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**CONDUCTING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN COUNTRIES AT WAR:  
IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT FACTORS IN A STUDY OF  
GIRLS IN ARMED GROUPS**

by

LORI HENINGER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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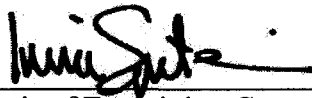
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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Adviser: Professor Irwin Epstein

This study seeks to describe the qualitative research methodology employed in the study entitled “The Voices of Girl Child Soldiers,” to contrast it with the qualitative research literature in social work, and to consider it in the light of reflective theory. Put simply, it is a study of a study. Utilizing a comparative case study approach it draws on research team experiences in the four countries that served as sites in the original study (N=4). In total, 15 interviews were conducted with team members in all four countries and with the Principal Investigator of the original study. Thirteen of the interviews took place in person and in country, two were telephone interviews. Interview guides for the current study were developed from a review of the literature on qualitative research methodology and from notes and experiences derived from the original study. Notes on the process of “dialogues on methodology” conducted with research team members during the original study, recorded personal reflections during and after the dialogues, materials for the dialogues, and the final reports of the original study were reviewed for the current study.

Despite exploration of social work and social science literature on qualitative methodology, it did not offer a fully effective way to implement a flexible and culturally nuanced approach to research with children in situations of violent conflict. To determine the gaps in the qualitative methodologies utilized in the research literature pertaining to children in situations of violent conflict, the specifics of the methodology of the girl soldier study were contrasted with existing literature, and considered through the lens of reflective theory.

Data analysis indicated an intersection between the categories of implementation of the method of research and the impacts of the implementation of the study on both the research team members and the girls they interviewed. Reflective theory provided a way to understand the changes that occurred in the original study, both methodological and individual. This intersection generated a framework for study design, implementation, and follow-up that may be useful in qualitative researchers in future cross-cultural studies of children in situations of violent conflict.

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The second group of people to whom I am indebted are the girls who told their stories for the original study, “The Voices of Girl Child Soldiers.” Their resilience and ability to maintain hope for the future is astonishing, and they will inspire me for the rest of my life.

This dissertation, truly, would not have happened without the unwavering support of Dr. Irwin Epstein, and without the vision of Dr. Von Keairns. Von gently prodded me to put away my first proposal and to focus on assessing the qualitative methodology used in the study, *The Voices of Girl Child Soldiers*. Her advice has provided for a way to open for me that I would never have expected. Irwin, also gently, helped me through the numerous iterations of the manuscript; he was never too busy to re-read and comment, and worked diligently and steadfastly with me to bring this study to fruition. It would be impossible for me to express enough gratitude to both.

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My husband, Jack Patterson, was my role model for doctoral work. He supported me during this long process and made me believe that I could do it. I love

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## Contents

List of illustrations, charts, diagrams, etc. ....	xi
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
“Demobilization and Reintegration Needs of Girls Who Have Participated in Armed Conflict”: The Initial Study .....	2
<b>CHAPTER 2: HISTORY/CONTEXT</b> .....	4
Social Work Research.....	4
Social Work Practice and Education.....	5
International Social Work Organizations.....	8
Social Work Research and the Internal Review Board Movement .....	10
Socio-economic and Political History .....	12
The Changing World: Ending of the Cold War and the Movement toward Intra- national Conflict.....	14
The Stages of Conflict .....	22
The Causes and Consequences of Conflict.....	24
The Need for Information Gathering for Appropriate, Effective Intervention.....	40
<b>CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b> .....	43
Introduction.....	43
Hidden Populations.....	43
Research with Abused Children/Youth or Children/Youth Subjected to Violence	63
Domestic Violence and Sexual Harassment .....	72
Cultural Context and Research .....	79
Journalism in Situations of Violent Conflict .....	86
Common Themes in the Literature Review .....	93
<b>CHAPTER 4: GOALS AND INTELLECTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY</b> .....	103
Definitions of Key Terms .....	112
<b>CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY</b> .....	114
Study Design.....	117
Data Collection .....	121
Data Recording .....	122
Data Analysis.....	122
Overview of Data Analysis.....	1255
<b>CHAPTER 6: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ORIGINAL STUDY</b> .....	127
Conceptual Starting Point .....	127
Conceptual Framework, the Literature and Theory .....	130
Definitions.....	132
Sampling and Access .....	138
Dialogue on Methodology .....	154
Guide Development .....	173
Structures of the Interviews .....	176
Physical Setting of the Interviews.....	211
Building Trust in the Interviewing Relationship .....	222

Data Preparation.....	245
Technology .....	252
Implementation Elements of the Study: Conclusions.....	254
<b>CHAPTER 7: IMPACT OF THE STUDY IMPLEMENTATION ON THE</b>	
<b>GIRLS .....</b>	<b>260</b>
Physical Safety.....	2611
Girls and Retraumatization .....	2644
Confidentiality and Informed Consent.....	269
Impact of Implementation Concerns for Girls not Cited in the Literature .....	272
Unanticipated Personal Outcomes for the Girls.....	2811
Conclusions.....	283
Physical Safety.....	283
Retraumatization of the Girls.....	284
Confidentiality .....	284
Expectations.....	285
Gifts.....	2866
Unanticipated Personal Outcomes for the Girls.....	2877
<b>CHAPTER 8: IMPACT OF THE STUDY IMPLEMENTATION ON THE</b>	
<b>RESEARCH TEAMS .....</b>	<b>288</b>
Safety for the Interviewers.....	289
Confidentiality .....	295
Retraumatization of the Girls.....	296
Secondary Traumatization .....	300
Use of Information/Who Benefits from the Research?.....	308
Reciprocity.....	315
The Impact of Expectations on Team Members .....	319
Gifts.....	319
Challenges to Confidentiality .....	329
Unanticipated Personal Outcomes for the Interviewers.....	330
Conclusion .....	335
Safety .....	335
Confidentiality .....	336
Retraumatization of the Girls.....	336
Secondary Traumatization .....	337
Use of Information/Who Benefits from Research .....	338
Reciprocity.....	338
Expectations.....	339
Gifts.....	339
Follow-up.....	340
Dilemmas of Confidentiality.....	340
Unanticipated Personal Outcomes for the Interviewers.....	340
<b>CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>344</b>
Overview.....	344
Gifts.....	350
Future Directions for Research with Similar Populations .....	352
Appendix I .....	356
THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF FEMALE CHILD SOLDIERS.....	356
Appendixes II, III, IV.....	383

Research in Countries at War: Studying the implementation of a qualitative study to determine guidelines for methodology development.....	383
Appendix V .....	390
Consent Form.....	390
Appendix VI.....	391
AGENDA: DIALOGUE ON METHODOLOGY GIRLS IN ZONES OF CONFLICT PROJECT .....	391
Bibliography .....	393

## List of Figures

Figure 1	Matrix to Assess the Impact of Implementation in Studies with Children in Situations of Violent Conflict.....	347
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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation project seeks to describe and compare the use of qualitative research methodology in a study of girls in armed groups in countries at war in relation to congruent themes in Social Work research literature. Four countries in three geographic regions will be included in a comparative case study of a qualitative research project that focused on the demobilization and reintegration needs of adolescent women who have participated (voluntarily or involuntarily) in armed groups.

This introduction will set the stage for a “study of studies”: description of each initial study is contextualized by a historical exploration of three areas: social work research; the growing practice of international social work; and an overview of the changed political, economic, and social structures which impact violent conflict. Because there has been little written on research methods with children in situations of war, a review of literatures on research methods with hidden populations, research with abused children/youth or children/youth subjected to violence, victims of partner violence and sexual harassment, research and culture, and the role of journalists in war situations is presented. After a review of the literature, the theoretical foundations of the study will be discussed, followed by the outline and description of the study’s methodology. Finally, the data will be presented and analyzed and conclusions will be drawn.

## **“Demobilization and Reintegration Needs of Girls Who Have Participated in Armed Conflict”: The Initial Study**

In 2001, the Quaker United Nations Office was approached by the Norwegian Government to determine whether staff of that office was interested in conducting research on the demobilization and reintegration needs of adolescent girls who had participated in armed conflict. This was to be the first study of its kind. Studies had been conducted on the demobilization and reintegration needs of young men, but the needs of women were seen heuristically as differing significantly from men, requiring separate study. The Quaker UN Office, in conjunction with Dr. Yvonne Keairns of the Arsenal Family and Children’s Center, agreed to conduct the research, and a proposal was developed (Appendix I). The study would be qualitative, based on Irving Seidman’s “Interviewing as Qualitative Research” (1998). However, a broader review of the literature on qualitative research in countries involved in violent conflict uncovered little.

