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# Upbringing in a context of prolonged collective violence

A study among caregivers in Kitgum District,  
Northern Uganda

**Leen De Nutte**

***PhD student Ghent University & Board representative CCVS-Uganda***

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# Overview

1. PhD research
2. Preliminary results
3. Conclusion



# PhD research



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# Research question and design

- January 2014 – December 2017
- Central research question:
  - *How do caregivers experience the upbringing of their children in the context of (past) collective violence?*
- Exploratory, qualitative research design

# Research context

- Collective violence resulting out of the armed conflict between LRA and GoU
- Kitgum District, Northern Uganda

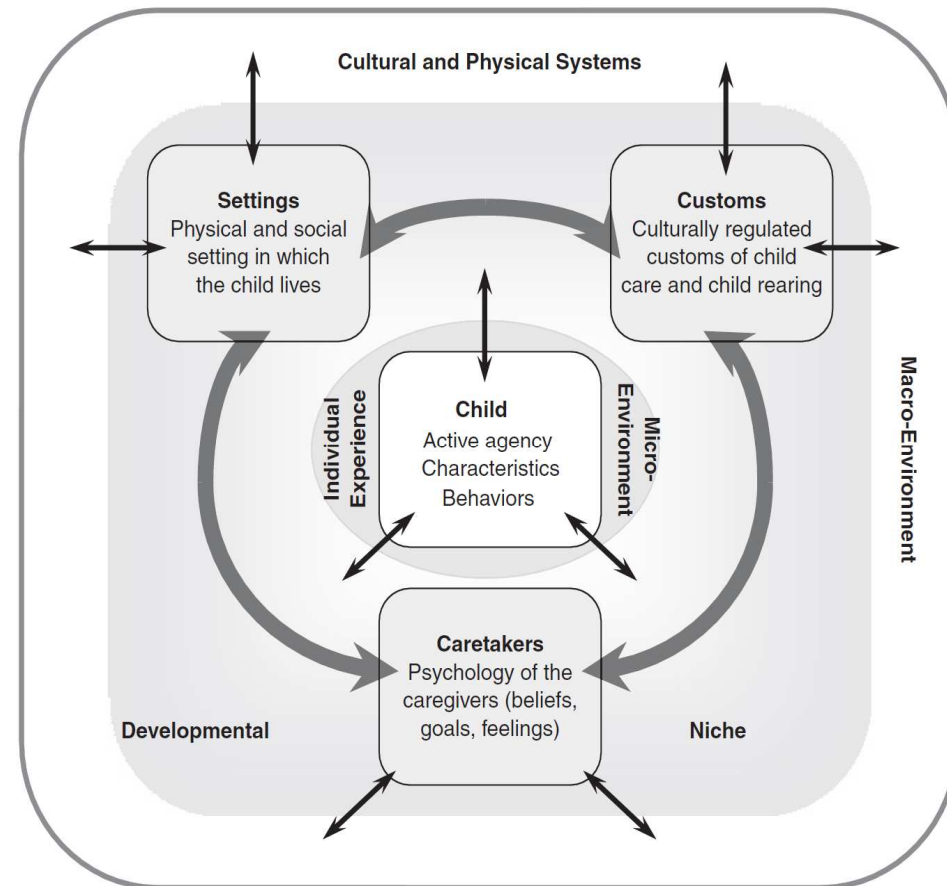


# Theoretical framework

- Ecological premises
  - *Upbringing as an adaptive process*
- Culture as a central component influencing upbringing
  - *Divergent definitions and loci*
    - E.g. culture = shared norms, values, ideas and assumptions regarding ways of being, thinking and doing
  - *Dynamic perspective → Acknowledgement of variability*

# Developmental niche

- Charles M. Super & Sara Harkness
- 3 subsystems:
  - *Physical and social settings*
  - *Upbringing practices*
  - *Upbringing beliefs*



# Data collection

## PRE-STUDY

- Interviews with adolescents attending services from/at the Gulu Mental Health Unit (n=20)

## STUDY 1

- Pilot focus group (n=1) and interviews (n=6) with elders
- Focus groups (n=6) and recurrent interviews (n=6) with **elders**

## STUDY 2

- Pilot interviews with girl mothers (n=3) and former LRA commanders (n=3)
- Recurrent interviews with **mothers** (n=7) and **fathers** (n=4) in **LRA captivity**

## STUDY 3

- Pilot interviews with former internally displaced persons (n=9)
- Recurrent interviews with **former internally displaced persons** (n=5)

## STUDY 4

- Interviews with **social workers** (n=8)

## VALIDATION

- Formal and informal feedback sessions at closure of every fieldwork
- Intra-case and inter-case member checks with mothers (n=7) and fathers (n=4) in LRA captivity
- Focus groups with various community stakeholders



# Preliminary results



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# (1) Influence of pre-war life

- Impact on perception and “evaluation” of upbringing during and after collective violence
- Idealized narrative on pre-war “traditional” upbringing
  - *E.g. communal way of upbringing, more effort put into upbringing, respect for elders and clan, strong Acholi culture, etc.*
- Different perceived appreciation of pre-war upbringing among older and younger generations

## (2) Agency

- Active agents ↔ Passive victims
- E.g. upbringing in captivity
  - *Individual choice of caregivers as central in balance between disclosure and silencing experiences towards children and others nowadays*
- E.g. upbringing in encampment
  - *Recreation of home during and after encampment*

## (3a) Framed within context

- Upbringing connected to possibilities and restrictions of the context
  - *Cf. adaptability of upbringing*
- E.g. upbringing in captivity
  - *Agency shaped by age, stigmatization, resources, etc.*
  - *Teaching “bad” lessons to the child*
- E.g. upbringing in encampment
  - *Difficult to uphold certain upbringing practices*

## (3b) Importance of setting

- Physical and social setting
- Important influence on practices and beliefs of upbringing
- E.g. upbringing in encampment
  - *Continuities (e.g. more distant spatial connections – memories, stories, practices) and discontinuities (e.g. new spatial connections) between place of the camp and upbringing of children*

# Conclusion

# Upbringing in transformation

- Upbringing at intersection of (past) collective violence and other processes
  - *E.g. technology, modernization, influence of other ideas and practices (e.g. “westernization”)*
  - *Present context ≠ past context*
- Upbringing in social transformation and flux
  - ➔ Open-ended discussion on settings, practices and beliefs of upbringing
    - *Enhancing uncertainty and doubt*
    - *Acknowledgement of variability and contextualization*



Leen De Nutte

PhD student, Ghent University  
& Board Representative CCVS-Uganda

CONTACT INFORMATION



[leen.denutte@ugent.be](mailto:leen.denutte@ugent.be)



+256 782 642 205



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[www.centreforchildren.be](http://www.centreforchildren.be)



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