

RESPONDING TO THE FORGOTTEN VICTIMS

Examining the Employment of Simplified Narratives by Civil Society Organisations Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Perpetrated Against Men in Northern Uganda



Alice Baker
6185487
Utrecht University
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Supervisor: Dr Lauren Gould

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Cover image: Taken by author whilst conducting an activity with Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) in Lira District, May 15 2018. The image shows a painting displayed as part of a memorial story-line exhibited in a village hall in Lira district. The story-line depicted the various experiences of the conflict as felt by locals, including abduction, massacres, rape, camp life and the fear of living daily life in the villages.

*'Us men are going through a lot and organisations don't focus on us. Now the only thing for us to do to survive is to dig.'*¹

¹ Author's Interview with male victim. Participant number 18. 23/04/2018.

Abstract

Sexual violence is an everyday reality for many in war-affected communities – for men and women. The extensiveness of sexual violence across global conflicts, including that of northern Uganda, has brought it increasingly to the attention of academics and policy-makers. However, global attention continues to bypass male victims, whose challenges in life post-violation are often left unattended. Using the case-study of northern Uganda, this thesis argues that stories constructed by civil society organisations to portray the situation concerning conflict-related sexual violence maintain an exclusion of male victims, both discursively and materially. I zoom in on the discourse to action process that civil society organisations engage in when aiming to mobilise responses. This thesis highlights the deliberate emphasis of certain attributes that accentuate female victimisation and male perpetration. Such attributions proliferate the action taken, or in the case of male victims, not taken, to address the phenomenon. While these simplified stories find resonance with national and international actors, the experiences of victims tell a different story. Therefore, a platform is provided to analyse the dynamic interactions between actors in their plight to present their preferred story, whilst also presenting the real consequences for male victims. This research constructs a strengthened understanding of not only the plight of male victims, but also how their post-conflict situation is shaped by civil society. Hereby, this thesis adds to academic debates concerning the use of discourse for mobilisation, whilst also contributing to critical reflections upon responses to conflict-related sexual violence. Furthermore, a basis is provided for altering discursive practices to allow male victims of conflict-related sexual violence in northern Uganda to be recognised both in speech and action.

Keywords: conflict-related sexual violence, Northern Uganda, civil society organisations, male victims, discourse, post-conflict responses.

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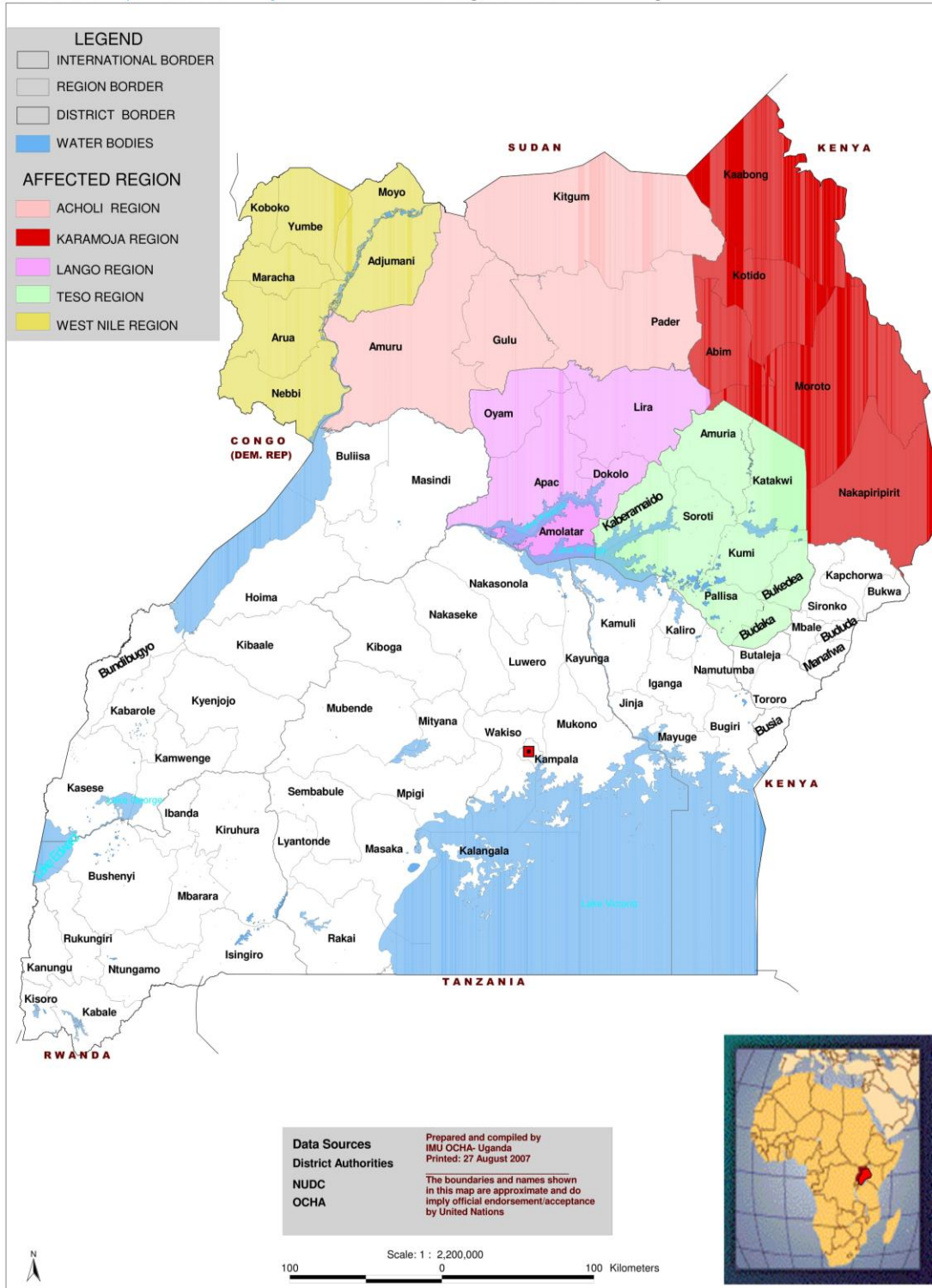
Acronyms and Abbreviations

ARLPI	Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative
CBW	Children Born of War
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
GRG	Grassroots Group
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
JRP	Justice and Reconciliation Project
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRA	National Resistance Army
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RLP	Refugee Law Project
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPDF	Ugandan People's Defence Force
WAN	Women's Advocacy Network

Map of Uganda: LRA Conflict Affected Areas



MAP OF UGANDA Showing Conflict Affected Areas August 2007



Source: OCHA map sourced from Reliefweb. Accessed July 25, 2018.

<https://reliefweb.int/map/uganda/map-uganda-showing-conflict-affected-areas-august-2007>

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

‘When elephants fight, the grass suffers.’²

Whilst eating lunch one day, my colleague used this phrase to describe his perception of the war that waned across northern Uganda. The Acholi language, he explained, is rich with metaphors and phrases, and the above expression was one commonly used to depict the overwhelming impact of the conflict. As another colleague added: ‘every family was touched in some way by the conflict, you just couldn’t hide.’³ Such sentiments were clear amongst many communities with whom I interacted with. Throughout this research, I had the privilege of meeting exceptionally resilient people who have suffered the consequences of two ‘elephants’ fighting but have turned their gaze to carrying on with life. The experiences of victims of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) does not stop at the act but continues into their post-conflict lives; this realisation has driven me to be their voice.

1.1 The presence of CRSV across northern Uganda

From the mid-1980s until 2007 northern Uganda witnessed decades of violence, with devastating impacts on the lives of thousands.⁴ Not only were thousands of people victim to rape, abduction and violent death, but it is estimated that the war caused the displacement of over 1.7 million people (Okello and Hovil 2007, 434). The LRA conflict⁵, similar to so many ‘dirty wars’ of today’s political climate, saw pervasive crimes of sexual violence throughout.⁶ Various authors note how “sexual violence was embedded in the ideology of the LRA and operationalized through its structures and norms” (Amone-P’Olak et al. 2016, 2). Throughout the war, sexual violence was central to tactics of abuse and humiliation, including rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage. Such violations were perpetrated not only by LRA forces but also by other actors. The displacement camps, established as part of the government’s counterinsurgency strategy, became unsafe territories, in which civilians

² Field notes, Gulu District. 13/03/2018.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Note: The conflict found root in a rebellion led by Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) forces (one of several rebel movements rising from Acholiland in the wake of the National Resistance Army (NRA) seizing power in 1986) against the Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni (Branch 2010, 25). Increasing violence after 1986 meant that support started to decrease rapidly amongst civilians, who were targeted by both the LRA and the NRA (later known as the Uganda People’s Defence (UPDF)) (Okello and Hovil 2007, 434).

⁵ Note: The choice of title ‘LRA conflict’ is not a political choice but rather one based on familiarity, as this is the title most frequently used in northern Uganda by both civil society actors and local communities.

⁶ Note: It should be noted that is generally acknowledged that sexual violence was not new in Acholi, Uganda or Africa. However, the difference between sexual violence perpetrated before and during the LRA conflict, apart from the temporal difference, was that before the war, sexual violence was no structured or systematic, it was a case by case situation, for instance, in cases of lust or cleansing rituals to settle family disputes. On the other hand, sexual violence within the conflict was systematic and disrupted many cultural understandings.

became prey to sexual violence. Women and men within these camps lived in fear of being raped “by the UDFP and its auxiliary forces, or by the LRA and marauding deserters” (Okello 2007, 439).⁷ The violations in this conflict were extensive and varied, severely impacting women and men, boys and girls.

1.1.1 Estimating the extent of male victimisation

The existence of male victims of CRSV, both across northern Uganda and as a global phenomenon, is widely noted as an existing reality (RLP 2013, 19-20).⁸ As Sivakumaran outlines, in conflicts around the world in which sexual violence has been studied, “male sexual violence has been recognized as regular and unexceptional, pervasive and widespread, although certainly not at the rate of sexual violence committed against women” (2007, 259).

The task of estimating an exact number of victims, both worldwide and in specific cases, has been recognised as an immensely difficult undertaking. It is widely recognised that across the world a high level of stigma is attached to victims of sexual violence (UN 2017, 6). Stigma is often intertwined with strong cultural ideas of masculinity and prevalent gendered constructions that prevent men from being conceived as probable victims. Dolan argues that, “the absence of data on male victims is not an objective reflection of levels of violence, but rather a symptom of immense difficulty – both on the part of male victims themselves and [...] on the part of those tasked with shaping GBV support interventions – in acknowledging that men too can be rendered vulnerable by virtue of their gender” (2014, 495). Other scholars have indicated that widespread perceptions that women are ‘disproportionately affected’ remain, “even though there are insufficient data on the prevalence of SGBV against men to assert such a claim with regard to any given conflict situation” (Erdström et al. 2016, 11). When viewed in comparison to the extensive research worldwide into women and children as victims, there have been few efforts to engage in research specifically on male victims and gain insight into the magnitude of the phenomenon.

Looking more specifically at the regional level, the issue of male victimisation is extensive in many conflicts across the Great Lakes region (BBC World Service 2012). Within Uganda, most statistics, quantitative data or testimonials concerning the phenomenon remain anecdotal and only few organisations work directly with male victims of CRSV, particularly victims of the LRA conflict (RLP 2013, 19).⁹ As will be elaborated upon, the lack of focus upon male victims provided me with great motivation to attempt to add to the knowledge concerning the situation in northern Uganda.

⁷ Note: Levels of sexual abuse committed by fellow community members and exploitation in exchange for services were also exceptionally high within the IDP camps.

⁸ Note: Globally, sexual violence against men or boys has taken place in at least 25 armed conflicts in the past decade alone (Refugee Law Project 2013, 18).

⁹ Note: Quantitative data on the prevalence across Uganda, and especially concerning this conflict, is difficult to find. Major organisations, such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, acknowledge its existence but do not have

1.2 Positioning the research

Due to the prevalence of sexual violence across conflicts, the global focus on the topic is vast. Extensive focus has been afforded to theoretical interpretations of why individuals are victimised, with the term ‘tool of war’ becoming a common description used regarding the presence CRSV. Sivakumaran argues that various dynamics are active when sexual violence is committed: different dynamics depending on whether it is inflicted on civilians or combatants, those within the perpetrating group or people in the community (2007, 267). Such dynamics include; power and dominance, emasculation of the individual or group and feminisation (Sivakumaran 2007, 267-74). Arguably, the act “is no longer primarily viewed as a biological sexual desire” (Solangon and Patel 2012, 425). In particular, it is generally agreed upon that sexual violence, especially within conflict, against a male victim is intended to feminise men by promoting the gender construct of female subordination. Therefore, one could argue that through feminising men, sexual violence against men is a weapon to disempower and disrupt gender hierarchy and splinter the larger community. Looking more directly at northern Uganda, Amone-P’Olak et al. argue that “the theories of ‘*militarized masculinity*’ and ‘*organizational opportunity*’ can be used to explain war-time sexual violence perpetrated in Northern Uganda during the two-decade war” (2016, 2). CRSV perpetrated by LRA fighters, they argue, align with the ‘organizational opportunity’ theory, due to the controlled and regulated manner by which sexual violence was conducted. According to the theory of militarized masculinity, sexual violence was used as a show of power, mainly by government forces, by feminising the perceived enemy (Amone-P’Olak et al 2016, 2).¹⁰ These theoretical interpretations help in highlighting perpetration trends and bring attention to the existence of male victims of CRSV. However, such theoretical arguments focus almost solely on the act itself, ignoring the aftermath. Therefore, using these theoretical interpretations as important foundation, other scholars have attempted to look more closely at experiences after the violation, as the impact of CRSV does not end at the act itself.

concrete data (UNHCR in Refugee Law Project 2013). There are rough estimates; for instance, a study based on the 2006 Uganda Demographic Health Survey uncovered that 11% of Ugandan men above the age of fifteen identified as victims of sexual violence, although not necessarily violence carried out in conflict (Demographic and Health Survey 2006, 290). However, those most vulnerable within society, such as refugees may have not had access to such a survey and so even existing empirical evidence must be approached with caution. Individual testimonies have been documented by the Refugee Law Project. Compilation of testimonies has allowed the project to draw on various observable patterns. For instance, the project accounts how: “analysis of the sexual victimization of men in conflict reveals similarities between these crimes as committed against men and as committed against women” (Refugee Law Project 2013, 1). The accounts of both female and male rape victims indicate that these sexual violence crimes were “crimes of power, intended to degrade, humiliate, and subjugate victims” (Refugee Law Project 2013, 1).

¹⁰ Note: The study indicated that government troops were the main perpetrators of sexual violence against men, particularly against Acholi civilians, targeting men within the population, in part, to attack the leaders and protectors, diminishing their masculinity, and unravelling social hierarchies (Amone-P’Olak et al. 2016, 2).

Increased media coverage of abuses against men in Uganda and across worldwide conflicts has run parallel to growing academic debates concerning post-conflict responses to CRSV (Leatherman 2011; Guardian 2011). Erdström et. al argue that the majority of international attention and funding focuses itself on female victims, and there is opposition in some areas to extending attention to male survivors (2016, 11).¹¹ Situated within broader debates concerning the impact of normative constructions on CRSV responses, this work emphasises how on a global level, despite increasing recognition and recent changes in international rhetoric regarding masculinities and gendered binaries, such changes “have yet to filter into mainstream international policy and practice on gender-based violence (GBV)”, of which CRSV is included (Erdström et. al 2016, 10). Research by the Refugee Law Project (RLP) (2013) indicate that changes in rhetoric are also yet to filter into the narratives and practices of institutions and organisations within Uganda. As a leading actor in the field, RLP recognise that increased attention in Uganda has mostly come due to forced-migration, meaning considerable focus concerning male victimisation focuses upon refugee male victims.