Four countries were to be chosen, and interviews with between 6 and 10 women would be conducted. An advisory committee was formed, including people with expertise in child soldiers in-country and globally, and in international research. The advisory committee met in New York in 2000. At that meeting, the research methodology was discussed, and ideas were developed to make the research process as relevant to the people participating as possible so that the data gathered had the greatest heuristic potential. It was decided that the three-interview process described by Seidman would be an effective method for gathering information, and that it was critical to the results of the study to have people working on the ground who were indigenous to the country and/or culture actually conduct the interviews due to the cultural, geographic, political, and linguistic knowledge, and ability to access regions or facilities that

“outsiders” would not have. It was also agreed that instead of bringing local interview teams to New York for “training” it would be better to have one person from the study team go to each of the countries to conduct a “dialogue on methodology” with the on-site data collectors; many of those who would be conducting the actual research had already conducted research in their countries, so had firsthand experience. Data would be collected by the teams, transcribed, translated, cultural context added, and the completed sets would then be sent to the head researcher, Dr. Keairns. The advisory committee was scheduled to meet a second time in September of 2001 to review and approve the final form of the outcome document; however, the events of September 11 forced a cancellation of that meeting, delaying the outcome. This meeting was rescheduled for spring 2002.

The author of this dissertation conducted the dialogues on methodology in the four countries. During the first dialogue on methodology, the question arose, “Will you be coming back after we are finished to debrief with us?” This was not part of the original study design, nor did it arise in the meeting of the advisory committee, but when the same question arose in a subsequent dialogue on methodology, it became clear that there might be a need for such a debriefing. Coupled with the dearth of knowledge on qualitative research methodology in countries in conflict, it was suggested by the head researcher that a debriefing/study be conducted around the methodology. The current study is, as stated previously, a “study of studies,” seeking to uncover the implementation issues and outcomes of a comparative study on girls in armed groups in relation to both the current literature on research. In the course of the dissertation, reflective theory was especially helpful in describing and interpreting what was found.

## CHAPTER 2: HISTORY/CONTEXT

The historical context for understanding this project involves three main components: social work research; the changing nature of social work practice and education; and the socio-economic/political changes that have shaped the world over the past 20 years.

Social work practice and education have historical and contemporary grounding in international concerns. Social work research has more recent concern with international issues and practice, but a long history of rigorous methodology. However, social work practice, education, and research are now operating in a world structure that differs dramatically from 10 years ago. The following sections of this chapter will provide an historical perspective for this study based in social work and the changed world in which social work is practiced.

### Social Work Research

Research in social work has and continues to receive much attention in social work literature and in practice. Schools of social work are required to teach courses in research including qualitative and quantitative methodologies, utilizing either or both in specific studies outside of as well as within practice. Journals such as *Social Work Research*, *Evaluation and Program Planning*, *Research on Social Work Practice*, and *Small Group Research* are dedicated solely to research methods; authors such as Guba, Lincoln, Patton, Epstein, Kirk, Sue, Bogdan, Bilken, Potocky-Tripodi and Tripodi have explored and written

extensive texts dedicated to research in social work, indicating the seriousness and commitment to the studied advancement of knowledge in social work practice. Social work, as a profession has committed itself to the integration of research and practice.

Social work has used the “borrow and apply,” practice as research, research as practice, and the social research and development models to make these connections (Kirk, 1992). Sue and Zane have carefully considered the impact of culture on research methodology (1977). Methodology for topics such as needs assessment, program development, implementation, and evaluation have been developed and described (Patton, 1987; Neuber, 1980; Morris, Taylor Fitz-Gibbon, Freeman, 1987). Research methodology for use with children has been explored and documented, as well as methodology for use with women and hidden populations. Studies have been conducted in areas of the United States where people have been exposed to violence, and methodology has been a point of consideration in those studies (Taylor Gibbs, Bankhead-Greene, 1997). Research has been conducted in social work practice around the world as indicated by the journals *International Social Work* and *The Journal of Social Work Research and Evaluation*, on people who are refugees or internally displaced during or after a conflict (2001), indicating a growing interest in the social work profession in international issues; however, little is written specifically on conducting research from one country to another, particularly during periods of conflict.

### **Social Work Practice and Education**

Social work, as a profession, is changing in its commitment to international practice. The economic, political and socio-cultural structures that predominated for the past 60 plus years are being reshaped and transformed. The speed with which changes are occurring,

given radio, television, computers, Internet, and cellular communications, has grown exponentially. There are changes in the scope, partners and methods of policy-making on the international, national and local levels; decisions made in one region or country may have a direct affect on neighboring countries or regions, affecting the structures, lives and problems of people, cities and nations. Social work, from its origins, has spoken to complex, knotty problems, primarily on a local or national level, but always with an international component. From the beginning, social work addressed concerns of individuals, families, policies, business and culture. In the 1880s, “social workers” were working with migrant and refugee individuals and families in the early days of the settlement house movement. Knowledge of the culture and traditions of those served was essential in helping migrants and refugees make the transition from their former land to the new one. Settlement “social workers” viewed poverty not as an individual fault, but as the problem of a larger system and therefore addressed policy issues. Advocating for and working to create public education and hygiene, public playgrounds, and daycare were some of the ways in which early workers began to change the face of the policy environment. Union organizing was not far behind; the first factory laws in Illinois protecting women and children in the workplace were driven to law by Jane Addams (Shepler, 2000).

Work in the tenements in the late 1800s meant facing unemployment, dire poverty, disease, and death; in 1888, one-third of all babies born in Mulberry Bend, a tenement area in New York City died before their first birthdays. Early social workers struggled for women’s suffrage, with women finally winning the right to vote in 1920 (Huff, 2000).

Today, the problems may differ, but the populations with whom social workers

work are similar: women, children, families, the poor, minorities, migrants and refugees, people suffering from addiction and the aftermath of traumatic life events, those with mental health problems, the homeless, workers. Social workers address conflict, racism, ethnic, and religious difference in schools, community centers, and the courts. Social work fields of practice include clinical work, supervision, policy work, and administration. Social work's educative process includes theories of population or subject area, causality, methodology, and context, and incorporates the practical, first-hand experience of fieldwork. Social work education, at its best, is a holistic, person/issue-in-environment way of considering problems that allows social workers a vast variety of options for intervention in partnership with our "client." The origins of social work and the education, grounded in those origins, would seem to provide an ideal foundation for work outside of and across national borders.

There is a movement growing within the discipline of social work education to expand into the international arena. The University of Pennsylvania, under the direction of Richard Estes, has a Masters program in international social work that focuses on development. In addition, Dr. Estes has created "Praxis," a multi-link website for social workers and others interested in a wide range of international issues and international social work curriculum. Similarly, Columbia University has an MSW program with a focus on international social welfare. Part of its mission statement follows:

"The Mission of Columbia School of Social Work is to prepare students for advanced social work practice and professional leadership; develop knowledge that supports social work practice and education; provide training programs for practicing social workers; enhance the well-being of people by shaping social policies programs, services and resources;

address conditions that undermine human development and affect people adversely, and serve diverse populations locally and globally”

(Columbia University, 2000, p. 1)

Bryn Mawr’s school of social work has an international program as well, as does Howard University’s program in Social Work with Displaced Populations. Monmouth University in New Jersey has an MSW degree titled “Masters in Community and International Development” (Monmouth University, 2000). The Council on Social Work Education houses a webpage entitled “International Social Work Field Instruction,” a guide to schools of social work offering international placements and the location of those placements (2000). Although each has a slightly different focus, all of the foregoing programs are attempting to move the field of social work into the global arena.

In a survey of 300 accredited schools and programs of Social Work in the United States, 83 (27.6 percent) offered international field placements; 48 (16 percent) schools mandated that the placement be created by the student, and 35 (11.6 percent) had institutionally-established placement opportunities. The placements covered the globe, including Canada, Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Australia, Russia, and the Pacific Islands, including New Zealand. The schools surveyed included public state and local colleges and universities, and private secular and religious-based schools. Programs surveyed included both MSW and BSW curriculum (International Commission of the Council on Social Work Education, 1998).

### **International Social Work Organizations**

There are a number of international social work organizations. Some of the best known

are: The International Federation of Social Workers, founded in 1956 (IFSW); the International Council on Social Welfare, founded in 1928 (ICSW); the International Association of Schools of Social Work, also founded in 1928 (IASSW); and the Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development, founded in the 1970s (IUCISD). As is evident from the dates of the foundings, social work has had an international scope since the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, close to the beginning of the founding of the profession. Missions of the organizations include: “[Working] directly at the grass-roots with people in poverty, hardship or distress... [Providing] help for a wide range of people who are poor, ill, disabled, unemployed, frail, or oppressed.” (ICSW, 2000, p. 1); “To promote social development and develop worldwide quality education, training and knowledge for social work practice, social services, and social welfare policies” (IASSW, 2000, p. 1); “[To use a] social development approach to: promote world peace and social justice, fight economic and political oppression, improve access to adequate health care and education, overcome discrimination against women and minorities” (IUCISD, 2000, p. 1); “[To recognize] that social work originates variously from humanitarian, religious, and democratic ideals and philosophies; and that it has universal application to meet human needs arising from personal-societal interactions, and to develop human potential” (IFSW, 2000 p.1). These international organizations have memberships that include more than 80 countries worldwide and represent individuals, universities and local and national Associations of Social Work. All have annual conferences and meetings for social workers, students, academics and others interested in international social work and social policy, and all have websites and publications.

Social work has a historical and current grounding in international concerns.

Social work research is increasingly involved in international investigation with some of the practice and research focusing on the needs and problems of people on individual and policy levels. Increasingly, these problems stem from situations of conflict or war. Refugees, the internally displaced, and people suffering from reactions to traumatic life events can be caused through violent conflict, as well as state, regional, or international economic or political circumstances which have changed significantly since the end of the Cold War. The next section of this chapter provides background for thinking about research and practice in social work, with a focus on the changed political, economic, and social relationships around the world.

### **Social Work Research and the Internal Review Board Movement**

Until the end of World War II, most research was conducted without legal protection for participants. Professional Codes of Ethics provided the guidelines for research; however, after the atrocities of “experiments” in German Concentration Camps, the Nuremberg Code, part of the *Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law* was created. Created in 1947, this was the first international legal mechanism protecting the rights of participants in research (Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law, 1949). In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created. In 1966, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was developed and added to the Declaration; Article 7 states: In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation” (Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences, 2002, p. 9). The next major step in the protection of human participants in studies was the Helsinki Declaration, adopted in June 1964 by the World

Medical Association. The Helsinki Declaration spelled out, in much greater detail, the rights of participants and the limits of researchers. (The World Medical Association, 2000).

In 1966, U.S. Surgeon General William Stewart, after it had come to light that the U.S. government was actively funding research that violated the statutes of the Nuremberg Code and the Helsinki Declaration, created a federal policy that protected participants in studies funded through federal grants. This was the beginning of the Internal Review Board (IRB) movement in the United States (Heath, 2004).

Internal Review Boards were created to scrutinize and approve research projects, ensuring that the research is just, beneficial and respects the people that will participate. They ensure that the benefits of the research outweigh the risks to the participants, that participants are informed of their participation and the risks associated with participation, review informed consent forms and take a particularly close look at research with vulnerable populations (Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics, 2003).

Since the late 1980's, research funded by the United States government was subject to IRB scrutiny and approval. It was recognized that not all institutions would be able to convene formal IRBs, and so in 1991, independent IRBs were created. Independent IRBs are subject to the same laws and regulations as formal IRBs, but do not need to be located within an institution, such as a university or medical center (Heath, 2004).

Since the enactment of federal legislation on the protection of human subjects in research, professions have organized to develop and enforce research standards that reflect federal standards. The American Medical Association (American Medical Association, 2001), the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences, 2002), the American Psychological Association (APA, 2003), and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 1999) all have codes of ethics that incorporate legal frameworks. Universities have IRBs to assess all research taking place within the school. IRBs are a critical component of ensuring the knowledge, safety and confidentiality of people participating in research.

### **Socio-economic and Political History**

The nature of conflict has changed significantly over the past 20 years from international conflict waged in hot and cold wars between countries, to intra-national strife manifesting in civil wars. Countries at war face a multitude of problems needing solutions before, during, and after the conflict: the creation of refugees and internally displaced persons; the distribution of humanitarian intervention; the flow of small arms; landmines; the child combatants; destruction of arable land and country infrastructure; corruption in governance structures; and fragmentation of the country/region's economic base. Most of these concerns are not "stand alone" in their orientation; they interlink and exacerbate one another, causing not only the destabilization of a country itself but also potentially the destabilization of a region.

A civil war such as the one witnessed in the Democratic Republic of Congo saw intervention by many governments in the region, and the provision of humanitarian aid

by donor countries, much of which was sold for arms. As older fighters were killed or fled, younger and younger fighters were recruited, and used armaments purchased with funds earmarked for humanitarian aid. Deals were made between the Kabila government and multinational mining corporations which made Kabila and those around him wealthy men (Braeckman, 1999). What role did the income from those mineral rights provided by multinational corporations have in the purchasing of arms and the economic entrenchment of one tribal/familial group over another?

In other conflicts, communicable disease, including HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and TB have been spread through troop movement and through the scores of internally and externally displaced peoples; it is estimated that 13 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa have lost both their parents to AIDS (Gates Foundation, 2001). Children who are orphaned are more likely to participate in armed struggle; the numbers of children (under 18 years) engaged in combat has risen dramatically over the past 10 years and they and children and the societies in which the children live and return to post-conflict are forever altered by their experience (Brett, McCallin, 1998).

Theories about the causes of these conflicts range from economic inequity to ethnic, racial, and religious hatred. Issues that cause conflict, continue conflict, and act as catalysts for renewed conflict are deeply complex; the length of many conflicts and their seeming intractability are indicators of their complexity, as well as indicators of a lack of a range of preventive strategies and creative interventions. Investigations of the pre-conflict needs of a country may help prevent or lessen the conflict itself. Information gathering to determine the pre-, during- and post-conflict needs of a country is critical in addressing the problems leading to conflict or to the resolution of conflict. In working toward solutions, a multitude of issues and overlaps need consideration, as well as the

potential repercussions of those overlaps (Patterson, 2001). How is this needed information to be gathered in a “hot” war, taking into consideration the needs and safety of all participants in the information gathering, so that these needs can best be met?

### **The Changing World: Ending of the Cold War and the Movement toward Intra-national Conflict**

Until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the world was predominately defined by the political, economic, and social structures of the Cold War. The “cold” conflict between the United States/Europe and the Soviet Union (coupled with China in the early 1950s and later on its own) was manifested in “hot” conflicts, such as Korea, Cuba, Uganda, Indo-China, Nicaragua, and Afghanistan.

On a larger scale, people around the world lived in fear of nuclear war. This fear is now reduced, but not eliminated. Great sums of money were plowed into defense and sophisticated nuclear missile delivery systems on both sides of the Cold War, decimating the funding for infrastructure development and social programs in the former USSR.

During the Cold War, economies were defined and constructed as Capitalist, Socialist, or Communist; market development, normally bolstered by trade, was limited by bi-lateral restrictions. Limited communication and exchange took place between peoples due to government-imposed travel restrictions and the expense of travel and phone service. There was deep fear of the “Red Menace” by the United States, the panic that Communism would spread throughout the world. This translated to a fear of the (former) Soviet peoples. The Soviets were afraid of the “Capitalists,” convinced that they were bent on overthrowing their Socialist regimes, again translating into fear of the “other.” For many years, the world was locked into very separate political, economic, and social units.

Since the end of the Cold War, there have been significant changes in global political, economic, and social structures, much of the change being caused by the catchword "globalization." Many socialist and communist countries have or are moving toward democratic political structures; fragile transitional democracies are evident in Asia, the Soviet Union, and Africa (Barber, 1996). These transitional democracies are also moving toward capitalist, market economies (Hokenstad, Midgley, 1997). The European Union, formed long before the cold war, has expanded massively, changing rules and patterns of trade between countries; in the face of much nationalism, the "Euro" has been declared a common currency. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has shifted labor and commerce patterns between Mexico, Canada, and the United States (US Trade Representative Annual Report, 1995), and the Free Trade Area of the Americas is positioned to expand a NAFTA-like agreement throughout the Western Hemisphere. Companies are moving factories to parts of the world where labor is cheap, causing union weakness leading to industrial depression of wages and/or job loss in the developed countries, and sweatshop environments for laborers in developing countries (Snarr, Snarr, 1998).

Through decreases in Official Development Assistance, the burden of financial crises through unregulated capital flows, and falling commodity prices for raw goods, the gap between the rich and the poor is growing around the world (Hokenstad, Midgley, 1997). Foreign Direct Investment has increased to seven times the level of the 1970's; however, most (80 percent) of that money went to 20 countries, mainly China and the rest predominately industrialized; the wealth of the three richest people in the world are greater than the combined GNP of all least developed countries. (Human Development Report, 1999).

Cultural expansion (particularly of northern countries) and information dissemination and availability are also causing dilemmas around the world, e.g., the changes in family structure from extended to nuclear (Stoez, Lusk 1994), the introduction of social security systems into prior government-run economies, and the growing conflict between religious fundamentalism in all forms and the lifestyles promoted by capitalist marketing campaigns. As social, economic, and political structures are moving toward international status and a seemingly more unified world, conflict and war situations have become increasingly intra-national and numerous, manifesting in, among others, the former Yugoslavia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Indonesia, Angola, Colombia (Project Ploughshares, 2000).

The numbers of intra-national conflicts vary depending on the definition and who is defining them. Project Ploughshares of Canada, a non-governmental organization, defines a hot conflict as one in which there are 1,000 combat-related deaths per year; based on that definition they have determined that there are currently 40 conflicts in 35 countries. This is up from 37 conflicts in 35 countries in 1997 (2000).