The northern Ugandan conflict-setting has been the centre of extensive international attention. Although fought locally, the conflict has become international and even global in character, as “flows of imagery, weaponry and humanitarian aid become entangled with local socio-political realities” (Finnström 2006, 12). Civil society within northern Uganda is considered especially active, with NGOs familiar to many war-affected communities.¹² Like responses to other violations, responses to CRSV have very much been led by CSOs. With the guiding role CSOs play in the post-conflict setting, it is important that research also looks at the role they play in shaping such settings for men and women. According to the UNDP, “evaluating civil society is important for a variety of reasons” (Pagoulatos and Kastritis 2013, 9). Not only do assessments enable CSOs to enhance the quality of their performance, but such evaluations also “help improve a CSO accountability, transparency, internal governance and legitimacy” (Pagoulatos and Kastritis 2013, 9). Therefore, in focusing this research upon CSOs in northern Uganda, I aim to not only provide critical reflection upon the responses provided, but also enhance understanding as to whether the discourse and action amongst CSOs reflects recognised changes within international rhetoric concerning CRSV. Additionally, application of the chosen analytical frame seeks to examine the role of different actors in maintaining certain discourses concerning CRSV.

The relationship between discourse and action has been afforded broad attention by frame analysis approaches, especially within social movement literature. Theoretical frameworks that provide structured lenses through which to observe discursive mobilisation processes have provided explanations as to how certain formulations of discourse assist in mobilising action. ‘Collective action

¹¹ Note: Resistance “rooted partly in fears over competition for inadequate funding, and partly in a sense that even where men are victims, they are nonetheless representatives of the primary perpetrator groups, and (as such) should not be considered a high priority for assistance” (Erdström et. al 2016, 11).

¹² Note: Globally, “civil society is understood as playing an important role in reducing violence, and in facilitating the conditions necessary for building sustainable peace” (Paffenholz 2009, 2).

frames', as coined by Benford and Snow (2000), helps to understand the construction of meaning as a tool in social movement mobilisation through discursive simplification. Civil society action is not only guided by discourse but uses discursive practices to create support for certain action. However, no academic work has tested the adoption of collective action frames as a mobilising tool for civil society actors. Benford himself recognised that there was a lack of empirical studies across cases, movements and time (1997, 411). Therefore, there is a need to build upon social movement theory and understand frame uses in discourse-action interactions by other collective action actors than the fixed social movement characterisation.

Empirical knowledge concerning discursive simplification of reality by actors for the achievement of aims, has been offered by those with focus upon the Greater Lakes region.¹³ Titeca and Costeur (2014) add to the debate on framing, as well as shedding empirical light on the case of Uganda, by pointing to the dynamic relationships between various actors in image construction of the LRA conflict. As Titeca and Costeur highlight, within current academic debates on framing, little research exists concerning how different actors frame a certain conflict situation and the interaction between actors' frames (2014, 96). Other empirical knowledge is offered by Autesserre (2012), who allows insight into the action-producing power of frames and narratives in the DRC. Adopting her perspective on simplification for achievement of aims, Autesserre states that: "given that narratives orient action, it is important to study their impact on the ground" (2012, 209). In her assessment of the broader academic debate, she notes that when scholars have studied the negative consequences of dominant narratives, their assessment normally stops at the macro-level, rather than analysing the impact on the ground (Autesserre 2012, 210). This research builds upon this attempt to explain how narratives orient action at the micro-level, with northern Uganda as the assessed case.

This thesis aims to make valuable contributions to existing academic knowledge concerning male victims of CRSV, whilst bringing increased attention to their plight. Whilst there is increased recognition, both globally and within Uganda, that CRSV perpetrated against men exists and should receive a fairer level of attention, still their experiences as victims of CRSV remain largely unacknowledged in research, policy or practice (Erdström 2016,5). This discrepancy alone provides considerable motivation to engage in extending knowledge on the topic.

Previous scholarly work recognises the role meaning-construction plays in post-conflict settings for male victims but fails to look further into how constructions are maintained, by who and for what aims. In adopting a frame analysis lens, this research aimed to uncover the power of discursive processes in influencing action mobilised by CSOs. Consequently, the unique and relevant contribution offered by my research project finds root in the ability to highlight, through a structured framework, the points within the discourse to action process that maintain narratives that largely

¹³ Note: Countries in the African Great Lakes region (sometimes also called Greater Lakes Region) include Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

exclude male victims. Application of this lens in the northern Uganda setting will build upon the recognised social movement framework, providing unique insight into its use for analysing signification by actors other than social movements. The active civil society reflects a network of interrelated actors with particular interests in portraying CRSV in a certain manner. Therefore, viewing the narratives created through a frame analysis lens will help to highlight the dynamic processes of signification of frames, especially on how stories told about something in conflict are influenced by the audiences towards whom they are produced. Whilst affording attention to the creation of simple narratives by CSOs and the dynamic interactions with other actors, the micro-level impact will be presented – exactly how the narratives are impacting the victims they speak about. Consequently, this thesis aims to delve deeper than the theories that explain why CRSV happened to male victims; I seek to understand the aftermath of their CRSV experiences and the role civil society plays in shaping this.

1.3 Research question and thesis structure

While the next chapter details the concepts employed in my question and the process by which I came to adopt them, I will first explain the research question, as well as how I propose to answer it. Accordingly, my research question is as follows:

How have simple narratives employed by civil society organisations in northern Uganda mobilised action taken to address conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated against men since 2006?

This thesis will attempt to understand the simplified stories produced as CSOs seek to respond to CRSV. Analysis of such narratives will be seen with reference to the broader meaning-construction arena and will seek to understand the discursive and material interpretation and impact of these narratives on those they are constructed for. In seeking to understand the dynamics surrounding CSOs in *responding to the forgotten victim*, I aim to reflect on the power present in discourse and the impact stories have on the people being spoken, or in the case of male victims, not spoken about. In order to answer my research question, I will focus upon six sub-questions:

1. What are the core framing task features identifiable within simplified narratives employed by CSOs concerning CRSV in northern Uganda?
2. Have the narratives employed by CSOs concerning CRSV transformed since 2006?
3. How do the narratives employed by CSOs resonate with the audiences, towards whom the narratives are aimed at?
4. How do the audiences influence frame construction concerning CRSV in northern Uganda?

5. What action has been mobilised by CSOs due to the employment of these simple narratives in response to CRSV in northern Uganda, especially regarding male victims?
6. What are the consequences of the mobilised action for male victims of CRSV in northern Uganda?

This thesis will be structured around answering these sub-questions. The second chapter will elaborate upon the analytical concepts, how and where they will be applied, and the methodology employed to attain my findings. In chapter three, diagnostic and prognostic features identifiable in CSO narratives concerning CRSV will be presented, as well as transformations in frames since 2006. The fourth chapter will look to the broader meaning construction arena, examining resonance of frames amongst the various audiences. This will allow for reflection upon the signifying role each audience plays in construction of CRSV narratives. Consequently, chapter five will examine the action mobilised due to employment of the identified narratives. Space will be provided for reflection upon the micro-level impact for male victims. I will conclude by reflecting on the answers to these sub-questions and propose that male victims of CRSV have ultimately been excluded by the simplified narratives employed by CSOs in their attempts to mobilise responses to CRSV in northern Uganda.

Chapter 2:

Assumptions, Analytical Frame and Methodology

In this chapter I will examine the different components that have moulded my focus, analysis and methodology. The choice of analytical frame and combination of analytical concepts guided data collection whilst in the field. Although frame analysis within social science often sits comfortably within social movement literature, my empirical findings suggest appropriate adaptation for use in analysing the mobilisation of action by actors other than social movements.

2.1 Conceptualising the relationship between narratives and action

Firstly, it is important to highlight broader discussions on the relationship between discourse and social reality. Foucault (1977) outlines the social process through which discourse converts into knowledge, highlighting discourse's significant role in constructing forms of attitudes and interpretations. An important relationship highlighted is between power and knowledge. Accordingly, "discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart" (Foucault 1998, 100-101). Formulated into a more usable theory, one can argue for the significant role of discursive practices in the creation of knowledge. Foss and Gill argue that interpretations of discursive practices produce social meaning, which ultimately shape social life (1987, 387). Therefore, utilising discourse gives one power to alter interpretations. I assume that discursive practices performed through the way one constructs a story of a certain situation are significant for the construction of perceptions within society and consequent decisions concerning when to or not to take action.

The stories told about a certain situation are often referred to as narratives (Autesserre 2012). Autesserre emphasises how narratives include a central frame, or combination of frames – "frames are essential to the social world since problems are not given, but have to be constructed," and ultimately shape our views on what counts as a problem and what does not (2012, 206). An extension of this notion is offered through the term 'simple narratives', putting emphasis upon the act of simplification (Autesserre 2012, 204). A main argument from Autesserre's work is that frames and narratives alone do not cause action. Instead, they make action possible: "they authorize, enable, and justify specific practices and policies [...] These actions in turn reproduce and reinforce both the dominant practices and the meanings, embodied in frames and narratives, upon which they are predicated." (2012, 207). This emphasis upon assertively making aspects of a narrative prominent in order to mobilise action resonates with social movement frame analysis.

Therefore, to operationalise ‘simple narratives,’ I will take two identified core framing tasks from Benford and Snow’s work on collective action frames (2000). This framework reflects one of the most common conceptual toolkits for studying cognitive processes of interpretation and meaning-making. Their work offers a lens that views a discourse-action relationship with emphasis upon the deliberate highlighting of certain ideas by core ‘signifiers’ for the achievement of goals (Benford and Snow 2000, 611-639). Thus, actors engage in framing work due to the assumption that meaning is prefatory to action (Benford 1997, 410). Collective action frames are constructed as actors negotiate shared meaning. Throughout this process, actors seek to negotiate understandings of the victim and enemy, lay out a possible solution and mobilise a group for action – these are termed the ‘core framing tasks’ (Benford and Snow 2000, 615). The characteristics simple narratives resonate strongly with these framing tasks. With reference to the case at hand, civil society actors must also negotiate various levels of understanding when addressing CRSV. Therefore, this process will be viewed through the lens of ‘core framing tasks.’

Firstly, diagnostic framing is the process through which certain elements are identified (Benford and Snow 2000, 615). Considering that mobilisation often seeks to remedy an issue, directed action is contingent upon identification of the problem at hand, of a victim and a possible responsible agent. The second task, prognostic framing, involves articulation of a proposed solution and strategies for accomplishing it (Benford and Snow 2000, 616). Many studies have highlighted a correspondence between diagnostic and prognostic framings, as the identification of specific problems inevitably constrains the range of possible solutions (Benford and Snow 2000, 616). These two core framing tasks will guide the analysis of narratives employed by CSOs in northern Uganda.¹⁴

In constructing collective understandings of a situation, framing actors interact with different audiences. This research assumes that CSOs do not operate alone or stagnantly within northern Uganda when responding to CRSV. As referred to earlier, Titeca and Costeur (2014) provide an empirical application of frame analysis that emphasises the dynamic relationships influencing frame construction. In their reflection on framing processes of the LRA conflict, they found that, “two interrelated factors are crucial in determining how different actors frame the LRA: the actor’s interests, and the broader political context in which these interests are produced” (Titeca and Costeur 2014, 93). Their analysis provides understanding of how actors construct particular images to pursue their goals even if such images distance themselves from reality. Additionally, it highlights the dynamic and influential interactions between actors invested in a situation (between frames and audiences), emphasising the dynamic and processual nature of framing. As will be assumed in this

¹⁴ Note: Benford and Snow do indicate the presence of a third framing task, labelled “motivational framing,” which provides a rationale for engaging in collective action and includes construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive (2000, 615). This research will not focus directly on motivational framing for a case-specific reason. Namely, due to the placement of many CSOs within broader human rights discourses, the issue or existence of CRSV is inherently intertwined with understandings of injustice. Therefore, the mobilisation of action in response to human rights violations calls upon already deeply embedded vocabularies and motivations founded on the global understanding of protection of human rights.

research, audiences play separate, yet intertwined roles. On one side, the audience acts as a measure of mobilising ability of frames, as level of resonance with audiences will influence the level of support for action. On the other hand, audiences also play a signifying role within the formulation of frames and process of making certain narratives dominant. Taking inspiration from Titeca and Costeur's (2014) reflection on the dynamic interactions between various actors in framing aspects of conflict, this thesis will observe the narratives with reference to various recognised variable features, constraints and facilitating factors of collective action frames. Namely: cultural opportunities and constraints; contested processes of frame formation; resonance; and audience effects (Benford and Snow 2000). These theoretical aspects, through which I will observe discursive processes, will be further explained within the context chapters.

To briefly summarise, this research adapted the clearly categorised framing tasks as an analysing framework for observing interaction between discourse and action. Therefore, in observing the CRSV narratives present within the work of CSOs, I attempted to highlight certain elements of these narratives that indicated the pursuit of these tasks. The chosen analytical concepts distinctly refer to campaigns of social movements. However, this research will test the flexibility of this frame for application in other mobilising for action situations.

2.2 Methodology

'Sometimes the stories are so painful and new that you can't believe they really could have happened.'¹⁵

In accordance with the epistemological and ontological perspectives of the broader analytical stance, my perspective sits within an interpretative research tradition and can be placed comfortably alongside a social constructivist interpretation of social reality.¹⁶ Ontologically, this research sees agents not just as carriers of ideas, and the relationship between ideas, social structures and action as not one of determinism, but rather one of contingency (Lindekilde 2014, 203).¹⁷

Through exploratory social research in northern Uganda, I focus on how narratives and frames are constructed and interpreted by various actors, thus my research focus is subjective and requires a qualitative approach. This is consistent with the ontological stance of the analytical

¹⁵ Author's Interview with JRP2. Participant number 9. 22/05/2018.

¹⁶ Note: Accordingly, this thesis will assume that through complex social processes of interaction, negotiation and interpretation, multiple realities have been constructed and exist within societal understanding. From this basis it can be assumed that knowledge is the product of various interpretations of discourses and discursive practices. Viewing a situation from such a perspective allows one to focus on the meaning and interpretations of discourse and facilitates exploration of how such interpretations impact action (Lindekilde 2014, 203).

¹⁷ Note: This ontological stance does not deny the existence of structures; however, they are not simply given but are always socially constructed through discourse and practices. Notably also, meaning and symbols are often given significant attention within this ontological perspective.

framework, as this research aims to better understand the construction of meaning that surrounds action. I will attempt to make it as transparent as possible how I conducted this research, where my evidence derives from, and outline identified limitations.

It is important to acknowledge that my findings may not be representative of all CSOs and victims of CRSV in Uganda. Furthermore, my findings cannot simply be generalised to cover other contexts. The intended outcome of research is not necessarily to provide a model. Rather, I aim to provide a platform for the framing interactions of CSOs to be observed, highlighting the impacts on the ground for male victims. Utilisation of the theoretical framework has helped guide the research and has provided a model for structuring and analysing data. Although I have approached this particular case-study from the larger frame analysis framework, I consider my approach to be informed, whilst simultaneously open to interpreting and collecting data from outside the frame boundaries.

2.2.1 Data collection and sampling

This research project adopted multiple techniques with the aim of creating a triangulated analysis. Certain data-collection techniques aided in answering particular sub-questions. Due to the central focus being discursive practices, the main techniques used in this research were in-depth interviewing and focus groups. The choice of interviewing as a main technique was rooted in the opportunity it provided for people to tell their stories. Moreover, a main form in which narratives are maintained is through speech. In conducting interviews with representatives of CSOs, it was easier to identify key narratives and frame attributions. The interviews conducted were semi-structured, giving a clear focus whilst still allowing for additional topics to be discussed.

Overall, five focus groups were conducted, varying in size and duration. They were often mobilised by my colleagues and would be conducted alongside another JRP activity, influencing the number of willing and available participants. Focus groups provided a unique setting for interpretations of narratives to be aired. Due to the lack of education across respondents, this group-setting proved beneficial, as respondents could support each other in understanding terms. It must be acknowledged that the overwhelming openness and willingness to share, although mostly very insightful, did mean that often each participant would be keen to share in-depth stories. This created an ethical dilemma between giving each respondent appropriate levels of attention whilst simultaneously sticking to the outlined topics.¹⁸ Despite this, focus groups proved a unique and insightful opportunity.

¹⁸ Note: To try and overcome this, my translator assisted me in explaining to the participants before each session that we would have a limited amount of time and that although individual experiences were extremely important, in this instance the group opinions were sought after. Additionally, my colleagues would provide extra support for any respondent who wished to have their story listened to.