### *Changes in Regional-Bilateral-Multilateral Affiliations*

Historically, the nation-state was fairly insular, with bilateral alliances that included trade and military protection; much of the isolationism was due to factors of lack of ability to get from one place to another, inability to transport perishables, and the importance of individual sovereignty. This has changed dramatically over the past hundred years; nations are interdependent as never before for economic development and stability, and security (Luke, 1996). These affiliations cover the spectrum from intra-national, as in the city-city alliances across state borders termed "micro regions" to the global

intergovernmental multilateral groups such as the World Trade Organization. Rosenau delineates these alliances as follows:

- Micro-regions: city-city relationships across state lines;
- Macro-regions: e.g., the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) creating a free-trade zone in north America;
- Cross-border Coalitions: e.g., international environmental groups in protest during the 1999 WTO Ministerial;
- Transnational Institutionalized Control Mechanisms: e.g., international credit-rating agencies, these can be governmental, as in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, or private, as in Standard and Poor's Ratings Group.
- Sub-national Institutional Mechanisms: e.g., international crime syndicates, the cocaine trade in the western hemisphere;
- State-sponsored mechanisms: NATO, the European Union, the Organization of African Unity;
- Jointly sponsored Institutionalized Mechanisms: e.g., election monitoring in Haiti, a conjoining of the UN and international NGOs to do work (1995, p. 21)

Most are fairly new forms of alliance, and all form a web of interrelatedness and provide new structures of allegiance outside of the structures of the traditional nation-state. The structures as delineated include governmental and non-governmental alliances in the areas of trade (legal and illegal), regional and national security, international law and policy-making, labor, and the environment. They also include the relationship between governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), e.g., election monitoring and, as depicted previously, humanitarian intervention. These alliances

present varying degrees of benefit within themselves (note the limited voices of the least developed countries within the World Trade Organization balanced against the need to be part of the world trading system) and one another, and are greatly varied in their configuration (bi-national or multi-national) and rules (decision-making processes, organizational structures). The alliances can be either similar or very different in configuration and rules in comparison to the governmental structures and laws of specific nation-states, as can the policies created by these bodies. In this way a nation-state, particularly the smaller states, may sign on to treaties that are different from national laws; those laws would then need to be changed (Human Development Report, 1999). This is not a judgment of whether this change is positive or negative, it is an illustration of the manner in which multilateral alliances can influence and direct the nation-state.

A more overt multilateral intervention into the governance of the nation-state has been the Structural Adjustment Programs of the Bretton Woods Institutions. When a government finds itself with a balance of payment problem due to trade imbalance, or, more recently, due to currency trading as in East Asia, a member country can apply to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for loans. Using economic equations, the IMF determines the monies needed and the agreements for repayment. In addition, they develop a plan for "Structural Adjustment," which until recently was written by the IMF and presented to the country in need for their signature and guarantee of compliance in exchange for bail-out loans. Structural Adjustment is the IMF's way of attempting to restructure the political and economic systems of a country to make that country fiscally solvent and subsequently viable for future Foreign Direct Investment to facilitate economic growth. Often, a mandate for governmental transparency and a move toward

democratization is required. Governments were also mandated to open their markets to external investors. Again, without going into the positives and negatives of Structural Adjustment (a dissertation in itself), the IMF as a multilateral institution exerts tremendous influence on the governmental structures of countries in need of assistance (IMF, 1998).

### *Globalization*

The ever-expanding sea of local through international relationships described above has been termed “globalization.” The United Nations Human Development report defines globalization as “...integrating not just the economy but culture, technology and governance. People everywhere are becoming connected—affected by events in far corners of the world...” (1999, p. 43). Globalization is not a new phenomenon; Marco Polo helped open the possibility of trade in spices in 1275; a more brutal example is the Conquistadors providing Spain with gold and slaves through the conquest of Central and South America. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, however, there are a number of developments that make globalization significantly different than in the past. New markets, new tools (Internet, cell phones), new multilateral organizations (World Trade Organization, the Organization for African Unity), and NGOs, and new rules (intellectual property rights, trade agreements) have created the opportunity for international contact and contract in ways that could not have been imagined 50 years ago (Human Development Report, 1999).

Each of these changes to the historical global order has consequences. The Internet provides instant access to global information, the opportunity to become informed about other cultures, and a new way to work; however, computers and the

Internet increase the “technology gap” between those with and without access. Most of the computers in the world are in the Northern Hemisphere, and most of those are in the United States. Although it is absolutely possible for a citizen of Bangladesh to have the same access to the Internet as someone in Great Britain, the infrastructure of Bangladesh and the per capita income in that country prohibit wide-scale use of the Internet resource. Seventy-four percent of all phone lines are located in the top fifth of the highest income countries; the bottom fifth has 1.5 percent, limiting Internet access even if computers are available (Human Development Report, 1999).

On the other hand, many countries have benefited from the opportunities of economic and technological globalization. India, having built a strong technology-based sector for employment, has created the largest middle class in the world. Chile, Mauritius, Turkey and Poland have all attracted Foreign Direct Investment and export growth has averaged more than five percent per year (Human Development Report, 1999).

### *Political Globalization*

Since the end of the Cold War, the world has witnessed a narrowing of the range of governmental paradigms. Communism has ended in all but a handful of countries, and democracy is now considered the governmental form of choice within the United Nations system (Boutros-Ghali, 1995). Countries have joined and split through both violent and non-violent means, and new governments have been created. The merger of East and West Germany, the splintering of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, and the (until Chechnya) non-violent separation of the former Soviet Union, are clear examples of changes in governmental geography and are one of the many changes affecting the

structure and function of the nation-state as we have known it. Intra-national conflict, although technically defined by national borders, often spills over into neighboring states, be it military positions or arms, influx of refugees, or economic loss. This often threatens entire geographic regions. James Rosenau captures this idea: "... [T]he numerous shifts in the loci of governance stem from interactive tensions whereby processes of globalization and localization are simultaneously unfolding on a worldwide scale... The combined effect of the simultaneity of these contradictory trends is that of lessening the capacities for governance located at the level of sovereign states and national societies" (1995, p. 18).

### *Nationalism and Religion*

Historically, nationalism arose out of an agreement that feudalism was no longer enough to preserve the liberty of groups of people, and that union with surrounding others was the way to meet security, economic, nutritional, and religious needs. Taken to extreme, economic (primarily capitalist), political (primarily democratic), and cultural (primarily Northern/Western) globalization may be seen as an enlargement of nationalism to "internationalism." In reaction to this change, ethnic and religious groups are cleaving from the global culture and, often, from the nation in which they reside. Barber gives United States examples: he cites the French legally outlawing American words and phrases, mandating that new French words be created for the American if they do not exist; and Quebec, a primarily French-speaking province in Canada, which would like to be a sovereign nation inside Canada (1996).

There have always been "fundamentalist" religious beliefs and practices; wars have been fought in the name of God (Buddhist/Hindu today in Sri Lanka, differing

Muslim sects between Iraq and Iran, non-Catholic during the Crusades). Fundamentalist religions are strident and militant, promoting one-dimensional ideas that exclude others and see them as less than themselves (Marty, Appleby, 1991). In a world supposedly moving toward democratic pluralism, why the powerful emergence of the Christian right in the United States, Jihad in the Middle East, the Ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel, Buddhist priests in Sri Lanka?

There is a claim, in religious as well as nationalist fundamentalism, of profound loss; loss of affiliation, loss of morals and values, loss of soul to consumerism, and in the case of the United States, loss of traditional liberty (e.g., the right to bear arms). However, as Barber so eloquently states, nationalist and/or religious fundamentalism are as exclusionary as economic globalization is homogenizing; they are in opposition to one another, and democracy and pluralism are the losers (1996). Here is perhaps an explanation of the paradox of increasing globalization—increasing intra-national conflict. But how are we to reduce conflict in this global context?

### **The Stages of Conflict**

Interventions designed to stop or lessen conflict are thought to be greatly dependent on the stage of the conflict; because of this, efforts have been made to define the stages of conflict (UN, 2001). The three most commonly used in the UN system are:

Pre-conflict: There are always indicators of an impending conflict. In Rwanda, the radio was used to stir Hutu-Tutsi rivalry for months before President Habyaramana's plane was shot down and the genocide began (Keane, 1997). Studies at the World Bank indicate that countries with 26 percent or more of their GDP in primary commodity exports (higher if subsoil, e.g., oil, diamonds, gold, basalt) and high unemployment rates

are four times more likely to find themselves engaged in civil war than those without these indicators (Berdal, Malone, 2000). There are currently no cross-border wars between two countries with democratic political structures. More fully defining the variables which are present prior to violent conflicts, and creating interventions that ameliorate these variables, is critical work just beginning in the international arena (UN, 2001).

During conflict: Situations of conflict that have erupted into violent conflict are tremendously difficult to stop, as witnessed during World War II, the Vietnam conflict, the Soviet/Afghani war, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh, and the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Feelings on one or both sides have grown to the point where people are ready to lay down their lives for their cause or country. This is also the point where the needs for food, shelter, and safety may be greatest on both sides and for those caught in between, e.g., refugees, indigenous peoples. Conflict situations are at the heart of this paper, and will be subsequently be described in detail.

Post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction: This is the time after the conflict is over; infrastructure and relationships need rebuilding. This cannot happen solely at the political level, although political construction/reconstruction is vital if peace is to last. Lines of communication will need to be rebuilt between multiple layers of a society (Diamond, McDonald, 2001). Infusions of capital for reconstruction, as in the Marshall Plan after World War II, are necessary to help a country reconstruct or create a functioning, viable economy.

Post-conflict peace-building and conflict prevention have much in common, and have provided and are currently providing fertile ground for research. The area of

research that is lacking is during conflict situations. Other than military intervention, what interventions are possible during conflicts?

## **The Causes and Consequences of Conflict**

Each of the issues discussed below have the potential to destabilize a country, thereby creating the opportunity for a conflict to erupt, to exacerbate existing conflict situation, and to halt a peace process or plunge a country back into conflict after a resolution has been reached. Designing interventions for each cause must take into account its unique role in relation to the stage of the conflict.

### *Multinational Corporations*

For many years in the developed world, citizens have been complaining about the influence of private monies on political campaigns and on politicians. Figures have been released during the past two U. S. presidential elections citing the contributions of corporations such as Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), Philip Morris, RJR Nabisco, and The Tobacco Institute, to all political parties (in differing amounts) so that whichever candidate won they would be beholden to some extent to the corporate interest. During the 1992 election campaign in the United States, ADM was one of the largest contributors to the Democratic Party; in addition, it contributed nearly \$1.4 million in soft money to the Republican Party (Andreas, Andreas, 2000). During the same campaign, tobacco corporations gave \$2.5 million to a cross-section of political parties, and three of the five corporate donors giving over \$100,000 to the Republican and Democratic National Committees were tobacco-related (Infact, 2000).

There are currently about 40,000 multinational corporations with 250,000

regional affiliates worldwide. These corporations exert a significant influence on the policies and players in national governments around the world. Pushing for changes in laws, buying of influence and supporting parties in conflict are but some of the many ways they exert influence (Rupert, 1999).

At the same time, corporations often set up shop in places where the regulations (taxes, labor costs, etc.) are the lowest, and will move to another country as soon as conditions change, e.g., workers begin to discuss unionization for higher wages or better working conditions; it is called the “race to the bottom.” Governments will change or create laws to accommodate corporations that promise to bring jobs and revenue into a country; an example of this is the creation of Export Processing Zones (EPZs). EPZs are geographic areas set aside from national laws and taxes so that a corporation incorporated elsewhere will develop a plant for the making of goods to be shipped internationally (Galhardi, 1998); these goods are often utilized intra-corporately.

Corporations can also play a role in the destabilization of governments in a number of ways. The first way is through their purchasing of commodities. This can be seen in the current conflict in Angola. UNITA, the main rebel group fighting the government, battles for control of diamond regions. Angola is diamond-rich and diamond traders, until recently, have been willing to buy from the lowest seller. UNITA, through its diamond sales, has been able to swap diamonds for fuel, arms, and supplies. On the other hand, when the government of Angola discovers a new oil well, the people grieve; annually more than 50 percent of the national budget goes to buy arms manufactured in and sold by Ukraine (McClelland, 2000). The war continues, causing one of the largest internal displacements of people in the world. In situations of political instability or in the failure of rule of law, corporations may feel the need to protect their

investments. This protection can be bought through private security companies that will enforce rules made by the corporation to safeguard its investment. The rule of law of the country is thereby altered and superseded by the need of the corporation for the preservation of its interests. People who previously had access to the land or raw materials now controlled by the private forces may become involved in a conflict with the corporate security company; internal conflict can destabilize a government. At the very least, the question as to who is actually in charge arises (Berdal, Collier, 2000; Nelson, 2000).

### *The Washington Consensus and the Movement for Good Governance*

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall, two main models for the nation-state grew in the wake of the Communism/Democracy dichotomy. The first, the “Washington Consensus,” was originally gleaned from the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the Bretton Woods Institutions during the 1980s. It was seen as a way to assist states in times of economic collapse and to help structure them internally in such a way that economic recovery was possible. The Washington Consensus was viewed as the way to assist countries in Eastern Europe as they emerged from Communism and was premised on economic formulas and the idea that the opening and liberalization of markets alone would take care of the economic inequities, providing opportunity for all countries to develop in the manner that Adam Smith proffered in “The Wealth of Nations” in 1776. The second model, which first appeared in 1990, was that of “Good Governance.” The UN has stated that competition in markets may guarantee efficiency, but not equity (Human Development Report, 1999). Taking into consideration the results of the Washington Consensus (extreme corruption on the individual and governmental levels,

transfers of wealth from the poorest to the richest countries, lack of social provisions when markets failed, reaction to the “conditionality” of the SAPs), a new model was needed, a model that unified the state, the market, and civil society. Good Governance is grounded on three axes:

- The importance of the role of competitive markets;
- The responsibility of government to manage those markets in the best interest of the nation and to promote and uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law;
- The importance of private rights and individual initiative (democratic structures and participation of the organs of civil society) (Archer, 1994 p.2).

It was felt that markets alone were not the answer, that the state was “needed as a promoter and governor of social and economic responsibility” (Archer, p.2), that no market could survive without the underpinnings of a stable state coupled with a functional and discerning civil society, and that no state was viable without the ongoing committed participation of civil society and economic stability and equity (Archer, 1994). Targets of the governmental aspect of the triad along with the aforementioned responsibilities are: the reduction of poverty and corruption (Short, 1999) and an educated population (Skweyiya, 1997).

### *Small Arms*

In the 1980’s, the United States and the Soviet Union were responsible for 70 percent of global arms deliveries; 80 percent of all arms imports during that same time were to developing countries (Ayoob, 1995). The legal and illicit transfer of arms can have a tremendously destabilizing effect on countries and can involve many governments

outside of the country in conflict.

The UN, in June 2001, held its first world conference on the illicit trade in small arms; this is a small piece of the total small arms puzzle. There was great resistance to this conference being held at all; it was clear that arms manufacturers and the gun lobbies in developed countries were pushing governments to stop any process that would have an impact on private gun ownership and governments' ability to distribute weapons to the groups of their choice. It was agreed that talking about the illegal trade in small arms would not touch those issues, so those parameters were chosen. Obviously, the manufacturing and selling or distribution of arms is a huge piece in solving the problem of small arms and will hopefully be discussed in the future.

The demobilization of arms is, and has been, a critical issue in the continuation of the peace process in Northern Ireland. There have been numerous times, since the Good Friday Agreement, when the Irish Republican Army refused to meet numerous deadlines to decommission weapons. This has repeatedly thrown the ongoing peace process into chaos and has caused the Northern Ireland Assembly to be disbanded and then reconstituted. Since the September 11 attack on the United States, the IRA has decommissioned its first weapons; this has been taken as an encouraging sign by many Unionist parties to the conflict (CNN, 2001; Sussman, 2000).

In post-conflict countries flooded with arms, e.g., Sierra Leone, post-conflict peace-building becomes very difficult. Gangs of individuals, often working for both sides in a conflict, still bear arms and procure money through extortion, etc. (Berdal, Malone, 2000)

### *Humanitarian Intervention*

During the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, refugee camps were set up just over the borders in Tanzania, Uganda and the former Zaire. These camps were filled with Hutu refugees and were staffed by workers from international relief agencies. It became clear that the foodstuffs and other supplies that were being given to the occupants of the camps were being diverted to representatives of Hutu militias, who were then selling the relief supplies for arms to conduct raids over the border into Rwanda (Keane, 1997).

In 1999, the international community, led by Australia, moved to stop the violence in the newly independent East Timor. Meeting after meeting took place in the UN Security Council and, finally, peacekeeping troops were allowed in. Aid flowed in with the troops, and although people did not starve, prices of commodities sold by growers within the country fell and the economy was destabilized (Fischer, 1998).

These vignettes are examples of how humanitarian intervention, the move to stop or prevent the wide-scale suffering of a group or groups usually due to intra-national conflict or disaster, is carried out by NGOs (the International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, Bread for the World, etc.), external governments (the US/UK in Mozambique), and/or multilateral institutions (the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme, the UN High Commission for Refugees, etc.) (Deng, 1995) can have negative unintended consequences.