Regarding the identification of participants, a non-probability purposive sampling method was employed.¹⁹ Three categories of research participants were identified: 1) relevant CSOs; 2) male victims of CRSV; and 3) female victims of CRSV. Firstly, in accordance with UN Guiding Principles, this thesis will consider CSOs to be “non-state, not-for-profit, voluntary entities formed by people in the social sphere that are separate from the State and the market. [...] They can include community-based organizations as well as non-governmental organizations” (UN Guiding Principles 2018).²⁰ The majority of relevant organisations were identified prior to fieldwork according to their level of interaction with victims of CRSV. Additional organisations came to my attention whilst residing there. The range of CSOs²¹ represent a relative sample of the responses offered to victims of CRSV in northern Uganda.²² CSO representatives were sampled with reference to their role in the organisations’ responses to CRSV.

Secondly, all male and female participants spoken to had either direct or indirect affiliation with JRP. This often entailed the use of snowball sampling, as JRP would help me mobilise a key respondent who would help in mobilising further relevant respondents.²³ The identified research participants did not originally include community members, due to ethical considerations.²⁴ However, it came to my attention that certain community members offered unique insight into the situation concerning CRSV.²⁵ In total, I interacted with 52 respondents; 23 through semi-structured in-depth interviews and 29 in focus groups.²⁶

These methods were used in combination with document analysis and participant observation. Although only limited documents were analysed due availability, document analysis allowed for strengthened identification of narratives, including transformations.²⁷ This also proved beneficial in

¹⁹ Note: Non-probability sampling does not involve *random* selection. It is purposive in the sense that it has been sampled with a *purpose* in mind. A number of specific pre-defined groups provide the basis for the search for participants.

²⁰ Note: In accordance with the UN definition, the proposed research will consider civil society as “the ‘third sector’ of society, along with government and business [...] It comprises civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations” (UN Civil Society 2018). The use of the term CSO instead of NGO in this research project allows for consideration of other civil society actor groups who may have a particular role to play in CRSV responses in northern Uganda, such as local cultural institutions or religious groups.

²¹ Note: The chosen civil society groups – Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP), Refugee Law Project (RLP), Vivo International, Grassroots Group (GRG), Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) and Women’s Advocacy Network (WAN) – work across Acholi, West-Nile and Lango sub-regions of northern Uganda.

²² Note: See Annex 3 for a summary of projects offered by each CSO.

²³ Note: One weakness of the snowballing technique is that those mobilising would often identify and mobilise those they have regular contact with due to logistical and infrastructural challenges in northern Uganda. This problem was also enhanced by the taboo nature concerning CRSV, meaning that victims weren’t always clear about what they had experienced, making it hard to clearly categorise or identify victims. This meant that sometimes just before an interview would begin it would become clear that perhaps the respondent being spoken to wasn’t exactly within the category that they were first thought to belong to. To overcome this my colleagues sought to provide particular criteria to the mobilisers concerning the respondent categories.

²⁴ Note: See section “Research Process, Ethical Considerations and Limitations” for further explanation.

²⁵ Note: Therefore, the number of ‘other interview respondents’ is low, as those spoken to often had close association with JRP projects and the victims themselves, and were not searched for, as to avoid stigmatisation of victims.

²⁶ Note: See Annex 1-2 for further information concerning in-depth interviews and focus groups.

Note: My in-depth interviews consisted of: a) eleven with representatives from relevant CSOs; b) four female victims of CRSV; c) five male victims of CRSV; and d) three members of the community. In addition, four focus groups were conducted with between 2-16 female victims of CRSV, and one focus groups was conducted with 3 male victims of CRSV.

²⁷ Note: As referred to in sub-questions 1-2.

highlighting trends of resonance and audience effects.²⁸ The documents sampled were drawn from CSO archives and were chosen due to their connection to CRSV responses.²⁹

This research was conducted alongside an internship placement at JRP. Due to my role as an intern,³⁰ participant observation offered an excellent opportunity to gain greater understanding of the interactions between CSOs, victims and communities.³¹ Combining talk, text and observation allowed me to triangulate my research by approaching the topic from multiple perspectives and enables my research to claim further representation of perspectives.

Regarding qualitative analysis of collected data, I systematically sorted, coded and analysed my data. I used my analytical frame to guide the analysis process, as analytical concepts provided general themes. I also let the data speak for itself, identifying interesting patterns that offered deeper insight to the analytical perspective.³²

2.2.2 Research design

The research setting was Acholi-sub region of northern Uganda, with specific interaction with organisations and communities active in Gulu and Pader districts, and one group in Lira.^{33,34} The majority of the research was conducted in Gulu district, a hub for international and national CSOs. According to the principle of maximisation, this setting was chosen due to the sheer volume of organisations based in Gulu town.³⁵

Although English is widely spoken in Gulu town, those participants living in rural settings often only spoke the local language of Acholi.³⁶ Therefore, interviews with CSO representatives were conducted in English, while all interviews with victims and community members were conducted

²⁸ Note: As referred to in sub-questions 3-4.

²⁹ Note: Documents included website content, project and activity reports, briefing papers, and workshop and dialogue reports. The total number of documents relating to CSO responses to CRSV analysed was 12.

³⁰ Note: My position as a Gender Justice intern was completed under the Gender Justice department at JRP. This department mainly focus special attention on the transitional justice needs of vulnerable groups and individuals seeking justice for gender-based crimes (JRP Gender Justice, 2018). Therefore, during the internship period, the projects I was involved in engaged primarily with war-affected women, especially those who were formerly abducted by the LRA.

³¹ Note: Participant observations will be referred to under to as 'Field Notes.' Reference to field notes will also include informal conversations had.

³² Note: It should be noted that identification of narratives and frames involved looking for a range of elements in written and spoken exchanges. As has been outlined, the interpretation of frames in a certain manner is what signifiers aim to achieve. This interpretation may be achieved through direct or indirect discursive exchange. Therefore, I looked for use of certain words in connection with others (e.g. 'victim' and 'woman'), or in many cases the lack of use of a certain word or combination of words (e.g. 'victim' and 'man'). Often the direct associations between these particular terms allowed for trends and patterns to indicate particular emphasis on certain attributions.

³³ Note: Although the greater northern region of Uganda has suffered greatly from the conflict, the Acholi sub-region experienced the greatest impact of war.

³⁴ Note: These districts were where JRP had largest engagement with conflict-affected communities. Lira district, although not technically situated within the Acholi sub-region, the location's proximity means that many have experienced the same impacts of war.

³⁵ Note: Especially in the earlier part of the conflict, Gulu was the centre of much of the war between the LRA and government forces until peace started to return to Northern Uganda after the Juba peace talks. Therefore, this area is where civil society action in northern Uganda finds greatest concentration.

³⁶ Note: Langi is the local language spoken in Lira district.

with a translator. My colleagues often acted as my translator, helping me navigate personal and emotional topics and providing me with additional insight into the context.³⁷ It must be noted that a literal translation from Acholi to English is not always possible, leaving room for interpretive errors. For those interviewed in English, the quotes have been taken exactly as quoted. For interviews that used a translator, these quotes are all translations from Acholi to English. I have quoted the translations provided by my translator as precisely as possible, only adjusting grammatical errors.³⁸

Regarding the temporal aspect, in 2006, the Juba Peace talks aided in majorly decreasing the violence in LRA-affected areas (Wijeyaratne 2008, 5). Soon after, IDP camps began closing, and many people returned to their homes. As life became more stable, CSOs could increasingly build upon previous efforts to address violations. Therefore, by looking at the activity of CSOs from 2006, when most organisations came to Gulu, it has been possible to observe transformations in discursive processes. I recognise that the analysis and evidence presented do not provide a year-by-year overview of narratives concerning CRSV by each CSO, as lack of availability in publications proved challenging. Additionally, due to funding reasons, it is not always the case that CSOs consistently focus on CRSV responses. Nevertheless, in choosing this time period, I seek to add an extra dimension to the analysis.

2.2.3 Research process, ethical considerations and limitations

It is recognised that CRSV was perpetrated by various parties within the conflict. However, it proved difficult to find victims of CRSV perpetrated by other actors than the LRA.³⁹ Therefore, the majority of interviews with victims conducted were with victims of LRA violations. Additionally, trying to identify and mobilise male victims proved challenging, meaning that only a small number were interviewed, further limiting generalisation. This meant that I was partially reliant on JRP's network. On the other hand, working alongside JRP provided me with additional context of the situation, aiding me in avoiding, as much as possible, re-traumatisation or increased stigmatisation towards victims.⁴⁰

³⁷ Note: Normally my translator would be female, which may have impacted how people, particularly male victims, spoke about their experiences. However, JRP is well respected and trusted among communities which somewhat negates the potential gender effect. Working as part of JRP helped to build trust with respondents and the organisation also helped me to identify and mobilise respondents. However, I recognise that also being affiliated with an organisation may also have prevented respondents from being critical.

³⁸ Note: I recognise that the translator also plays an interpretive role in this discourse exchange. To overcome this, I asked my translator to translate everything as closely as possible, avoiding summarising and influence of their own interpretations on what was said.

³⁹ Note: As indicated previously, the stigma attached to sexual violence due to cultural norms make it difficult for victims to speak out about their experiences and seek support. Additionally, as will be highlighted further in the thesis, victims and organisations may fear government intimidation if they expose violations committed by UPDF forces.

⁴⁰ Note: Nearly all female respondents spoken to were active members of WAN and had prior engagement with researchers. Therefore, most were comfortable in speaking about their experiences, and were not afraid of being identified as a victim of CRSV. Concerning the male victims, only three out of the eight spoken to were members of WAN. In all cases, the meeting locations were more private, as my colleagues sought to decrease the possibility of identification by the community, as it was often the case that male victims do not disclose their experiences to their spouses or family members.

Note: Before embarking on fieldwork, I had originally not intended to search for male victims of CRSV. This reservation

In a few instances, respondents' reactions emphasised the emotive nature of the topic and made me aware of my position as a researcher. The tears of one male respondent brought this to the forefront of my mind.⁴¹ In cases where respondents reacted emotionally, I would pause and ask if they wanted to continue. My colleagues offered support and worked with WAN to ensure that participants were offered extra emotional support if needed. It became apparent that the sensitivity of the topic often informed expectations of those I engaged with. In the majority of interviews with victims, I would be asked to support them financially. In attempting to handle expectations, I always outlined that I was a student researcher with limited funds.⁴² Additionally, as a researcher, it is important to acknowledge the potential influence that 'researcher' may have on answers given. Respondents may have altered their opinions or stories depending on what they saw as possible outcomes.⁴³

As mentioned earlier, the language barrier proved challenging. Although the main challenges were overcome by using a translator, sometimes translation itself had limitations. Colleagues at JRP explained that there is no word-for-word translation for 'sexual violence' in Acholi. Instead, the understanding of a sexual act becoming a violation is held in descriptions, as it is necessary to provide a list of acts and emphasise the forced nature.⁴⁴ Therefore, sometimes it took a few explanations to ensure everyone involved was conceptualising CRSV similarly.⁴⁵

To try and overcome these limitations and ethical issues, verbal consent was asked before every interview and focus group. With victims and community members, verbal consent offered a better alternative due to high illiteracy rates. Concerning CSOs, due to their willingness to participate, verbal consent was deemed sufficient.⁴⁶ Although most CSO representatives were willing for their identity to be public, I have chosen to use a coding system to protect their identity.⁴⁷ For other participants, they were assured that their identity would remain anonymous to avoid risking further

was based on ethical elements and perceived difficulty in identifying and mobilising. Colleagues reassured me that it was possible and important due to the lack of research available that interact directly with male victims. Therefore, JRP worked closely with me on this to help me in navigating this.

⁴¹ Author's Interview with male victim. Participant number 19. 17/05/2018.

⁴² Note: Money to cover transport costs were given when not covered by JRP.

⁴³ Note: For instance, in speaking with CSOs, they may feel like they are being criticised or if representatives are aware of the research, then they may have been aware of the narratives they were portraying.

⁴⁴ Author's Interview with JRP1. Participant number 8. 07/05/2018; Author's Interview with JRP3. Participant number 10. 23/05/2018.

⁴⁵ Note: As will be discussed further in chapter 3, the definition for CRSV that has provided the basis for this research project and analysis is that as provided by the UN (UNSG 2017, 3). The choice of the term CRSV over other terms was to avoid certain assumptions that may be attached to extensively used terms such as gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). As JRP acknowledged, "gender-based violence and gender justice are typically erroneously understood to mean women's issues due to high rates of violence against women globally" and "more often than not, the mention of SGBV during conflict evokes images of women raped" (2017a, 9; 2017b, 1). Therefore, utilisation of the term CRSV aims to steer away from already constructed societal assumptions.

⁴⁶ Note: When initially contacting them, my research objectives were clearly given my intentions explained.

⁴⁷ Note: As will be highlighted on in section 4.3.3, some organisations working in the post-conflict setting in northern Uganda have felt repercussions due to airing their opinions concerning the government. For this reason, I have used a coding system to protect the identity of the specific individuals speaking, although the organisations name is available. The coding system refers to the name of the organisation and the order in which the participants from each organisation were spoken with.

stigmatisation.⁴⁸ Concerning the documents selected for analysis, these were available in the public domain meaning direct consent from the affiliated organisation was not necessary.

In analysing the data collected, I was also aware of the impact that my own interpretation could have on analysis. In analysing speech and texts, I attempted to keep myself informed of the influence my own understandings of social life may have on analysis. Therefore, I aimed to have particular criteria when approaching analysis.⁴⁹ Triangulation with other data collection techniques helped in strengthening interpretations.

In sum, this thesis is the product of exploratory qualitative research. Data collection and analysis were guided by the epistemological and ontological stances and core concepts of the analytical framework. The Acholi sub-region was established as the geographical focus due to it being the most prominently affected by the conflict, with Gulu town as the base location due to extensive presence of CSOs. This research used four data collection techniques, namely: in-depth interviews, focus groups, document analysis and participant observation. Each technique provided unique data that have helped in answering the sub-questions and main research question. As presented, there are important ethical considerations related to the conduct of this research that shaped the research process. Having clarified the theoretical basis and methodology, the following chapter will delve into the discursive processes surrounding CRSV in northern Uganda.

⁴⁸ Note: Therefore, in the list of research participants, those other than CSO representative are anonymised, with only their district as further information. Additionally, field notes only include district locations and dates, excluding any details that may add to identification. When participant observations are articulated through the use of vignettes, names are used to enhance the ability to relate to the story being told. The names have been changed to protect privacy of the individuals involved.

⁴⁹ Note: Such criteria included certain words or phrases I looked for, use or lack of certain words and the way people spoke, including pauses or phrases that seemed added on.

Chapter 3:

Identifying Core Framing Task Features

‘NGOs just fail to consider male victims. I don’t know the reason why they forget them, they just do.’⁵⁰

This chapter will address the first two sub-questions. The first section will present evidence that indicates processes of simplification through emphasis of certain attributes of CRSV in the frames employed by CSOs. The subsequent section will point to discursive complexities and transformations of narratives produced by CSOs since 2006 and propose that contested processes amongst CSOs have brought men somewhat into the minds of audiences.

3.1 Diagnostic framing

In accordance with the analytical frame, in constructing collective understanding of a problem which they indicate as in need of change, civil society actors “make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change” (Benford and Snow 2000, 615). The first phase in engaging in discursive mobilisation has been identified to be diagnostic framing – intertwined identification of the problem, the main victimised group and the perpetrator or source of blame (Snow and Benford 1988).

3.1.1 What is the problem at hand?

There is widespread acknowledgement that CRSV was prevalent across northern Uganda and many CSOs point to the need to respond (JRP 2017a; JRP 2017b). However, how do CSOs conceptualise CRSV and present this through dominant narratives? According to the UN definition, CRSV may be understood as “rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict” (UNSG 2017, 3).⁵¹ As outlined, not only are the violations numerous, but men and boys have equal entitlement to the label ‘victim of CRSV’.

⁵⁰ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 18. 23/04/2018.

⁵¹ Note: This definition is taken as the basis for analysis throughout the research project and thesis. In line with this definition, the link with conflict “may be evident in the profile of the perpetrator (often affiliated with a state or non-armed state group), the profile of the victim (who is frequently a member of a persecuted potential, ethnic or religious minority), the climate of impunity (which is generally associated with State collapse), cross-border consequences (such as displacement or trafficking in persons) and/or violations of the terms of ceasefire agreements” (JRP 2017b, 8).

As previously highlighted, rape, forced marriage, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual abuse have been recognised as prominent throughout the LRA conflict. With reference to the UN definition, these acts should all be considered CRSV. However, in conducting research it became clear that certain emphasis was placed upon particular violations.

In a JRP report, an overview of sexual violence experienced by men and boys during the conflict is provided: “the conflict associated men and boys with different forms of sexual abuse, either as perpetrators or as victims. E.g. as perpetrators they were sometimes forced to rape/abuse women, and as victims, rebels or soldiers may have sexually assaulted them” (2017a, 25). In pinpointing to specific experiences of men during conflict it allows one to question how strong the association between the term CRSV and specific acts is. In an interview with a Vivo International representative, she explained: ‘I was trying to think of cases I remember of sexual violence [...] I cannot remember ever a case where a [male] client said directly to me, “I have been raped.”’⁵² Such a statement indicates automatic association between CRSV and acts of sexual abuse or rape. Likewise, a representative of ARLPI, explained:

From the rebels themselves, when they go to the camps they abduct people, young girls are raped, women are also raped, and then from the government troops as well the same thing is done. We saw more of men suffering from the perspective of the government forces. In the camp, the amount of sexual violence increased: there were a lot of incidences of rape, incidences of defilement, incidences of defilement, incidences of incest, incidences of sodomy.⁵³

When speaking with representatives, the conversation often followed a similar pattern. The experiences that this respondent focused upon does reflect the situation for many victims. Nevertheless, when observing the conflict through the lens provided by the UN definition, there is whole other side to the story.

Interestingly, all eleven CSO representatives, after being directly questioned whether forced marriage would be considered as CRSV agreed that it should be considered within the boundaries of CRSV.⁵⁴ As a RLP representative explained, ‘it is exactly what happened in the bush. You are not given any choice as to who your wife is, you were given a woman. So that is also, in a way, a violation.’⁵⁵ Although the ability to generalise further than those representatives is limited, a clear trend was the initial association between the term CRSV and particular sexual abuses, such as rape.

⁵² Author’s Interview with VIVO1. Participant number 2. 28/03/2018.

⁵³ Author’s Interview with ARLPI1. Participant number 7. 18/04/2018.

⁵⁴ Note: Representatives at JRP recognised a certain level of confusion amongst CSOs concerning the utilisation of the term CRSV due to practical difficulties in defining boundaries. For instance, there are hundreds of cases in which those who were forced into marriage within captivity have chosen to stay together when returning to their communities, making it hard to determine when a forced marriage becomes one of consent and when it is not.

⁵⁵ Author’s Interview with RLP2. Participant number 3. 11/04/2018.

Notably, forced marriage was not completely dismissed. Rather, in many instances, the automatic association with rape overshadowed the connection between forced marriage and CRSV until directly brought to attention. Additionally, multiple reports acknowledge forced marriage as a standard occurrence during the conflict (JRP 2017a; JRP 2017b). Despite recognition of the widespread existence of forced marriage in the conflict, numerous reports point to significantly low numbers of male victims or simply don't mention them at all (Demographic Survey 2006; RLP 2013). If it is recognised that men were also forced into marriage, then surely the numbers would be higher, if for every woman forced a man was also? Therefore, one could question whether men are realistically seen as possible victims of forced marriage. There is a discrepancy between the recognition of forced marriage as a central part of conflict life, and the way CRSV is presented through reports and speech. The particular dominance of this automatic association within the narratives produced, maintained and reproduced by CSOs arguably reinforces dominant gendered understandings of the possible victims and perpetrators of CSRV.

3.1.2 Who is the victim?

Problem identification intimately interlinks with attributions ascribed to the phenomenon. Scholars have called attention to “the ways in which movements identify the ‘victims’ of a given injustice and amplify their victimization” (Benford and Snow 2000, 615; Gamson et al. 1982). International understandings of CRSV emphasise the clear interruption of human rights (UN 2017). Global recognition of human rights violations as an injustice is mirrored in many of the publications presented by the chosen CSOs (Apiyo and McClain Opiyo 2017; JRP 2017b). Due to CSOs seeking to align with broader human rights discourse, one would assume that gender equality would be central to their perspective. Although many CSO representatives were aware of the fact that men *can* be and *are* victims of such violations, the most dominant portrayal identified was of women and girls as *the* victims of CRSV.

Firstly, in document analysis, it was often the case that women and girls were identified as most important, and even sole victims of CRSV. On the Vivo International website, it was presented that: “to provide psychotherapeutic support to survivors of gender-based violence, vivo was funded by the UN [...] In the course of this project, Vivo offered a wide range of psychological support for traumatised children and women” (Vivo International 2018). In the final evaluation report concerning the UN programmes that funded the Vivo project, it was stated that “during the war, women and girls were exposed to GBV in different ways, including physical, psychological abuse and sexual violence within the LRA” (Wielders and Amutjojo 2012, 10). This example provides a clearly evident association between the term ‘victim’ and women. Although such a direct link between the terms was not identifiable in all reports, evidence collected through other methods offers strengthened insight.

The tendency to associate women and girls with the term ‘victim’ was also evident in spoken narratives. In an interview with an ARLPI representative, a clear link was made: ‘the victims of the LRA still find a lot of challenges coping with the reality that they have been either raped or defiled because from the rape by an LRA soldier probably led to a child.’⁵⁶ Of course, it is understandable that there will most probably be one group who suffers more than others. However, what was indicated by many is that often the focus on women as victims eclipses, to a disproportional extent, the plight of male victims. As one of my respondents asked, ‘why was most of the focus during and after the war focused on women?’⁵⁷ By certain respondents it was emphasised that often ‘women and children are seen as vulnerable and more prone to acts than men are’⁵⁸ and often ‘don’t have the power to say no.’⁵⁹

An association between victim identity and level of suffering was often drawn. An ARLPI representative outlined their understanding of victimhood in conflict:

The people who suffer more are women and children, and just like in this part of the region, the women suffered more because probably the suffering starts from the arrest of the husband. The husband has been arrested and the woman is left there to struggle with the children, [...] this woman goes into the bush there to look for firewood, to look for food, and she can be arrested from there, she can be raped from there [...] So generally, women suffer more than men, in any conflict.⁶⁰

Victims of CRSV recognised this as a general understanding across CSOs. Focus group respondents agreed that in the view of stakeholders, the government and NGOs, the challenges of women are seen as more necessary.⁶¹ One female respondent indicated that most understandings concerning level of suffering and victimisation of women lays in the fact that many had children as a consequence of CRSV and were expected to care for the children, ‘and that is why, a lot of NGOs and the government have decided to support them, so that they can supplement.’⁶² It was emphasised that tendencies to focus on women and children as the main victims was not only dominant during conflict, but also in the post-conflict setting: ‘to me, the situation after the conflict became more alarming, as there was a lot of focus on women, women, women, and on child mothers. There weren’t issues of child fathers. There were issues of widows but there were never issues of widowers.’⁶³

⁵⁶ Author’s Interview with ARLPI1. Participant number 7. 18/04/2018.

⁵⁷ Author’s Interview with JRP1. Participant number 8. 07/05/2018.

⁵⁸ Author’s Interview with JRP3. Participant number 10. 23/05/2018.

⁵⁹ Author’s Interview with JRP1. Participant number 8. 07/05/2018.

⁶⁰ Author’s Interview with ARLPI1. Participant number 7. 18/04/2018.

⁶¹ Focus Group number 3. 26/04/2018.

⁶² Author’s Interview with female victim. Participant number 12. 04/04/2018.

⁶³ Author’s Interview with RLP2. Participant number 3. 11/04/2018.

3.1.3 Who is the perpetrator?

Emphasis upon the perceived victim lends itself to constructions of the perpetrator of CRSV. Considering that civil society responses to CRSV seeks to “remedy or alter some problematic situation or issue, it follows that direct action is contingent on identification of the source(s) of causality, blame, and/or culpable agents” (Benford and Snow 2000, 616). As JRP recognised, “‘men’ is often synonymous with ‘perpetrator’ when discussing conflict SGBV” (JRP 2017a, 10). When telling about the lack of responses to men, one male victim explained that, ‘before, none of the organisations came for men to help them, specifically because men were seen as perpetrators.’⁶⁴ Interlinking with prominent global understandings of gender roles and assigned characteristics, ‘in most cases, men are taken to be a stronger human being in comparison to women and this aspect of women being seen as the weaker sex emphasises male strength and position as perpetrator.’⁶⁵ Many representatives emphasised how men are often seen as perpetrators, especially in the LRA conflict, which is described as a male-led conflict.⁶⁶ Violence was perpetrated by both parties involved in the conflict, of which the majority of those fighting on the front-line were men:

It’s more likely the men were boys when they were abducted were turned into soldiers, into rebels. The LRA grew in a patriarchal society and they were themselves patriarchal. So, obviously, of course, most of the sexual violence was rape towards women, so of course it was more that way. All the high commanders were men, and then they would also hear, “okay, Kony ordered this”, “Otti ordered this.”⁶⁷

Factually-based understandings of conflict roles have influenced attributional assignment by many to men. It would be inappropriate to assume that CSOs would need to display this explicitly, because often it is assumed. Therefore, in document analysis I did uncover definite statements damning men to the role of perpetrator. However, as previously discussed concerning forced marriage, even though both men and women are involved, men are more often than not assumed the perpetrator even if forced himself. Two representatives hinted to female perpetration.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the resounding undertone that presented itself was that men were simply assumed to have committed such violations, as ‘people often always blame men.’⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 18. 23/04/2018.

⁶⁵ Author’s Interview with RLP2. Participant number 3. 11/04/2018.

⁶⁶ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 17. 11/04/2018.

⁶⁷ Author’s Interview with VIVO1. Participant number 2. 28/03/2018.

⁶⁸ Author’s Interview with JRP3. Participant number 10. 23/05/2018; Author’s Interview with ARLPI1. Participant number 7. 18/04/2018.

⁶⁹ Author’s Interview with JRP1. Participant number 8. 07/05/2018.

3.2 Prognostic framing

The assumed progression from identification of the problem and victim group is articulation of a proposed solution (Benford and Snow 2000, 616). A reflection given by a RLP representative gave insight into the solution often put forward by CSOs in mobilising responses:

If you look at the history of conflict within northern Uganda, it is hard to not realise that most of the outcry has been on the plight of women and children. Because of that, early interventions were focused towards addressing the conflict experiences of women and children. That is why [...] we had World Vision supporting the children in education for children, and Child Voice and so on and so forth. [...] That, in its own way, shielded or created a barrier to understanding and addressing the plight of men and boys during conflict and post-conflict.⁷⁰

Providing tailored responses to CRSV, centred around the needs of female and child victims, stood strong as the proposed solution. Such a solution indicates a level of correspondence between the diagnostic and prognostic framing. As social movement literature suggests, “the identification of specific problems and causes tends to constrain the range of possible “reasonable” solutions and strategies advocated” (Benford and Snow 2000, 616). Notably, clear links may be drawn between who responses were aimed at and the dominant understanding of victim and perpetrator identities, not only just concerning CRSV but also more broadly. As highlighted by JRP, “several interventions were set up by the government, its development partners and non-governmental organisations to respond to immediate needs of the communities affected by conflict. Many of these interventions had a bias towards persons deemed the most vulnerable and consequently a lot of focus was placed towards women, children and the disabled” (JRP 2017a, 29). For instance, immediate responses, such as empowerment strategies brought to IDP camps, focused on women’s empowerment and rights:

IDP camp life was an opportunity for people to, especially women, to be empowered in all means; socially, economically and financially [...] The relief items, both food and non-food items, were channelled through women [...] even economic initiatives were channelled through women because the belief was that men after receiving food would go to the market, or would go to a beer place and exchange it for beer, while the family is suffering.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Author’s Interview with RLP1. Participant number 1. 14/03/2018.

⁷¹ Author’s Interview with ARLPI1. Participant number 7. 18/04/2018.

Many female victims outlined that male victims, specifically those who returned from captivity, were being supported by the government by being allowed to join the UPDF military forces.⁷² However, in terms of tailored responses to CRSV it has been acknowledged that men and boys often feel neglected in recovery interventions by various institutions (JRP 2017a, 2).

Notably, in my engagement with victims, it became apparent that proposed solutions and implementation was influenced by dominant framings of ‘perpetrator.’ One male victim explained that ‘men are on their own [...] there are no all-male groups because your name has been spoiled and the community would start to question your motives if you created a group because the conflict was male-led and we are seen as the perpetrators.’⁷³ Interestingly, female victims emphasised the need for victims to form groups to receive support in northern Uganda – ‘that is the problem, men are not in groups.’⁷⁴ Despite the recognised necessity for male victims to form groups in order to receive support, it seems the construction of perpetrator that has embedded itself on various levels creates barriers for achieving this.

To summarise, this section has presented the diagnostic and prognostic features of collective action frames present within the narratives employed by CSOs. Notably, the diagnostic features emphasised attributions that assume female victimisation and male perpetration. These feed into the prognostic features which exclude male needs and focus intently on the needs of female victims. To be reflective of the temporal focus of the research, it is important to reflect on whether narratives have transformed since 2006.

3.3 Discursive complexities: Changes in narratives overtime

Throughout frame analysis literature, the processual and active characteristics of framing are emphasised (Benford and Snow 2000, 614). Frames constructed are susceptible to continual alteration and influence from various actors, as “all actors within the collective action arena who engage in this reality construction work are embroiled in the politics of signification” (Ibid., 625). It would be inappropriate to assume that all CSOs reproduce the same narratives with precise emphasis upon similar attributions. Within the civil society arena of northern Uganda, discursive complexities have come to shape current narratives. As was noted by participants, it is slowly becoming more recognised and voiced that men *can* be victims and require assistance. Accordingly, publicity is increasing, and many have realised that most research has been tailored to women.⁷⁵ In recognising a

⁷² Author’s Interview with female victim. Participant number 13. 06/04/2018.

⁷³ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 17. 11/04/2018.

⁷⁴ Author’s Interview with female victim. Participant number 12. 04/04/2018.

⁷⁵ Author’s Interview with JRP1. Participant number 8. 07/05/2018.

need for change, a colleague indicated that actors should recognise that perhaps the support should be in a different form to what it might have been immediately after conflict.⁷⁶

In conducting document analysis, patterns arose concerning narrative transformation. For instance, the mention of male victims in publications published by JRP has dramatically increased in the past few years. In 2017, two publications in which male victims of CRSV are at the centre of attention indicate framing alterations (JRP 2017a; JRP 2017b). Although exact changes in written and spoken narratives were hard to identify cases due to lack of availability and subtleness of changes, in line with the understanding that discourse leads to action, this research assumes that the narratives employed by mobilising actors will be, to some extent, embodied in the responses set out. Therefore, the projects and programmes offered across this time period also offer a unique measure of discursive changes.⁷⁷

3.3.1 The Refugee Law Project (RLP): Bringing men to the forefront

Increasing recognition reflects contested processes in narrative construction, in which reality is disputed by those within the frame constructing category (Benford and Snow 2000, 625). A prominent contester amongst CSOs in northern Uganda is RLP, who recognises itself as one of the first organisations to venture into research on male victims and continues to almost single-handedly lead the way.⁷⁸ RLP emphasises contending aspects to attributions of female victimhood, male perpetration and sole response to female victims. As one representative recalled, ‘when RLP had the first conference and they presented the issue of male victims, many people were looking around at each other and wondering how such a thing could happen.’⁷⁹ By continually bringing male victims to the forefront of research, heads started to turn – ‘intervention has opened the eyes of the government, especially the ministry of health by showing that men can also be raped.’⁸⁰ The influence upon action of emphasising different frame attributions is visible, for instance, in the way the ministry of health now train medical students.⁸¹

It became clear that RLP’s constructed meaning concerning CRSV is one in which women and men are noticed as equal victims, equally able perpetrators and the solution lies in providing services that address the unique needs of each.⁸² In their work in northern Uganda, increased awareness regarding the plight of male victims has allowed many to see other survivors starting to

⁷⁶ Author’s Interview with JRP1. Participant number 8. 07/05/2018.