A country is "in need" of humanitarian intervention most often when its government has failed through internal or inter-state conflict, or during times of disaster (famine, flood, etc.). These are often coupled, one reinforcing the other as in the cases of Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia, creating large flows of refugees and internally displaced persons (Ayoob, 1995). Humanitarian intervention is (most often) a reactive mechanism,

provided during and after the damage has been done. Intervention is multi-faceted and much debated. One school of thought divides motivation in two ways. The first was the “blatantly political” intervention that was seen in the United States support of the Kurds at the end of the Gulf War in Iraq. Because the Kurds were in opposition to the government of Saddam Hussein, the United States believed that the Kurds, who were being driven off their land by the government, would naturally rise up against Hussein. The United States supported them with food, equipment, and arms to assist in the task of defending their Kurdish areas in the north of Iraq. The second motivation for intervention is termed “politically innocent,” efforts to help that do not include a political end; intervention to end starvation in Somalia could be seen as such an intervention (Ayoob, 1995).

If external forces (governments, NGOs, multilaterals) move invited or uninvited into a nation-state not their own, into a situation (as most are) as nuanced as Somalia, what does this mean for the sovereignty of the nation-state? On the other hand, what does the world do when great numbers of its peoples are in mortal danger and/or are dying within the borders of a nation-state due to national/inter-national political and/or economic disaster? The book, “Do No Harm,” has been developed to provide guidance for organizations providing humanitarian intervention through a structural framework of questions to be posed before entering the situation. This information was developed through case studies of humanitarian situations (Anderson, 1999).

### *Refugees/Migrants*

Refugees and migrants bring political, cultural, and economic changes into regions, each change with the capacity to alter the boundaries and role of the nation-state.

Refugees have been defined by the Organization of African Unity (in one of the most thorough definitions expanding on the Geneva Convention), as:

“Every person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protections of that country...The term “refugee” shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality” (OAU, 1969, p. 2).

Definitions and rights of refugees are found in the international codes and laws of Geneva Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and those rights are the mandate of the UN High Commission for Refugees (Deng, 1995). The Office of the High Commissioner estimates that of the 27 million people worldwide (up by 10 million over the past four years) who were under the purview of the UNHCR, 14.5 million were displaced persons living in another country and the remainder are internally displaced within their own country (Snarr and Snarr, 1998).

In Central Africa, the world has witnessed the influence of refugees on the sovereignty of the nation-state. During the Rwandan struggles after independence from the Belgians in 1962, the Hutu forced significant numbers of Tutsi refugees to live in neighboring countries; Tutsis set up communities along the Rwandan border. These

enclaves, by and large, were not accepted culturally or politically by their host countries, but became strong presences in a number of their regions, particularly in eastern Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The Tutsi, labeled the “Inyenzi” (cockroaches) by the Hutu government, ran raids over the borders, and during the genocide of 1994 grouped, with the assistance of neighboring countries, to defeat the Hutus and take control of the government (Prunier, 1995). Immediately following this conflict, Laurent Kabila began his march across Zaire and eventually captured the capital, renaming the country the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Although the Government of Rwanda denied all involvement, it was well known in the region that the Tutsi groups along the eastern Zairian border, with the help of the Rwandan government, supported Kabila with arms, supplies and troops (Keane, 1997). Neighboring governments, particularly Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, and Tanzania, were desperately concerned that the instability between Rwanda and the DRC and within the DRC had the potential to destabilize the entire central African region. There were many factors involved in this conflict; the role of refugees was not the single instigator, but it did contribute significantly to the crisis (Prunier, 1995 Keane, 1997). This is but one example of the impact of refugees on nation-states; there are dozens more, including the forced and voluntary exodus of Albanians from Serbia into Kosovo, and the movement of Angolans within their own and into surrounding countries.

### *Child Soldiers*

The UN’s Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict states that no child under 18 will serve in armed forces (United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, 1996). This,

however, has not stopped children under 18 from participating or being forcibly recruited into armed forces or armed groups; the numbers of “under 18’s” has grown significantly during the past decade (Brett, McCallin, 1998). The availability of small arms, the lack of adult men (who have been killed in protracted conflicts), the disarming nature of children, and the willingness of children to kill in heinous ways due to the looser lines between fantasy and reality, make children excellent candidates for soldiering. Child soldiers do not exist solely in countries where war is pervasive; the United States has only recently agreed to stop using under 18’s in combat, and the United Kingdom allows enlistment at 16 (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001).

The consequences of the use of children in armed groups are profound, for the society and for the child. Children are often made to commit a horrible act to break their resistance to killing; they may be asked to kill a family member, a respected member of the community or a peer (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001). Girls may do everything from cooking meals to being used as suicide bombers, or being kept as “wives” to the men in their group. The line between volunteering for the armed group and forcible recruitment is often very hazy. Children who do not have enough to eat will sometimes “volunteer” to serve when promised regular meals. Group members may become like family and girls may have children from members of the group (Keairns, 2002). They may also have developed a system of surviving through extorting portions of crops going to market which need to pass roadblocks of the group or through guarding a mining operation so that it may continue production in the midst of the conflict (Berdal, Malone, 2000).

Upon discharge, capture, or escape from the armed group, children face

significant demobilization and reintegration difficulties. Is there family and/or a home to return to? Will the family/village accept them back? Is a girl (in a number of cultures unable to own land on her own) marriageable if she returns with a child? If not, how will she support herself and the child? Alternatively, how will a child soldier cope with the psychological aftermath of participation? Are there traditional psychological healing methods? Is western-style treatment appropriate, and if so, is it available? And what becomes of the social structure of a country when youth have wielded incredible power and perhaps killed elders through having arms? These questions are just beginning to be asked and answered through research and the creation of demobilization and reintegration programs for young people.

### *Environmental Degradation and the Destruction of Infrastructure*

As with all other such phenomena, environmental degradation can cause, exacerbate and/or stop a post-conflict peace-building process (Trei, 1999). Plan Colombia, the US-based intervention to stop the conflict in Colombia and reduce the country's coca production, has had significant environmental consequences for people living in the southern part of the country. Campesinos, the farmers in the area, plant the food crops between the coca plants due to limited farming area, and when defoliants are sprayed from planes, all crops are lost, creating the potential for starvation. The irony of this situation is that the coca plants grow back almost immediately after being cut back, while food crops will not (Romero, 2001).

Cambodia is (was) a country rich in valuable tropical timber. During the time of the Khmer Rouge, timber was cut near the Thai border, purchased by Thai merchants, and transported across the border into Thailand where it was then sold to the rest of the

world. The funding received helped support the Khmer Rouge in their genocide, killing over a million Cambodians from 1975-1998 (Him, 2001; National Public Television, 2001).

Landmines cause death and dismemberment, as well as the loss of agricultural revenues and the ability of farmers to return to their lands and raise crops for family consumption. Landmines are buried and active in 87 countries. The problems created by mines are exacerbated when they are positioned close to centers of population or economic infrastructure, and when citizens are not aware of the placement of mines. When mines are planted in and around villages, the loss of land may mean that internally displaced persons are not able to move back to their villages without first de-mining taking place, causing people to remain in already overcrowded cities or in refugee camps. Demining is often carried out by military units or commercial entrepreneurs (Landmine Monitor, 2001).

*The Need for Intervention by the UN, Other Multilaterals  
and Civil Society*

There are a significant number of institutions, organizations and individuals from both government and civil society committed to helping the world work better and to avoid violent conflict; these include the large multilateral institutions such as the UN, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, etc. There are regional organizations such as the African Union (formerly the Organization of African Unity), the European Union, the Inter-American Development Bank. Non-governmental organizations, including religious organizations, secular organizations like the World Wildlife Fund, and labor, have held a special place in moving issues like

landmines, women/gender, and children's issues onto the world stage, sometimes much to the dismay of governments. The private sector has a number of NGOs, including the International Chamber of Commerce, Rotary International, and the Business Council for the UN. Individuals will often associate themselves with a cause and will speak out on that topic. Below are fuller descriptions of the work of the groups.

### *Multilateral Institutions*

The mandates of multilateral institutions have changed significantly in the past decade. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund now have poverty reduction as their main mandate (Ecclestone, 2000). Mark Malloch-Brown, the former director of the United Nations Development Program, had developed a program of work shifting the focus of UNDP from its historic role of grassroots development to policy-level governance and governmental capacity-building (1999). These changes have extended to the internal consideration of the role of the multilateral in conflict.

The traditional role of the UN has been as home of the Security Council and, along with NATO, perhaps the major security decision-making body in the world. As mentioned above, UNDP is for the first time considering issues of governance, a purview which was off limits until recently due to issues of national sovereignty. This shift has been partly due to the lack of funding of the UN, hence the lack of money available to conduct development projects, and partly to a strategic repositioning of UNDP to make it a more viable organ on the multilateral stage.

The World Bank has a number of people studying the economic indicators of countries involved in civil war, in contrast to its traditional role as a lender of funds for development projects. Their team has determined that countries with 26 percent or more

of GDP in one primary commodity export coupled with a plethora of undereducated, unemployed young men are four times more likely to experience civil conflict than countries without this combination of variables. Contributors to the book have proposed pre-, during-, and post-conflict interventions based on their research (Berdal, Collier, 2000).