⁷⁷ Note: Further elaboration on changes in action by CSOs will be provided in Chapter 5.

⁷⁸ Author’s Interview with RLP1. Participant number 1. 14/03/2018; Author’s Interview with RLP2. Participant number 3. 11/04/2018.

⁷⁹ Author’s Interview with RLP2. Participant number 3. 11/04/2018.

⁸⁰ Author’s Interview with RLP2. Participant number 3. 11/04/2018.

⁸¹ Author’s Interview with RLP2. Participant number 3. 11/04/2018.

⁸² Author’s Interview with RLP1. Participant number 1. 14/03/2018.

enjoy life and seek the same support – ‘we started with four and now we have more than 85.’⁸³ The involvement of both genders in each other’s support groups has broken gendered barriers, dismantled frustrations and increased levels of acceptance across communities. RLP is a key referral partner for many CSOs in the region and nationally, including JRP. As CSOs turn to RLP for their expertise on the topic, it can be argued that CSOs’ interpretations of their own frames have started become disrupted. The frames RLP construct are also starting to become replicated in action and words on a global scale. The establishments of institutions in Cambodia, New Zealand and sub-Saharan Africa have given light to such frames (RLP 2013b).

This example gives light to Foucault’s recognition of the power of discourse (1977). Contesting narratives among the signifying group have the ability to shape those existing and influence the dominant ways of talking about a phenomenon, as well as consequent action. However, as will be stressed in the following chapter, such contestation still battles against the discursive structures offered by external actors.⁸⁴

This chapter has reflected upon the framing tasks that emphasis certain attributions in the narratives employed by CSOs regarding CRSV. The evidence suggests that general dominant conceptualisations of CRSV by CSOs accentuate male perpetration and female victimisation, pointing to a recognition that the action taken should be tailored to the needs of female victims. Ultimately, these features divert attention away from male victims. In light of this, RLP have played a key role in contesting assigned features amongst CSOs by bringing men to the forefront of their presented CRSV narratives. Due to the interlinked nature of CSOs within northern Uganda, this has begun to create a ripple across the signifying actors. However, the next chapter will bring to light external influences upon framing of CRSV, offered by frame audiences, and will allow for reflection upon the likelihood of continued narrative transformation.

⁸³ Author’s Interview with RLP2. Participant number 3. 11/04/2018.

⁸⁴ Note: Elaboration of the broader external construction arena will be offered in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4:

The Broader Discursive Construction Arena

On a warm April day, I accompanied my colleagues to a nearby village.⁸⁵ As usual, we picked up some others from the petrol station who would be central to the planned activities. Betty, a WAN member who had been held in LRA captivity, accompanied her two children, Hope and Lucy, and her new husband, Patrick. Three more familiar faces joined the party. Margaret, also a member of WAN and fellow LRA returnee, and Richard and Charles, two former LRA combatants who had worked closely with JRP and WAN on various projects. Once we had managed to arrange ourselves in the back of the van, amidst the bottles of soda and biscuits, we set off on the less than comfortable journey to the village.

Having conducted this project for over 3 years, my colleagues were well-versed in how reunions usually pan out. On arrival, my colleague informed me that this reunion was somewhat different to those I had previously attended. Fred, the father of the children,⁸⁶ whom we were accompanying for the reunion, would actually be present. It was not often that JRP would conduct a reunion where the father of the children was still alive, as more often than not, the father would have been killed in combat or gone missing. I was not particularly sure what I should expect from this scenario. Should I expect extreme tension, tears or simply an overarching awkward silence?

As the day unwound, cleansing ceremonies were completed, prayers were said, and dialogues engaged in. Whilst attempting to keep up with the dialogue, additional snippets of information started to fill the picture. Under that mango tree, it came to light that this group of people had spent years living through the conflict together. Patrick, the current husband to Betty, was the former escort⁸⁷ to Fred in captivity. Fred's current wife was a co-wife⁸⁸ to Betty during captivity and together they had raised their children. Richard and Charles had been commanders during their time in the LRA, both of whom had been given multiple wives and had fathered many children. These women and men – perceived perpetrators and

⁸⁵ Note: This fieldwork was under the project title 'reintegration of children born of war through family reunions.' As it says in the title, JRP worked closely with the WAN forum to trace the paternal families of children who had been born as a consequence of LRA captivity. This entire reintegration process comprised many steps, including tracing the families either through by phone or on the ground, family dialogues, pre-visits, the reunion itself and follow-up visits to monitor the wellbeing of the child and mother and to evaluate processes of reconciliation amongst the communities.

⁸⁶ Note: In LRA captivity it was quite common that commanders would have multiple wives and would, therefore, have many children with different mothers. In this scenario, Fred informed me that he had had 5 wives whilst in captivity and numerous children. However, many of those children he does not have contact with or does not know their whereabouts.

⁸⁷ Note: Escorts, also commonly called porters, were assigned to commanders to help with carrying luggage and ammunition, acts as security and attend to the needs of the assigned commander.

⁸⁸ Note: While many of the abducted children in captivity were trained to use arms, become porters, labourers and servants, girls were commonly distributed among commanders as forced 'wives'. Commanders were often given more than one wife and these co-wives often lived together as a group and raised their children together. It is estimated that between 1988 and 2004 around 10,000 girls became child mothers as a result of abduction. (Akello 2013, 149).

*victims – were sat together, drinking soda, laughing and promising to build a better future for their children. There was no tension, no tears and no awkward silences.*⁸⁹

This scenario challenged my preconceptions of how survivors would interact with each other consistent with ‘perpetrator’ and ‘victim’ labels assigned by simplified narratives. Consequently, this chapter seeks to address sub-question three by examining how frames resonate, especially with the audiences they seek to mobilise. This examination will indicate interpretation of the frames and will aid in addressing the fourth sub-question which concerns itself with how audiences shape construction of CRSV narratives. This chapter proposes that different audiences aim to influence the production and maintenance of frames, as the recognised power in discourse provides incentive for engagement in discursive construction of CRSV.

4.1 Identifying target audiences

As recognised in influential scholarship, those utilising discursive practices do so in full knowledge of interaction with a range of audiences (Snow and Benford 1988). In this case-study, signifying agents (CSOs) engage in frame construction and employ narratives in the presence of a range of actors, all with varying connections to CRSV. CSOs sit in close interaction with the international community, especially as implementing partners of major donors, governments and national institutions (Zaum 2009, 22).⁹⁰ The great volume of CSOs in northern Uganda points to an interactive relationship amongst organisations, as indicated earlier in the discussion on contested processes. Locally, victims of CRSV and their surrounding communities represent another audience group, as their interaction in projects is what is intended. Figure 1 illustrates the interactions between the identified actors in constructing shared meaning of CRSV that plays into the interests and broader discursive boundaries relevant for each audience. As illustrated, the action that arises as a product of CRSV narratives directly impacts victims in northern Uganda.

⁸⁹ Field note, Gulu district, 05/04/2018 – 06/05/2018. Names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

⁹⁰ Note: Their presence at the local level, which often precedes a conflict by many years, along with their knowledge of specific local conditions mean they often make an important contribution to peacebuilding when larger international actors lack the required resources (Zaum 2009, 22).

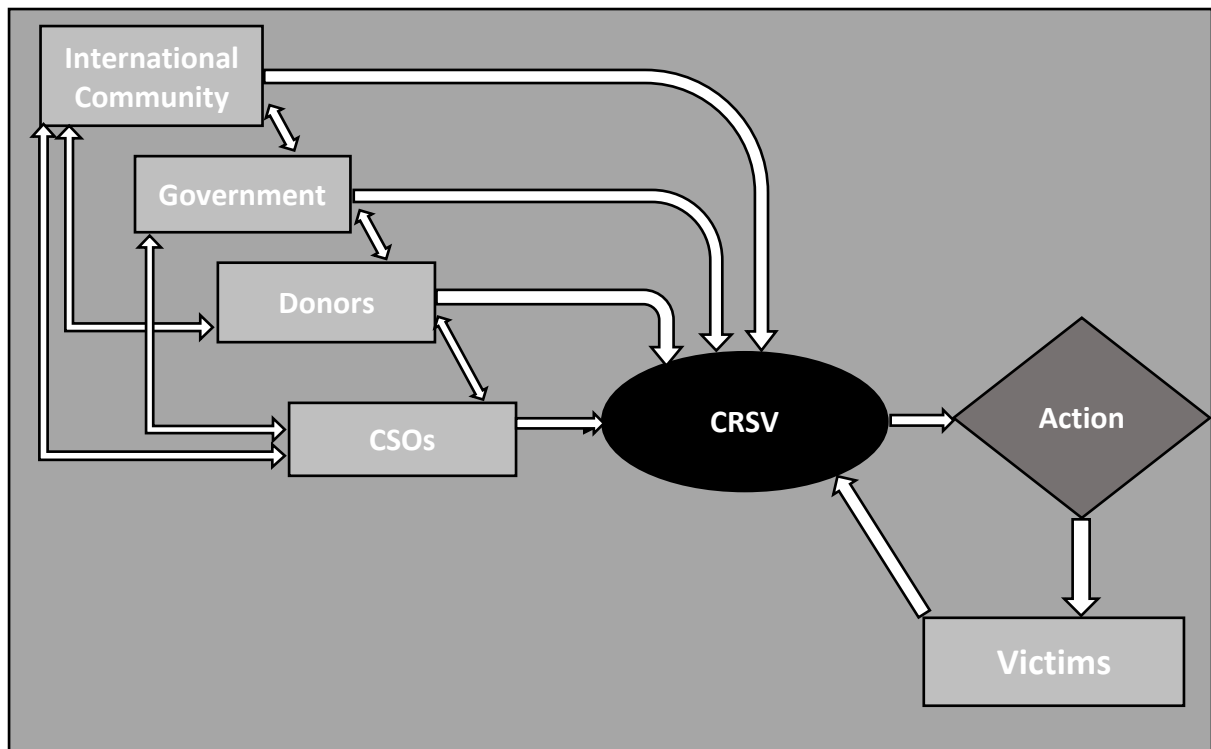


Figure 1: Dynamic interactions between various actors in the framing of CRSV

Having outlined the audiences engaged in discursive activities, I will now engage in a discussion concerning the resonance of narratives amongst these audiences, the dynamic interactions between them, and the signifying role these audiences play in constructing mobilising frames.

4.2 Frame resonance

Mobilising potential and ability for narratives to stay dominant is reflected in the resonance of frames, or how a movement frames its issues in a way that strikes a ‘responsive chord’ with target audiences (Benford and Snow 2000, Snow and Benford 1988). Target audiences play a role in determining resonance at various levels. There are two recognised elements that influence variation in resonance within social movement literature: credibility of the proffered frame and its relative salience (Benford and Snow 2000, 619). In understanding the interactions that constructed narratives have upon the social setting surrounding CRSV in northern Uganda, an evaluation of the relative credibility and salience will allow for reflection on how certain narratives align with their audiences’ perception of the situation. Such evaluation will call upon identified measures, as laid out by Benford and Snow (2000). Measures of credibility and salience can often be seen to interact with one another. Therefore, when using them in the following discussion, they will be presented in an order which allows for coherent understanding each actor’s interaction with the frames articulated by CSOs.

4.2.1 Credibility: Frame consistency

The first recognised element of resonance is frame consistency, which refers to the congruency between a signifying actor's "articulated beliefs, claims, and actions" (Benford and Snow 2000, 620). In northern Uganda, the continued mobilisation of action towards CRSV since the end of the conflict, with clear basis in the attributions assigned through core framing tasks, indicates a consistency between what CSOs articulate through the frames and the action produced.⁹¹ Although more action by various actors towards male victims suggests some frame transformation, the majority of action has remained aligned to female-focused narratives.

4.2.2 Credibility: Empirical credibility

An "apparent fit between the framings and events in the world" is labelled as empirical credibility and offers a measure of resonance (Benford and Snow 2000, 620). The "believability of the evidence for the reality of social problem as captured within the frame" (Ettema 2005, 133) may not match factually with the diagnostic or prognostic claims. Instead, empirical verification by audiences can be found in whether empirical referents lend themselves to being identified as 'real' indicators of the claims made (Benford and Snow 2000, 620). Notably, such empirical verification by audiences tightly interlinks with the dimensions of salience. One's understanding of the empirical fit of the framings is also shaped by the lived experiences and interpretations of the world around them. Therefore, I will highlight these dimensions consecutively, as it makes sense to present the interwoven process of meaning-making together.

Regarding the perceived problem at hand, the fit of the frames seems to resonate on different levels amongst actors. For the male victims spoken to, conceptualising what is or isn't CRSV proved difficult. One explained that he could not allow forced marriage to be considered as CRSV because, as a male victim of rape, he is much more vulnerable than those forced into marriage. In telling his story, through wet eyes he told me:

A relationship between man and woman is understandable, even if forced. What I have been through is completely different and very painful. If it had happened to a woman then people would be more lenient, but what I have been through is *real sexual violence*. Can you get used to a man being a wife to you or you being a wife to a fellow man?⁹²

⁹¹ Note: The exact details of the action mobilised by the certain CSOs will be elaborated on further in Chapter 5.

⁹² Author's Interview with male victim. Participant number 44. 23/04/2018. Emphasis added.

Such a statement indicates a potential perceived scale of impact or vulnerability within the CRSV term. This indication that rape leaves someone more vulnerable than forced marriage can arguably be linked with societal gendered understandings, shedding light on the automatic association made by CSOs. On the other hand, five male victims outlined that forced marriage should be seen as CRSV.⁹³

All female victims agreed that forced marriage was a key element in their identification as victims. However, there was no consensus as to whether men should be recognised as victims or whether they would recognise themselves as victims. GRG representatives outlined that males often spoken of CRSV as ‘if I have to be forced to sleep with someone,’ whereas female participants often indicated that not only physical acts but also being ‘forced to marry a man that I did not love.’⁹⁴ One focus group unanimously agreed that forced marriage should be considered CRSV. However, when asked whether men who were forced into marriage should be considered victims, there was an almighty roar across the room.⁹⁵ One participant explained that men were allowed to pick their match: ‘men are not forced to have sex with women, you find it is always that the men force you to have sex with them.’⁹⁶ Although most agreed, one participant defended male victims, explaining that if they did not pick a woman they would be punished.⁹⁷ Although opinions varied, the majority of female victims aligned with conclusions drawn and consequent assumptions (men as perpetrators, women as victims, men not as possible victims of forced marriage) by the narratives produced, indicating a high level of empirical credibility.⁹⁸

Approaching the diagnostic claim that women and girls are the sole victims of CRSV, it is noted by many CSOs that women often represent the majority of victims. Due to sheer numbers of female victims seeking help, for many CSOs this confirms such a claim.⁹⁹ Looking to the national level, this claim fits with the Ugandan Constitution (Penal Code 2018), whose legal definition of sexual violence indicates women and girls as potential victims. This is mirrored at a regional level. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Protocol (2006) outlines a similar definition and promises to provide protection for women and children against impunity for sexual violence, indicating recognition of these frame attributions as realistic. Looking to the international level, a

⁹³ Focus Group number 2. 25/04/2018. Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 16. 06/04/2018; Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 17. 11/04/2018.

Note: Notably, these respondents had all been abducted by the LRA and had nearly all spent extended periods in captivity and indicated that the experiences of captivity also fed into their experiences as a victim of CRSV.

⁹⁴ Author’s Interview with Magdalen Amony, Abalo Betty and Nyeko Christopher, GRG. Participant numbers 5, 6, 7. 17/04/2018.

⁹⁵ Focus Group number 5. 10/05/2018

⁹⁶ Focus Group number 5. 10/05/2018.

⁹⁷ Focus Group number 5. 10/05/2018.

⁹⁸ Note: Attention should be paid to the role of civil society actors in influencing the victims’ conceptualisations of CRSV. In the bush, victims would be told that marriage, as conducted in the LRA, was normal and simply a way of increasing the LRA. Sensitisation across communities meant that on return many were told that their experiences were unjust. Contradiction between what they were told in the bush and when they returned could have meant that victims started to question their situation and experiences. Therefore, it is important to understand the development in collective construction of the term CRSV since the conflict came to a halt.

⁹⁹ Author’s Interview with Magdalen Amony, GRG. Participant number 4. 17/04/2018; Author’s Interview with Anett Pfeiffer, Vivo International. Participant number 2. 28/03/2018.

recent development in the ICC led to allegations by various organisations that “an opportunity to address other gender-based crimes has been missed” (Amnesty International 2018). Following Dominic Ongwen’s appearance at the ICC in 2015, he was charged with multiple SGBV crimes against women and girls abducted by the LRA.¹⁰⁰ However, new allegations regarding CRSV crimes against men and boys was rejected as evidence (ICCa 2018).¹⁰¹ This decision by the ICC, as an institution with a mission to “help put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes” (ICCb), points to reduced sense of urgency to address issues of CRSV against men. This non-admittance of the evidence suggests that the international community deems the frames to empirically credible.

In reflection of prognostic framing, emphasising a need to focus on female victims’ needs, the general alignment by the majority of audiences with diagnostic attributions suggests that the empirical credibility of the prognostic frames stands. On national, regional and international levels, diagnostic and prognostic features lay very much based on statistics and secondary images of the conflict. For victims, their recognition of empirical credibility sits tightly intertwined with their experiences.¹⁰²

4.2.3 Salience: Centrality and narrative fidelity

The observed credibility elements link closely with salience factors of centrality and narrative fidelity. Looking at the cultural foundations of collective action, centrality has to do with how essential the beliefs, values and ideas associated with the mobilisation frames are to the target audiences (Benford and Snow 2000, 621).¹⁰³ This aspect links closely to narrative fidelity, which asks to what extent the frames culturally resonate with audiences.

Concerning centrality, the audiences outlined all have some relation to CRSV. As previously indicated, as a human rights violation, the investment in responding to CRSV sits central to values and beliefs of many audiences. As CSOs seek to achieve some redress for CRSV crimes, advocate for human rights and ensure sustainable peace (JRP Home 2018; GRG 2018), it is understandable that their goals are central with both international community and institutions invested in upholding human rights, but also with those locally impacted by war.

¹⁰⁰ Note: Crimes included forced pregnancy and forced marriage, neither of which had been prosecuted at the ICC before.

¹⁰¹ Note: On March 6, 2018, the Trial Chamber declined to admit the proposed evidence of sexual violence against men and boys, stating: “since the acts described by the anticipated testimony would fall under the category of sexual crimes and such acts are not mentioned in the facts confirmed by the decision on the confirmation of the charges, the Chamber considers them to be beyond the scope of the charges” (ICC 2018). The victims’ lawyers then filed a request urging the Chamber to reconsider, as without including such evidence the misconception that sexual violence against men and boys does not happen may be entrenched. This second request was again not warranted due to the argument that it would exceed the facts and circumstances of the sexual and gender-based crimes in the case. It has been recognized, however, that once a trial is underway, it is increasingly difficult to introduce evidence of such crimes, without prejudicing the fair trial rights of the accused (Amnesty International 2018).

¹⁰² Note: Will be elaborated upon in section 4.2.4.

¹⁰³ Note: As Snow et. al elaborate: “*values* refer to the goals or end-states that movements seek to attain or promote, *beliefs* can be construed as ideational elements that cognitively support or impeded action in pursuit of desired goals” (1986, 469-470, emphasis added).

Cultural resonance can be viewed both locally and internationally. Looking to audiences in Uganda, the frames employed concerning CRSV align somewhat with cultural understandings of men and women. CSO representatives outlined that local cultural understandings support constructions of male perpetration and female victimisation. A representative of Vivo International explained that, ‘it is quite difficult because even for some of our counsellors, it does not seem to be a known concept of how a man can rape another man.’¹⁰⁴ Male victimisation stands in contrast to mainstream understandings, as one of the female victims pointed out, ‘sodomy was and continues to be seen as a weird thing that shouldn’t happen.’¹⁰⁵ As a JRP representative explained, ‘men would always consider sexual abuse conducted by men to be sexual violence but if a woman rapes a man it is never considered to be sexual violence.’¹⁰⁶ On an international level, as scholars highlighted, although there have been changes, similar conceptualisations still drive international perspectives (Dolan 2014; Edrström et. al 2016). Due to the constructed frames emphasising perceived male and female characteristics, a relationship between the framing features and cultural resonance both on national and international levels can be highlighted.

4.2.4 Salience: Experiential commensurability

An additional measure of resonance is experiential commensurability, which questions whether framings are congruent with the personal experiences of the targets of mobilisation or whether framings are abstract from their experiences (Benford and Snow 2000, 621). As indicated previously, the great volume of women seeking support for their experiences of CRSV is likely to have shaped the experiences for CSOs, international and governmental institutions aware of CRSV.

An aspect I found extremely interesting was the interaction by different audiences with ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ identities. As indicated, the conflict was and is seen as male-led, with the majority of CRSV crimes being ordered or perpetrated by men. For many war-affected communities, men returning from LRA captivity were feared by communities¹⁰⁷, as they were scared they would kill or abuse them.¹⁰⁸ One male victim explained that for some there was conflict within communities, as the community ‘knows that you came and abducted people from here and killed people.’¹⁰⁹ It was explained that CSO sensitisation programmes have sought to alter these perceptions to increase acceptance, reconciliation and healing.¹¹⁰ However, whilst engaging in JRP projects, it was noticeable

¹⁰⁴ Author’s Interview with VIVO1. Participant number 2. 28/03/2018.

¹⁰⁵ Author’s Interview with female victim. Participant number 14. 23/03/2018.

¹⁰⁶ Author’s Interview with JRP3. Participant number 10. 23/05/2018.

¹⁰⁷ Note: It was acknowledged by many of the victims spoken to that there was a general fear towards anyone returning from the LRA due to the atrocities associated with the conflict party in general. However, the majority of respondents pointed to a continued fear towards male returnees and men in general due to the assigned perpetrator identity.

¹⁰⁸ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 18. 23/04/2018.

¹⁰⁹ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 16. 06/04/2018.

¹¹⁰ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 18. 23/04/2018;

that there is still some tension between community members and men who returned from LRA captivity. Often there was objection by maternal families towards reuniting CBW with paternal families due to the perception that the father was the perpetrator of their daughter's violations.¹¹¹ Notably, the experiences of many communities reflect similar attributions to the diagnostic framings. Although this was a common sentiment amongst communities, a contradicting response was prominent in engagements with victims.

The vignette at the beginning captures an instance in which assumptions surrounding 'perpetrator' and 'victim' become conflicted. In my experience, among victims themselves, these identities are not so black and white. For many who returned from captivity, they feel a level of joint victimisation: 'we feel a mutual friendship and love because we feel like we were from the same prison – we are like brothers and sisters now.'¹¹² For many, the context in which CRSV was perpetrated have influenced their experiences.¹¹³ Concerning forced marriage, women were often given to men as a reward, a tactical decision by the LRA as they discerned that if you had a family then you would fight to protect them.¹¹⁴ This outlines influencing dynamics upon many CRSV experiences of victims. In speaking with victims of UPDF violations, one explained how 'when the soldiers came, they assaulted men and women alike.'¹¹⁵ They emphasised the lack of stigma within communities, as their shared suffering has broken conceptualisations of male perpetration and female victimhood.¹¹⁶ In interacting with victims of both LRA and UPDF perpetration, an overwhelming number of respondents declared that as male and female victims of CRSV they shared an identity.¹¹⁷ The pain and problems that stem from being forced to have something perpetrated against you, and equally being forced to perpetrate something, are experiences that both genders can share.¹¹⁸ The male victims who are members of WAN groups emphasised that they felt welcomed and had never experienced hostility from the female victims.¹¹⁹ This shared sense of identity majorly dislocates the common conceptualisation that women are solely victims and men perpetrators, indicating that their experiences and view of their situation do not align with the frames and assumptions created.

As highlighted by JRP, male victims can simultaneously be a CRSV perpetrator and victim

¹¹¹ Field Note, Gulu District. 02/03/2018 – 20/05/2018.

¹¹² Author's Interview with male victim. Participant number 17. 11/04/2018.

¹¹³ Note: For many of the victims spoken to, their time in LRA captivity spanned over many years. It was explained by many of the respondents that daily challenges including walking long distances, carrying heavy loads, travelling for days and even weeks without sufficient food, caring for children whilst on the move and escaping from enemy attacks.

¹¹⁴ Author's Interview with JRP1. Participant number 8. 07/05/2018.

¹¹⁵ Author's Interview with male victim. Participant number 19. 17/05/2018.

¹¹⁶ Author's Interview with male victim. Participant number 19. 17/05/2018; Author's Interview with male victim. Participant number 20. 17/05/2018; Author's Interview with female victim. Participant number 15. 17/05/2018.

¹¹⁷ Note: As highlighted earlier in the thesis, there was difference in opinion among the female victims spoken to concerning what counts as CRSV and in what sense men can be victims of CRSV. In stating that they felt a shared identity with male victims, many of the female victims outlined that this would be in a scenario in which a man declared himself as a victim of CRSV.

¹¹⁸ Author's Interview with JRP4/WAN. Participant number 11. 24/05/018; Focus Group number 5. 10/05/2018.

¹¹⁹ Focus Group number 2. 25/04/2018; Author's Interview with male victim. Participant number 18. 23/04/2018.

(JRP 2017a, 25).¹²⁰ This clash of identities between labels assigned to men and the way they perceive themselves became a popular topic across interviews. Numerous CSO representatives indicated a link to larger societal problems that communities across northern Uganda are attempting to deal with.¹²¹ A JRP representative explained that in his interactions with various stakeholders and victims concerning the ICC case against Dominic Ongwen¹²², a general consensus was that, ‘if we are to treat people on what happened during the war, then everyone is to be punished and it will break society even more.’¹²³ This case has led communities to question perpetrator and victim identities, as it is hard to draw boundaries in a situation where ‘he was brainwashed but at some point, started to act under his own consent.’¹²⁴ This example highlights how in the complexity of conflict, simplified narratives provide discursive boundaries that do not necessarily fit the experiences of particular audiences.

Concerning prognostic features offered by CSO narratives, a considerable number of victims spoke of a difference in level of suffering. Many female victims and a number of male victims agreed that many sufferings they endured together, but concerning sexual violence, ‘women suffer more than men because women came back with children and are rejected by their maternal family.’¹²⁵ As one female victim outlined, ‘I believe we are the same, but the weight of suffering differs, and for this reason the weight of support differs.’¹²⁶ This implies that for many the needs of women seem greater, increasing the experiential commensurability of the prognostic element. As noted earlier, experiential commensurability and empirical credibility somewhat overlap, especially from the perspective of victims. For male victims, the contradiction between their experiences and dominant narratives employed by CSOs denies empirical credibility and experiential commensurability. What will be questioned in the section 4.3 is whether their contradictory stance has the power to influence narratives.

4.2.5 Credibility: Credibility of frame articulators

Credibility of frame articulators is recognised as another element for evaluating resonance. As was previously mentioned, CSOs have played an increasingly important role in post-conflict settings and are often relied upon by international actors to implement projects (Zaum2009). Therefore, this

¹²⁰ Note: In outlining the experiences of men and boys during and after the conflict in northern Uganda, the field note explains that regarding sexual violence: “the conflict associated men and boys with different forms of sexual abuse, either as perpetrators or as victims [...] As perpetrators, they were sometimes forced to abuse, harass and rape women [...] As victims, rebels and soldiers sexually assaulted them” (JRP 2017a, 25).

¹²¹ Author’s Interview with Anett Pfeiffer, Vivo International. Participant number 2. 28/03/2018; Author’s Interview with Benard Okot, JRP. Participant number 8. 07/05/2018; Author’s Interview with Okwir Isaac Odiya, JRP. Participant number 9. 22/05/2018.

¹²² Note: An arrest warrant for Dominic Ongwen, alleged Brigade Commander in the LRA was released by the ICC in 2005. He is charged with 70 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes allegedly committed after 1 July 2002 in northern Uganda. The trial began on 6 December 2016 and will resume on 18 September 2018 (ICC Ongwen Case 2018).

¹²³ Author’s Interview with JRP2. Participant number 9. 22/05/2018.

¹²⁴ Author’s Interview with JRP2. Participant number 9. 22/05/2018.

¹²⁵ Focus Group number 4. 27/04/2018.

¹²⁶ Author’s Interview with female victim. Participant number 12. 04/04/2018.

indicates that from an international perspective, those on the ground interacting with the targeted beneficiaries have expertise and experience that support their motive for action.

The credibility afforded to CSOs by war-affected communities and victims that I interacted with was one mostly founded upon respect. One male victim explained that because men would encounter problems from the community and government in attempting to form groups due to their demolished reputation, ‘formation of groups would only be possible if an NGO comes so that trust is there.’¹²⁷ Additionally, many victims reflected on the lack of support offered by the Ugandan government, especially concerning UPDF perpetrations.¹²⁸ Therefore, it is comprehensible that CSOs offer communities services they otherwise would not have.

To summarise, section 4.2 indicates that for audiences situated left of Figure 1, high levels of frame resonance are based upon embedded cultural conceptualisations and secondary images of conflict situations. For victims, their experiences are a crucial guiding element in viewing frame resonance. For female victims, credibility and salience in many cases fall in line with constructed frames, while for male victims their exclusion from frames contradicts their experiences. What was clear was that for many victims, the identities ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ cannot be seen as so defined, as this excludes additional dynamics that impacted their CRSV experiences. Having reflected upon audience interpretations, it is interesting to observe whether audiences with high or low resonance are most influential upon narrative construction concerning CRSV.

4.3 Audience effects

I think it is upon civil society to demonstrate that there is a problem [...] once civil society are not demonstrating that there is a need, the donor will be in their comfort zone: women will be supported, children’s rights and women’s rights will be focused on.¹²⁹

As indicated, it is assumed that signifying actors are not immune from external influences. As has long been taken as a given in communication studies, “the target of the message can affect the form and content of the message” (Benford and Snow 2000, 630). Whilst conducting research it became clear that discourses can be suppressed or manipulated by some in order to change the consequent image presented. Action of course brings with it attention. Therefore, it can be argued that in the signifying arena concerning CRSV in northern Uganda, actors aim to control where attention is placed. Accordingly, I will present the dynamic relationships between audiences in formulating

¹²⁷ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 17. 11/04/2018.

¹²⁸ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 20. 17/05/2018.

¹²⁹ Author’s Interview with RLP1. Participant number 1. 14/03/2018.

stories on CRSV.

4.3.1 International Community

As is commonplace within modern conflicts, the international community held various roles in the LRA conflict. From ICC intervention and aid distribution, to sustained peacebuilding initiatives, many of which were practically implemented by CSOs. The international community sits deeply embedded within master narratives, which dominate international interactions. Master narratives concerning gender and human rights provide discursive boundaries within which those functioning within the international community are expected to uphold. Ultimately, the influence of the international community upon broader discourses impacts how civil society can shape frames to ensure their own interests. Notably, as recognised by those within northern Uganda, the existence of male victims is not dismissed completely by CSOs. However, CSOs attempt to negotiate this whilst also attaining to broader discourses. It was noted in an Assembly of the UN of the Peoples (1999) that no local or global project to improve quality of life will ever be successful without close collaboration between civil society and institutions. Therefore, reliance upon the international network indicates a necessity to be in touch with broader narratives.