During the 1999 crisis in East Timor, the International Monetary Fund held committed funds. It was formally stated that the IMF could not release funds due to the economic insolvency produced by the Bank Bali vote-buying scandal; Indonesia was not following its IMF structural adjustment program and hence was not economically sound enough to receive the bailout funds (McBeth, Murphy, Tasker, Vatikiotis, 1999).

These three institutions, in conjunction with the WTO, the private sector and civil society, are now working together on a world conference on Financing for Development; it will be the first time these organizations have pooled resources to work on a UN-related event. There is interest on the part of the Bretton Woods institutions to consider the relationship between development and conflict, but there is great reluctance on the part of some of the member-states of the UN due to the potential linkage of development funds to conditionality (e.g., IMF structural adjustment programs) concerning conflict. The development of a greater knowledge bank pinpointing the specific variables, as the World Bank is doing, may help ease this tension and create a pathway for international agreement on ways in which to link development funding and the reduction of civil conflict.

#### *NGOs and social movements*

Non-governmental organizations, in the broadest sense, include all groups not officially

affiliated with or created by governments. These voluntary associations include the media, chambers of commerce, international Parliamentarians, churches, professional groupings, and other organs of civil society (Boulding, 1988; Boutros-Ghali, 1995). The idea of NGOs originated early in this century, and is based on the idea that “humankind has common interests” (Boulding, 1988), that not all positions and needs are represented or can be filled by governments. Currently, there are approximately 5,000 international NGOs operating around the world; this is up from around 200 at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Snarr and Snarr, 1998). International social movements tend to be coalitions of non-governmental organizations gathered together across borders around a specific issue that governments and business tend to abandon. This type of coalition-building was demonstrated during the boycott of Nestlé products in reaction to their promotion of infant formula over breast milk in countries without ready access to potable water or the resources to purchase the formula after the initial samples were depleted (Rosenau, 1995), as well as the environmental coalitions created before and during 1992 UN Conference on the Environment in Rio, Brazil (Consumer Alert, 2000).

Civil society organizations have been defined by the UN as “citizens’ groups” (Alger, 1998), and serve many different functions. Some civil society groups form to advocate for specific policies or policy changes, e.g., Greenpeace on the environment, or the International Chamber of Commerce for the business community. Other NGOs are created to provide humanitarian assistance to people in times of natural or person-created disaster, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent. NGOs exist to support the work of specific institutions, as in the Quaker United Nations Office support of the UN. The International Peace Academy develops and disseminates information needed by the UN and other institutions. Still others exist to

create global structures, e.g., the World Federalists, to support the creation of the International Criminal Court. A common thread that all civil society organizations share is increasing relevance in the international policy-making arena, forcing governments to move in policy directions they might not otherwise have voluntarily chosen. The recent campaign against landmines is an excellent example of a concern rising up from non-governmental origins resulting in the 1997 Ottawa Treaty to ban land mines which was ratified by 156 countries (English, 1997), as is the campaign to stop the civil war in Angola through a grassroots organization of religious leaders (AFSC, 1999).

Due to the increased numbers and impact of NGOs and social movements on national and international policy, multilateral institutions have been increasingly reluctant to offer the *carte blanche* admission to debates and decision-making sessions that were formerly open. Because of this, there have been calls for the establishment of a "People's Assembly" or "Civil Society Forum" linked to the work of the UN General Assembly (Harris, 1996).

### *The Private Sector*

The private sector has had a checkered role on the international stage. At their best, many private corporations have foundations associated with them to fund public-sector related projects, e.g., health, peacemaking, leadership. Rotary International has worked for years on the worldwide eradication of polio (Rotary International, 2001). The Bill and Melinda Gates foundation has given US\$10,000,000 over three years to HIV/AIDS research (Gates Foundation, 2001). At its worst, the private sector pays bribes to government officials to conduct business in their country, infiltrates and guides a country's governance, and/or hires private security forces to protect its interests in a

conflict (Nelson, 2000). There is much that the private sector can do to reduce its negative impact on conflict, potential conflict and/or post-conflict reconstruction; however, until recently there has been very little work done by the private sector on these initiatives. More recently, owing in large part to public pressure, corporations have, individually and in groups, begun to consider what they might do to improve the lives of people and to develop infrastructure (health, education) in the regions where they are located.

### **The Need for Information Gathering for Appropriate, Effective Intervention**

Knowing what to do in a given inter- or intra-national conflict situation has proven to be immensely difficult. Without a solid understanding of the conflict and the package of variables surrounding that conflict and without the “buy-in” of the people concerned, even excellently crafted interventions are probably doomed to fail at best, and contribute to the continuation of the conflict and subsequent loss of life at worst. What markers/information/guides are used to determine the problems before, during, and after a conflict, and how are effective, stage/culture/gender-appropriate interventions designed and implemented?

Culture, ethnic/racial/religious divides, geography, origin of conflict or crisis, language, economic struggles, and more are variables that need to be explored if successful prevention or intervention is to take place. Each of the organizations mentioned in this section needs information to do their jobs; within the UN system, there are regular calls for studies to develop information in specific subject areas. Much is currently being done at the UN on post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction,

and the prevention of violent conflict, as well as the historical and ongoing work of the Security Council on intervening in a hot conflict. Most of the actual research for this work cannot be done by the UN, due to lack of funding and minimal staffing. It is therefore “farmed out” to others, particularly NGOs (UN, 2001). The World Bank, an organization with significantly greater resources, is able to do its own research, and is currently studying the economic underpinnings of violent conflict; however, it is working in collaboration with NGOs. The IMF and the OECD largely do their own research.

NGOs may understand the dilemmas of a conflict situation, and may want to advocate for a certain intervention or policy. They will need to make a credible plea, backed by accurate information, for political change or funding of a particular program developed for intervention. As was stated previously in this section, NGOs are increasingly being asked to develop information for use both within the UN system and in their own organizations to develop and implement programs that respond to the interconnected nature of politics and economics, the changing world scene, the stage of a situation, and the population being served.

As illustrated above, there are a plethora of variables in conflict situations; stage of the conflict, causes of the conflict, interveners into the conflict. Given the almost limitless combination of these variables (and variables as yet unknown), as well as a potential lack of understanding of the nuances within a specific culture or cultures depending on the conflict, accurate, timely, and culturally relevant information-gathering would seem mandatory for the design and implementation of effective interventions and policy on the local, national, and international levels.

To gather salient information, similar questions need to be considered when designing the methodology for a study. What is the relevance of gender, culture, race,

ethnicity, political affiliation, class, geographic area, etc., for the gathering and interpretation of information within an area about which the researcher knows little? About which little may be known by anyone? What type of sample will be developed? How does one access the key informants in a conflict situation? Saliency of outcome data, upon which programs or policies are built, is critical in the success or failure of those programs or policies. Very little has been written on this subject, and a review of the literature has found no articles specifically on this topic. To address this void, the present study has been created to reflectively explore the use of qualitative research methodology in situations of violent conflict in hopes of providing some guidance to researchers conducting comparable studies in war zones.

## **CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE**

### **Introduction**

There is little written on the subject of conducting research in zones of conflict; however, there are a number of bodies of research methodology that dovetail with the study of girl soldiers given the characteristics inherent in the study of adolescent girls involved in armed units. By identifying and exploring methodologies used in prior studies of analogous problems, it is hoped that issue areas will arise and questions for the current study will emerge. These relevant studies involve: hidden populations; abused children/children exposed to violence; domestic violence and abuse of women; and ways of conducting culturally competent research. There are also parallels between conducting research in zones of conflict and the work that journalists undertake in reporting stories of war; an exploration of this literature will also be included.

### **Hidden Populations**

#### *Definitions*

Definitions of terms fall into two main categories; defining the population and defining words used by the population. This section will focus on defining the population.

Hidden populations have primarily been identified as drug users and people with

HIV/AIDS, particularly when HIV/AIDS was emerging as a public health crisis, little was known about its transmission, treatment was extremely limited, and great social stigma was attached (Herdt, Boxer, 1991; McLaws, Oldenburg, Ross, Cooper, 1990; Power, 1989; Watters, Biernacki, 1989). The term has historically been used to refer to the hidden, usually atypical, social world of drug users (McKinlay, 1996). The term “hidden populations” is reflective of a population that “is obscured from view due to a special behavior or characteristic of the population” (Fitzgerald, 1996 p. 7).

A hidden population is defined as a subset of the general population whose membership, due to the clandestine nature of its activities, is concealed from the view of society (Wiebel, 1990; Watters, Biernacki, 1989). For example, the characteristics of the culture of drug use will mandate that users remain a hidden population “even when they live visible lives on the street not only because they are difficult to reach, and impossible to measure with conventional research methodologies, but also because their deviant status hides them from mainstream social worlds” (Fitzgerald, 1996, p.7). The group or persons are normally out of the public eye, and can be linked to organizations that are also hidden, (Fitzgerald, 1996) e.g., organized crime syndicates, child traffickers, and political resistance groups.