Additionally, the portrayal of the LRA conflict on an international level has constructed boundaries within which CSOs seemingly find less challenges. Finnström's observations of the 'official discourse' on the conflict – meaningless, criminal brutality of the LRA, innocent women and child victims, and the Western saviour – emphasises assignment of characteristics to certain actors (2012, 135). Clear 'enemy' and 'victim' categories heavily simplified the conflict. Such image constructions, fed by broader discourses, influence how CSOs can frame CRSV and their effectiveness on mobilising action. Notably, the three simplified narratives present a story that male victims don't fit into - their victimisation isn't recognisable and, in cases of UPDF perpetration, their perpetrator doesn't fit with recognised 'enemy' constructions.

4.3.2 Donors

As commonly recognised, CSOs rely on private enterprises for their funding and, therefore, their agendas must align with their funders (Zaum 2009). The relationship between CSOs and donors provides an example of an interaction in discursive construction in which the frames constructed are greatly influenced by the interests of the actors to whom the frames are aimed at. To mobilise action, CSOs require financial backing, so in mobilising action and support, the frames are shaped to interests of donors. This relationship creates a nexus for CSOs:

You come as an organisation trying to align the needs of the donor to the needs of the beneficiaries which is very challenging to us [...]. So as an organisation it is very challenging to work with returnees and also work with donors because aligning the two goals at the same time, while also attaining the organisations scope, is not easy.¹³⁰

The need for funding support, as indicated by Vivo International, sometimes outweighs the objectives of CSOs – ‘many organisations now say, “there’s so much money in Sudanese refugees,” so they’re all going there [...] I ask, “but what are you doing there?” And they say, “oh, we don’t know yet but there’s lots of funding there.” [...] So, it’s a donor and NGO thing.’¹³¹ The criteria set out by donors, to which CSOs have to adhere to, could be seen as a reflection of many donors’ own framings of CRSV. As a representative of JRP outlined, ‘we lack partners that really understand the importance of supporting men [...] It is very rare that they just say SGBV victims, they normally always specify for women.’¹³² As highlighted above, CSOs attempt to manage the issues they see before them concerning CRSV but find themselves constrained by the power withheld within funding.

4.3.3 Government

An influential audience for any CSO is the government. In this case-study, it became clear that the government has the power to shut down counter-narratives concerning the conflict. As a JRP representative articulated, looking at our political climate, the government is very careful concerning things that may tarnish its reputation.¹³³ Looking to Foucault’s (1977) understandings, power is transmitted through discourse, as discursive processes shape knowledge generation. The Ugandan government recognises the power held in the narratives created by independent actors. Set against the backdrop of human rights and international law, it is essential for the government to ensure that they lock frames in place that reflect a desirable image.

Many respondents indicated potential repercussions of uncovering unfavourable government conduct – ‘the podium is more level for people to speak about the LRA than about the UPDF because there is a chance that you will be punished for speaking [...] people still fear due to UPDF machineries.’¹³⁴ In 2017, ActionAid¹³⁵ had their bank accounts frozen ‘to send them a strong warning to be careful.’¹³⁶ CSO representatives pointed to this as a realistic consequence if their organisation

¹³⁰ Author’s Interview with GRG1. Participant number 4. 17/04/2018.

¹³¹ Author’s Interview with VIVO1. Participant number 2. 28/03/2018.

¹³² Author’s Interview with JRP2. Participant number 9. 22/05/2018.

¹³³ Author’s Interview with JRP1. Participant number 8. 07/05/2018.

¹³⁴ Author’s Interview with JRP2. Participant number 9. 22/05/2018.

¹³⁵ Note: Although action was taken allegedly due to money laundering, the director of ActionAid stated that “anyone with the slightest understanding and knowledge about ActionAid’s work would know that the reality cannot be any farther from the truth” (Daily Monitor 2017).

¹³⁶ Author’s Interview with JRP1. Participant number 8. 07/05/2018.

publish reports directly condemning the government of perpetration or focus their action purposefully towards victims of UPDF perpetration.¹³⁷ An RLP representative explained that other CSOs probably looked into male victimisation as a line of focus ‘but they feared approaching because of the government, because if you start looking at male survivors then the government might approach you.’¹³⁸ The portrayal of CRSV evident in CSO narratives retain attention upon LRA perpetrations, as dominant portrayals of the conflict centred themselves around LRA violations perpetrated against women and children (Finnström 2012). Therefore, maintenance of the current narratives align with the interests of the government, which ultimately, due to fear of consequences, have also become the interests of CSOs.

4.3.4 Victims

In consideration of the influence of external actors upon framing, I found it interesting to reflect upon the power victims themselves have in CRSV discursive construction. As indicated in Figure 1, the network of audiences and signifiers in the northern Ugandan context seemed to be split into two separate cycles. On one hand, the international community, donors, the government and CSOs engage in dynamic interactions, shaping in their own ways the narratives employed by CSOs. On the other hand, victims sit more detached from those interactions, whilst simultaneously on the receiving end of consequent action.¹³⁹ Although the frame do not necessarily resonate with the experiences of those who lived through it, do victims themselves have the potential power to alter the frames constructed by CSOs? As Titeca and Costeur (2014) argue, signifying actors are guided by their interests, seeking to effectively feed their objectives. The aims of all chosen CSOs emphasise their dedication to securing stable peace, achieving redress for violations and aiding the healing processes of local communities. Tailoring the needs to victims of CRSV, whether male or female, would surely be part and parcel? However, it became apparent that actually for CSOs to meet their aims, their investment in obtaining funding, pleasing the government, and complying with international understandings lay paramount to being present in the post-conflict setting. Therefore, in many ways, although the presence of victims as the subject of narratives and a targeted audience for mobilisation is necessary, their possible addition to discursive constructions is overshadowed by more powerful actors. In this instance male victims represent the ‘losing audience,’ whose interests fall short of influencing CRSV narratives.

¹³⁷ Note: As highlighted earlier, it is acknowledged that a large proportion of CRSV against men in northern Uganda, especially rape, was perpetrated by UPDF forces.

¹³⁸ Author’s Interview with RLP2. Participant number 3. 11/04/2018.

¹³⁹ Note: An overview of the action produced in response to CRSV by the CSOs will be presented in Chapter 5.

This chapter has sought to highlight how constructed frames sit with audiences based upon cultural, experiential and empirically relevance. In presenting this evidence, I have concluded that many victims themselves interpret the frames in alternate ways and have different levels of resonance to external actors. As the subsequent section showed, in this case, those actors whose interpretations of the frames sit closely in line with the diagnostic and prognostic features of CSO narratives have great influence within the construction arena due to their ability to fulfil essential interests of CSOs. In light of this, the following chapter will indicate what action is resultant of the dynamic discursive processes concerning CRSV in northern Uganda and what impact this has on male victims on the ground.

Chapter 5:

The Situation on the Ground

‘If they want women and men to live harmoniously then they should empower them equally, but, instead, men are often left out.’¹⁴⁰

Having highlighted the dynamic discursive processes concerning CRSV narratives in northern Uganda, this chapter will answer the final two sub-questions. The first section will present the action produced through employment of particular narratives, highlighting proliferation of the identified framing tasks. Subsequently, I present the consequences of subsequent action on the lives of male victims in northern Uganda. In reflection of these consequences, I argue that the power held in discourse that currently excludes male victims from responses can, in time, be reversed and start to bring light to their situation.

5.1 Reponses by CSOs to CRSV in northern Uganda

The construction of frames, observable through narratives, for the purpose of mobilisation, “authorize, enable and justify specific practices and policies” (Autesserre 2012, 207). Therefore, it is important to present an overview of the responses led and fuelled by CSOs within northern Uganda. As visible in Annex 3, the number of responses towards victims of CRSV mobilised by the chosen CSOs has been relatively steady since 2006. As visible, CSOs often declare their target beneficiaries to be ‘victims of CRSV’, indicating services for both male and female victims.¹⁴¹ However, as will be presented, it is often the case that women represent the overwhelming majority of beneficiaries, mirroring the identified frames. For instance, in their work with ex-combatants of the LRA, in 2016-2017, GRG worked directly with 175 victims of CRSV, of which 82% were female.¹⁴² Additionally, since 2005, JRP has engaged victims in a number of activities including documentation, economic empowerment and reintegration of mothers and CBW (JRP 2018), primarily through WAN.¹⁴³ Of the 900 beneficiaries¹⁴⁴ actively engaged, an overwhelming majority are female victims of CRSV, with only

¹⁴⁰ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 17. 11/04/2018.

¹⁴¹ Note: See Annex 3 for a summary of projects offered by each CSO.

¹⁴² Author’s Interview with GRG1. Participant number 4. 17/04/2018.

Note: Services offered included counselling and psychological support, engaging in community sensitisation and livelihood projects.

¹⁴³ Note: The primary mobilising mechanism through which JRP engages victims is through WAN, a semi-autonomous body of JRP of over 900 members that seeks to advocate for justice, acknowledgement and accountability for sexual- and gender-based violations inflicted upon survivors during the conflict in northern Uganda (JRP WAN 2018).

¹⁴⁴ Note: Not all members of WAN are direct victims of CRSV. Community members, child mothers and victims of other conflict-related violations are welcomed into the forum to help with broader sensitisation on certain topics, strengthen community dynamics and increase the benefits of the projects for the communities in which they operate.

five recognised male victims of CRSV.¹⁴⁵ It was noted that “JRP had observed that most interventions, including the WAN, explicitly targeted women and girls, since they disproportionately suffered from conflict-SGBV with minimal engagement of men and boys in redress for the gendered conflict experiences” (2017b, 6).¹⁴⁶ As indicated, male victims, more often than not, represent a small percentage of the response beneficiaries. In accordance with the discourse to action process assumed by this thesis, minimal active inclusion of male victims suggests low levels of presence of this victim group within the discourse that feeds the action.

In evaluation of responses, the influence of prognostic framings became apparent. Notably, in the child reintegration project run collaboratively by JRP and WAN, tracing the paternal family of CBW and conducting reunions focuses almost solely on the needs of female victims and CBW (JRP Reintegration 2018). I would like to emphasise that providing services tailored to female victims over male should not be seen in a wholly negative light, as differences in gender mean different CRSV experiences and needs. However, when one male victim reflected upon his encounter with CRSV responses, he explained that ‘men are just called to help with the women’s groups, but they are not often the focus of the support being offered.’¹⁴⁷ This statement indicates that often the needs of female victims and children are prioritised, with male victims playing a role but not necessarily as targeted beneficiaries.

As aforementioned, there are CSOs within the region that have sought to change narratives concerning CRSV.¹⁴⁸ RLP’s place as a leading contestator and signifier of male-friendly narratives is also reflected in the services offered, of which most are distinctly available to male and female victims. JRP, for example, has also increased direct interaction with male victims of CRSV in a number of ways. Firstly, the substantial increase in size of the WAN network has brought with it increased membership of male victims.¹⁴⁹ Whilst attending group set-up meetings, it was brought to my attention that the criteria put forward by JRP concerning proportions were that in each new group it was expected that there would be 25 female members and at least 5 male members.¹⁵⁰ Although the criteria for membership branches further than CRSV victims, it was expected that having these proportions would encourage male victims. Additionally, a current research project led by JRP works specifically with male former LRA soldiers, seeking to understand the experiences of male fighters whilst in the bush and how being a father in captivity shaped their experiences and views of war.¹⁵¹ Although not all research participants identify as CRSV victims, it provides space for men to understand what CRSV is and how they could be helped, while also increasing awareness on a local

¹⁴⁵ Author’s Interview with JRP4/WAN. Participant number 11. 24/05/2018.

¹⁴⁶ Note: The report was published following a consultative dialogue between JRP, its partners and stakeholders concerning gender equality in prevention and responses to SGBV.

¹⁴⁷ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 17. 11/04/2018.

¹⁴⁸ Note: See Chapter 3 for full discussion on the role of RLP in narrative transformation.

¹⁴⁹ Author’s Interview with JRP4/WAN. Participant number 11. 24/05/2018.

¹⁵⁰ Field note, Gulu, Pader and Lira district. 02/03/2018 – 20-05-2018.

¹⁵¹ Note: The project itself has not yet been publicised and for this reason the name of the project is withheld.

and international level. As presented in the previous chapter, transformations in narratives and action are influenced by external influential audiences. Therefore, although increased engagement with male victims reflects narrative change, considering the violence finished over ten years ago in the region, this transformation is arguably actively decelerated for reasons previously touched upon.¹⁵² In conversation with a JRP representative concerning unequal responses offered to victims, the shockingly honest response made me wonder what future lies ahead for male victims – ‘no, it is not equal at all and I don’t think it can change much.’¹⁵³ This left me questioning what the impact of unequal treatment has been on male victims and, consequently, if the narratives were to continue the way they are, what consequences would face male victims in northern Uganda continue.

5.2 The consequences on the ground for male victims

Having reflected on the proliferation of narratives in CRSV responses, I will now discuss the noticeable impacts on male victims. As highlighted by many respondents, male victims feel like they have been left out due to focuses on women. It was expressed that they see female survivors talking about their experiences and benefiting in numerous ways, and start to reflect on their own situation and question, not only ‘where do we fall in this category?’¹⁵⁴ but also, ‘what have we done and how do people view us?’¹⁵⁵ Reports published by JRP argued that lack of focus and involvement of male victims has led to resentment by men and even hostility towards female beneficiaries of post-conflict programmes, which in turn has contributed to their sustained victimisation (JRP 2017a, 6). An RLP representative supported this conclusion in outlining how in initial engagement with female survivors, strained relationships between men and women were evident.¹⁵⁶ Identifying a trend between frustration and extended victimisation of female victims by male victims or men in general is beyond the scope of this research. However, one male victim explained that committing domestic violence due to frustration would depend on one’s personality: ‘as a victim who has suffered, if something comes and only the wife benefits, there is no need for him to be jealous [...] because the NGOs choose who they support [...] he has no reason to be negative and talk against his wife.’¹⁵⁷ Notably, ARLPI representative explained that after the widespread women empowerment interventions implemented in IDP camps, there was a noticeable increase in incidences of men being mistreated, beaten or sexually violated by women in the community.¹⁵⁸ A representative of WAN noticed that it took time for women to not fight men due to their perception of men as perpetrators.¹⁵⁹ In light of

¹⁵² Note: See section 4.3 for elaborated evaluation on audience effects.

¹⁵³ Author’s Interview with JRP2. Participant number 9. 22/05/2018.

¹⁵⁴ Author’s Interview with JRP3. Participant number 10. 23/05/2018

¹⁵⁵ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 17. 11/04/2018.

¹⁵⁶ Author’s Interview with RLP1. Participant number 1. 14/03/2018.

¹⁵⁷ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 18. 23/04/2018.

¹⁵⁸ Author’s Interview with ARLPI1. Participant number 7. 18/04/2018.

¹⁵⁹ Author’s Interview with JRP4/WAN. Participant number 11. 24/05/2018.

these reflections, what was raised by a number of respondents was that if a platform were to be given, not only would more male victims open up and been viable for support,¹⁶⁰ but it would also help women to understand the challenges that men went through: ‘because if you don’t share then people don’t know what you’ve been through and that is why a lot of the men are left out.’¹⁶¹ Therefore, there are implications for male victims that lie very much in attempting to understand their own identity and how they should interact with others around them. Concurrently, without contesting frames, female victims also fall into patterns of knowledge construction and cannot understand the plight of male victims despite similarities in experiences. Additionally, it was expressed by various CSO representatives that the most basic needs of male victims are simply not being addressed. An RLP representative outlined that: ‘we have worked with some men who lived with, for instance, a rotting anus for 21 years, [...] some of them even ex-communicated themselves from their family, constructing a home deep in the bush.’¹⁶² Therefore, medical and psychological challenges continue to confront many male victims for years. When asked if there was still a need for CRSV perpetrated against men to be addressed in northern Uganda, a representative of RLP agreed with vigour.¹⁶³

An important aspect addressed was the role that CSOs play in upholding trends of support that tend to leave male victims out:

I think it is upon the civil society to demonstrate that there is a problem, that there is a need, [...] leaving it unchallenged, will mean we are validating that kind of violation, because then we will all become like bystanders. We can’t do something, we are just watching, we are just hearing. And for how long are we going to be bystanders?¹⁶⁴

As noted multiple times throughout this thesis, the recognised power in discourse means that words can imprison male victims in a life bound by labels and characteristics assigned or not assigned. Societal knowledge created from emphasised discourses means that not only do responses fail to address many needs of male victims, but maintenance of the identified frames limits the recognition male victims will receive and feeds into already dominant discursive dimensions regarding stigma and taboo. Continuation of narratives that exclude men will arguably leave them asking: ‘will people accept? Will people acknowledge that I am telling the truth?’¹⁶⁵

To summarise, this chapter has highlighted the observable proliferation of identified framing features within responses available for victims of CRSV across the northern region. Observable trends indicate

¹⁶⁰ Author’s Interview with male victim. Participant number 18. 23/04/2018.

¹⁶¹ Focus Group number 4. 27/04/2018.

¹⁶² Author’s Interview with RLP1. Participant number 1. 14/03/2018.

¹⁶³ Author’s Interview with RLP1. Participant number 1. 14/03/2018.

¹⁶⁴ Author’s Interview with RLP1. Participant number 1. 14/03/2018.

¹⁶⁵ Author’s Interview with RLP1. Participant number 1. 14/03/2018

low interaction with male victims and high rates of tailored responses to female victims' needs. Increasing direct interaction with male victims reflects slow narrative transformation. However, slow increases reiterate the constraints surrounding CSOs' narratives regarding CRSV. As indicated, not only are necessary social and medical needs often bypassed for male victims, but action feeds into maintenance of frames and broader discourses concerning CRSV in the region. Overall, observing from a Foucauldian perspective allowed me to observe the situation in two manners. Firstly, the continual processing of the already dominant discourse visible in narratives will uphold the societal understandings of what the problem is, who the victims and perpetrators are and how to respond. On the other hand, trends of knowledge construction can be altered, as was presented in discursive antagonism offered by RLP and the influence upon national and international audiences. Therefore, a glimmer of hope stands for male victims: words do have power, future discursive representation of CRSV is changing and the power is available to bring them to the forefront.

Chapter 6:

Discussion and Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have explored the discourse to action process surrounding CRSV responses in northern Uganda, through an adapted frame analysis lens, taking foundation from Benford and Snow's (2000) 'core framing tasks.' By analysing framing features observable within narratives employed by CSOs, I have indicated that simplified portrayals exclude male victims from dominant understandings of CRSV, and consequently leave many of their needs unaddressed. Firstly, I will address the sub-questions which this thesis sought to answer. Accumulation of these sub-questions provide an answer to the main research question, which asked: *How have simple narratives employed by civil society organisations in northern Uganda mobilised action taken to address conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated against men since 2006?* Consequently, I will outline the significance of my findings, highlighting how they helped me to answer my core research question. Thirdly, I will discuss the contribution provided by this thesis to advancing theory. Lastly, I will propose areas of focus for adaption of practices and further research.

Concerning the first sub-question, my research indicated that prominent diagnostic features emphasised female victimisation and male perpetration. Finding foundation in these, the prognostic features indicated that the appropriate solution should revolve around addressing the needs of female victims and CBW.

Referring to narrative transformations since 2006, as asked in the second sub-question, my findings highlighted increasing recognition by CSOs of the existence of male victims. Contested processes concerning the framing of CRSV amongst CSOs in northern Uganda has been led by RLP, who offer differing diagnostic and prognostic claims that give male victims a more equal platform. Due to the intertwined activity of CSOs, contesting frames have made an impact discursively and in actions locally and globally.

To answer the third sub-question, I evaluated elements of frame resonance as offered by Benford and Snow (2000), from the perspective of key audiences. Different conclusions concerning resonance were suggested, however, clear trends indicated differences between victims and more inter-related civil society and international actors. Most notably, the experiences of female and male victims went past the boundaries of the constructed frames and assumed identities. This discrepancy allowed for the question to arise whether victims, especially male victims, have the ability to influence CRSV narrative construction to align more with their experiences.

The fourth sub-question sought to understand the dynamic processes of discursive construction by looking at how audiences influence frame construction. Building upon the recognition that audiences play signifying roles, the findings emphasised the dynamic relationships between different actors fuelled by their interests. A main argument that arose was that in seeking to achieve

their objectives, CSOs often have to fulfil other interests that allow them to continue their work – interests that lay in the hands of international and national audiences. Therefore, it is argued that this cycle has led to framing that moulds to the shape of the powerful actors’ interests at the expense of those on the ground.

With reference to the fifth sub-question, my findings indicated that there are evident proliferations of the diagnostic and prognostic framing features in the responses led by CSOs. Most notably, low engagement with male victims and the presence numerous tailored responses to the needs of female victims emphasise the discourse to action process. However, as highlighted, there are notable changes regarding responses offered by NGOs which bring light to the plight of male victims. Nevertheless, the slow increase in response to male victims since 2006 indicates discursive constraints that help in the maintenance of simplified narratives.

Thus, in seeking to answer the fifth sub-question, I presented the societal, medical and psychological consequences of the narratives and consequent action. As raised, many men feel isolated and start to question their experiences. It was also noted that the narratives and action produced maintain an unawareness amongst female victims. Questioning the role of CSOs in upholding narratives that enable specific responses led me to argue that due to the recognition of discourse construction impacting societal knowledge construction, without contesting frames the knowledge of CRSV that excludes men will continue to be reproduced.

Therefore, I conclude that simplified narratives employed by CSOs have led to exclusion of male victims in northern Uganda both discursively and materially. Frames concerning CRSV overshadow reality of male victimisation, leading to disproportional mobilised responses that notably have negative consequences. To simply answer my research question, through emphasis of particular features – female victimisation, male perpetration and overwhelming need to address the needs of women – simple narratives employed by CSOs in northern Uganda concerning CRSV have actually, in many ways, failed to mobilise action towards male victims. CRSV meaning-construction reflects a web of dynamic interactions between various actors and audiences. The prominent framing features resonate on various levels with audiences that hold the most ‘power’- power found in their ability to either fulfil essential interests of CSOs or deter CSOs – allowing for maintenance of narratives. Therefore, this thesis provides a template for assessing the employment of narratives, highlighting by who they are maintained, how and for what aims.

6.1 Theoretical insight

This thesis aimed to contribute to theory by providing a case-study in which well-recognised social movement analytical concepts of ‘collective action frames’ and ‘core framing tasks,’ as adopted from Benford and Snow’s (2000) conceptual toolkit, are applied to a non-social movement setting. This

research indicates an applicability of the analytical frame for utilisation in analysing other mobilisation efforts than just social movements. Therefore, I propose that mobilisation of collective action to address an issue through discursive practices is not unique to social movements. Sitting within the broader understandings of the relationship between power and knowledge, combination of the analytical concepts ‘simple narratives,’ as presented by Autesserre (2012), and ‘core framing tasks’ offered an opportunity to delve deeper than prior academic work on narrative utilisation in post-conflict settings. Building upon the recommendations set out by Autesserre (2012), observing the process from meaning-construction to action enables one to understand how simplified narratives trickle down to impact the lives of those spoken about. Extended focus upon the dynamic interactions between audiences and signifying actors has added to existing vague theoretical assumptions concerning ‘audience effects.’ Framing should not be seen solely as the process for mobilising action but should be analysed as tool for serving a number of interwoven interests, some of which lay independent to CRSV.

6.2 Recommendations

This research not only presents an important step in expanding knowledge on male victims of CRSV, especially concerning life post-violation, but also provides unique insight for evaluative purposes. The findings presented emphasise the consequences of simplifying conflict complexities. In a society in which both men and women were victims of CRSV, it is essential to understand how images created have micro-level impact. In northern Uganda, CSOs stand as key distributors of services for redressing conflict violations. Therefore, ignoring their role in shaping experiences of victims could be detrimental for future post-conflict efforts. In light of the conclusions drawn, I propose that to reduce the exclusion of male victims of CRSV, from not only discursive recognition but tangible responses, the features offered in narratives maintained should seek to provide male victims with an equal platform. For achievement of this, it would be beneficial for CSOs to seek to understand interpretations of frames by victims themselves and provide them with a voice. Additionally, as CSOs become increasingly relied upon for peacebuilding endeavours, ensuring that research provides an informed but critical observation of CSOs’ work will help avoid replication of detrimental practices. Furthermore, having brought attention to the dynamic discursive interactions concerning CRSV, influential audiences (international community, donors, government) should acknowledge their signifying role.

As recognised in my methodology, due to practical limitations, the ability to generalise is limited. During fieldwork, it was difficult to mobilise victims of perpetrations conducted by parties other than the LRA and male victims in general. Therefore, to gain deeper insight into frame interpretations and micro-level impacts, further research should seek to engage with more victims.

Whilst I recognise the difficulties involved, engaging with more male victims would help in strengthening quantitative estimations of the phenomenon, whilst simultaneously extending their voice in academic and societal settings. Furthermore, this research was limited somewhat through engagement mostly with NGOs as the chosen CSOs. Therefore, to increase scope, it would be beneficial to observe the discursive practices of more categories of CSOs in the area. Increasing time scope of research could aid in addressing identification of other victims, observing additional CSOs and strengthening understanding of transformations of narratives overtime.

Due to time constraints and funding limitations, I conducted fieldwork in only three districts of the northern region. Although these districts were widely affected during the war, it is important to consider other districts in northern Uganda. Considering the majority of CSOs are based in Gulu Town, and many are representative of international actors, it would be interesting to analyse the responses and mobilisation of more local CSOs working in less internationally influenced areas. It would also provide interesting insight to compare this case with other post-conflict settings in which CRSV responses are led by CSOs. This would allow for more generalised information concerning responses to CRSV, especially regarding male victims.

6.3 Final note

Often male victims are left to be an afterthought when discussing CRSV – the forgotten victim. In attempting to deal with life after the violation, male victims' gender has led them to be assigned characteristics and attributions which often leave them excluded from many responses that could aid in alleviating post-violation challenges. CSOs, as the leading providers of CRSV services, are arguably in a critical position with the power to shape the stories that reflect the CRSV situation, including who requires attention and who does not. Therefore, it is my hope that case studies like this allow for not only the plight of male victims to be recognised but for influential actors to acknowledge the impact their actions have on those who have already suffered.

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Annex 1: Overview of Interviews

Categories of respondents:

1. Civil society organisation representatives
2. Female victims of conflict-related sexual violence
3. Male victims of conflict related sexual violence
4. Other interview respondents

NGO and expert interview respondents				
Interview Number	Code	Organisation	Location	Date
1	RLP1	Refugee Law Project (RLP)	Gulu town	14/03/2018
2	VIVO1	Vivo Gulu Outpatient Clinic (Vivo International)	Gulu town	28/03/2018
3	RLP2	Refugee Law Project (RLP)	Gulu town	11/04/2018
4	GRG1	Grassroots Group (GRG)	Gulu town	17/042018
5	GRG 2	Grassroots Group (GRG)	Gulu town	17/042018
6	GRG3	Grassroots Group (GRG)	Gulu town	17/042018
7	ARLPI1	Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI)	Gulu town	18/04/2018
8	JRP1	Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP)	Gulu town	07/05/2018
9	JRP2	Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP)	Gulu town	22/05/2018
10	JRP3	Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP)	Gulu town	23/05/2018
11	JRP4/WAN	Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) Women's Advocacy Network (WAN)	Gulu town	24/05/2018

Female victims of CRSV			
Interview Number	Context	District	Date
12	WAN member	Gulu	04/04/2018
13	WAN member	Pader	06/04/2018
14	WAN member (Acholi Bur)	Pader	23/03/2018
15	Victim of UPDF	Gulu	17/05/2018

Male victims of CSRV			
Interview Number	Context	District	Date
16	Formerly abducted by LRA	Gulu	06/04/2018
17	Formerly abducted by LRA	Gulu	11/042018
18	Formerly abducted by LRA	Pader	23/04/2018
19	Victim of UPDF	Gulu	17/05/2018
20	Victim of UPDF	Gulu	17/05/2018

Other interview respondents			
Interview Number	Context	District	Date
21	Male member of WAN group and victim of UPDF violence	Pader	23/04/2018
22	Male victim of UPDF violence	Gulu	17/05/2018
23	Female victim of UPDF violence	Gulu	17/05/2018

Annex 2: Overview of Focus Groups

Focus Groups				
Focus Group Number	Gender of Participants	Number of Participants	Location	Date
1	Female victims of CRSV	4	Pader	24/04/2018
2	Male victims of CRSV	3	Gulu	25/04/2018
3	Female victims of CRSV	4	Gulu	26/04/2018
4	Female victims of CRSV	2	Gulu	27/04/2018
5	Female victims of CRSV	16	Lira	10/05/2018

Annex 3: Summary of Projects Offered by CSOs regarding CRSV in northern Uganda

This summary table provides an overview of the publicised projects conducted by the chosen CSOs. For some of the projects, only limited information is known e.g. Not all projects specifically targeted CRSV victims, however, the targeted beneficiaries are indicated in the furthest right column of the table. In creating this summary, it is recognised that the chosen CSOs may have conducted more projects than noted in this table.

CRSV Response Projects				
CSO	Projects/ Programmes	Description	Project Period	Target Beneficiaries
Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP)	Documentation	Documenting of the experiences of victims of LRA captivity.	2005 – 2015	Victims of CRSV
	Community Theatre	Engage local communities in telling their stories through the mode of theatre.	Before 2015	Conflict-affected communities
	Story-telling	Providing a platform for victims to share their experiences of conflict	Before 2015	Conflict-affected communities
	Livelihood	Supporting WAN groups in livelihood projects with the aim of economically empowering beneficiaries	2015 – present	WAN members
	Child reintegration	Aiding mothers of CBW in tracing the paternal family. Family reunions are used as a way of increasing reconciliation and healing amongst communities.	2016 – 2018	WAN members (female victims of CRSV and CBW)
	Community sensitization regarding CRSV	Workshops and dialogues held with community members and local cultural/political actors concerning issues relating to CRSV	2006-2018	Conflict-affected communities
	http://www.justiceandreconciliation.org			
Refugee Law Project (RLP)	Support groups	Providing support groups, where victims can come together and offer peer support and share experiences	Unknown – present	Victims of CRSV
	Psychological and trauma counselling		Unknown – present	Victims of CRSV
	Legal support	RLP will offer legal support in a number of instances	Unknown – present	Victims of CRSV
	Documentation	Documenting of the experiences of victims of LRA captivity.	Unknown – present	Victims of CRSV

	Media Advocacy (in Kampala)	Creating different forms of media to inform audiences about CRSV perpetrated against men and to increase awareness	Since 2011	Male refugee victims of CRSV
	Medical Referrals	Providing medical services and referring to appropriate services	Unknown – present	Victims of CRSV
	https://www.refugeelawproject.org			
Grassroots Group (GRG)	Livelihood Projects	Support groups to develop a range of livelihood projects to improve their household income	2007 – present	LRA Returnees
	Reconciliation	Achieved through collaborative livelihood projects and through direct interventions	2007 – present	LRA Returnees
	Counselling and Psychological Support	Works with groups to design appropriate response methodologies, including group therapy and one-on-one counselling	2007 – present	LRA Returnees
	http://grassrootsgroup.org			
Vivo International	PTSD Therapy	Treat clients who have PTSD with Narrative Exposure Therapy	2006 – present	Victim of conflict suffering from PTSD (many LRA returnees)
	Psychological support	Offered a wide-range of psychological support	2011- 2012	Female and Child Victims of CRSV
	https://www.vivo.org/en/uganda/			
Women’s Advocacy Network (WAN)	Advocacy for rights of CRSV victims	Members took a petition to the Ugandan Parliament to advocate for increased acknowledgement concerning the rights of victims of CRSV/GBV, particularly women and girls	2014	WAN members
	Many of the activities than WAN run are done in collaboration with JRP. Therefore, please see above for a list of activities run through JRP.			
	http://www.justiceandreconciliation.org/initiatives/womens-advocacy-network/			
Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI)	Since 1997, ARLPI have been actively seeking to ensure peace across northern Uganda. During their earlier years, they worked at the forefront of the conflict, offering support in IDP camps and attempting to bring together religious leaders across the region to advocate for peace and help further peace discussions. They have worked with a range of communities and victim groups over the years, often providing support to other CSOs in the region.			
	http://www.arlpi.org			