Stakeholders often play a major role in the decision-making on which “hidden” populations are studied. Information can be requested or mandated by the State, or governmental body, including institutions of public health and law enforcement; these two bodies may have very different uses for the information generated. For example, in a study of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in Chicago, the city government mandated that a study be conducted to determine whether the “Concerted Services” program, a social service program in the housing project, was working, and if not, to determine the needs

of the community so that the program could better serve those needs (Rainwater, Pittman, 67). To gain a complete understanding of the problems and benefits of life in the housing project, it was necessary to include the “hidden populations” in the community, including gang members, drug dealers and users, prostitutes, etc.

During the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, public health officials worked toward gaining knowledge of methods of transmission and the geographic range of the disease, which were deemed critical to stopping its spread (McKinley, 1996; Herdt, Boxer, 1991). Providers of services, e.g., drug rehab programs may, themselves, want information to better serve people in their sphere of service, or to determine whether they are meeting the needs of the communities in which they function.

In ethnographic studies determining the spread of HIV, it was necessary to redefine the meanings of terms such as “sex” and “sexual partner.” For example, sex, in some cultures, means only heterosexual genital-to-genital intercourse and excludes oral, anal, and same-sex contact; the definition of sexual partner follows from the definition of sex, and can be further altered by cultural mores on age of consent, e.g., what is acceptable in societies (Herdt, Boxer, 1991).

### *Study Methods*

Research on hidden populations has been done in a number of conceptual and methodological paradigms, applied research, basic research, program evaluation, depending on the information needed and the specific ethical dilemmas concerning hidden populations, including safety, media attention, use of outcome information (Fitzgerald, 1996; Hannigan Millstein, Dare-Winters, Sullivan, 1994; McLaws, Oldenburg, Ross, 1990; Power, 1989; Rainwater, Pittman, 1967; Watters, Biernacki,

1989). The ethical dilemmas associated with each will be discussed later in this chapter.

The study of hidden populations has been primarily ethnographic; participant observation and phenomenology have been used extensively to begin to understand and “uncover” hidden populations, to provide the foundation for future, more targeted research, and to under-gird the development of service provision (Herdt, Boxer, 1991; Morgan, 1996; Kane, 1990). Ethnography has been used to “provide qualitative information of a sensitive nature that cannot usually be uncovered in surveys or formal interviews” (Herdt, Boxer, 1991, p.172). Since, by definition, so little is known about a hidden population, there is need to understand the entire “picture” of a situation and the person(s) in context so that an outsider might begin to make sense of why people function as they do. Inclusion of the social and cultural context and norms, gender roles, language nuances and slang, race, ethnicity, history are critical components to that understanding, and are integrated into the construct of the person’s life during ethnographic study (Fitzgerald, 1996; Hannigan Millstein, Dare-Winters, Sullivan, 1994; McLaws, Oldenburg, Ross, 1990; Power, 89). Because of the relationship and trust which (hopefully) develops during the ethnographic process, people are often willing to discuss topics that might not emerge or around which the person might not feel enough safety in other research settings (Herdt, Boxer, 1991).

More recently, there has been an expansion of the research methodology to include cross-cultural and longitudinal explorations of drug and alcohol problems across diverse social worlds of drug users. One unanticipated consequence of this research is the discovery of previously unknown populations, or surprising characteristics that surface about a known user group (Fitzgerald, 1996).

Notwithstanding the qualitative/quantitative debate that has been in existence as

long as the two methodologies, in the case of hidden populations, there seems to be the desire for the two to be used in conjunction, for example utilizing epidemiological and ethnographic methods in the study of HIV transmission and prevention (Hindmarch, 1990). Epidemiologists have charted the spread of the disease and numbers of persons infected, while ethnographers delved into the lives of those infected (or in close proximity to those infected) to uncover the previously unknown conditions which lead to infection. Coupled in this way, research findings have a far greater ability to produce targeted and salient health campaigns and intervention programs (Hindmarch, 1990).

More specifically, qualitative methodology provides the opportunity to probe and gain clarity on the organization of the activities of those in the hidden population, and can reveal the meanings implicit in both the social organization and the activities to members of the hidden group (Henslin, 1971; Watters, Biernacki, 1989). Results of qualitative research can then guide theory development, sample pool, and the creation or modification of survey instruments (Glaser, Strauss, 1967).

The major shortcomings of qualitative methodology are the limited generalizability of the outcomes and inability to test hypotheses due to the small sample size. In addition, in participant observation, observer bias can play a significant role in skewing data results, and there is a suggestion that participant observation be used as a first step toward the construction of a more formal interview questionnaire (Power, 1989).

In contrast, quantitative methods provide the possibility for generalizability due to the reliability and validity of the instrument(s) used, as well as the pre-planned representative sample and adherence to that sample. This can be problematic in the study of hidden populations in a number of respects. In most cases (other than a clinic

or program setting) numbers and representativeness of the population are not known; since drug use is illegal and same-sex intimacy may carry ostracizing social stigma, the function of the people involved is to remain anonymous and to “prevent access or knowledge to non-users” (Power, 1989). Traditional quantitative methodologies, utilizing random samples and dependent on the reliability and validity of questionnaires, often cannot capture the unknown. This significantly limits the potential for a random sample unless a huge number of persons are included to reveal “low incidence” phenomena. Establishing the reliability and validity of an instrument standardized on predominately white, middle class persons may be impossible given the population is, at the point of research, hidden (Watters, Biernacki, 1989).

### *Sampling and Access*

Sampling may be especially difficult in the study of hidden populations. Those engaged in illegal or stigmatizing behaviors desire to remain out of the view and reach of law enforcement or wish to remain part of their community; developing a sample roster will be challenging at best. In determining how to identify members of a hidden population, it is necessary to determine the size of the subpopulation in comparison to the broader population, and the ease in selecting members of a special population and obtaining reliable responses from them (Fitzgerald, 1996).

Defining the sample is critical in all research; ethnographic study is one way to work toward that definition. The sample chosen must represent the foundations of the research. McKinlay stresses the need to consider the purpose of the research when the sample is defined; the sample for policy-level intervention must include the community as a whole, and not just the individuals who might come under scrutiny (1996). Becker,

in 1963, and Watters, Reinerman, and Fagen again in 1985, indicate the need to study drug users in the community as well as in clinical settings or other social/governmental institutions to gain a full understanding of the world of drug use. Access to hidden populations through institutions provides ease of sampling; however, there are many groups outside of traditional treatment centers, clinics or jail which “may not share important attributes with their institutional counterparts” (Watters, Biernacki, 1989 p. 417). These groups may not reside regularly in one place, or may not have a phone. In studying IV drug use, sampling from methadone clinics alone might lead one to believe that all IV users are heroin users. This would be a false conclusion and, in the case of HIV/AIDS transmission, would lead to the ignorance of the population of IV amphetamine/cocaine users in both epidemiological knowledge development and treatment potentials (Watters, Biernacki, 1989).

In countries where populations are culturally, racially, ethnically, or tribally mixed, sampling will need to reflect these social constructs in the research. Gender and age will also require differing approaches, and results will not be generalizable to the larger, mixed population (Herdt, Boxer, 1991).

Uncovering a specific hidden population under scrutiny can take a number of forms, and has been described as a process. Often a number of strategies are used, as in Power’s study of drug users. First contacts were made in a clinical setting, where ease of access, initial connection, and safety were primary concerns. The ethnographer then began to frequent, through the clinic contacts, places where drug users hung out. When the researcher wanted to access women drug users, he then utilized a snowball technique (Powers, 1989). In another study of IV drug users and the spread of HIV/AIDS, Watters and Biernacki developed a sophisticated sampling system utilizing aspects of

“street ethnography, theoretical sampling, stratified survey sampling, quota sampling and chain referral sampling... [T]his was called targeted sampling, [a] purposeful, systematic method by which controlled lists of specified populations within geographical districts are developed and detailed plans are designed to recruit adequate numbers of cases within each of these targets”(1989, p.420). There is an interactive component to targeted sampling, data are routinely analyzed and used to adjust the sample, and the sample being observed or interviewed alters the questions being asked in relation to their responses.

Watters and Biernacki developed ethnographic maps of populations in an area based on direct observations, legal and governmental records, dialogue, programs located in areas, etc. Community leaders were identified and contacted, and they led the researchers to others, incorporating a snowball technique. When it was determined that there was a dearth of women participants, a girl who was a former user was hired to help gain access to other women users. The researchers agreed that areas of bias were the time of day when respondents were recruited (without knowledge of the time schedules of IV users in an area, a skewed or reduced sample may result), and location which must be geographically and culturally accessible to the population under scrutiny (1989).

Access to populations through clinics and other institutional settings may cause difficulty for the researcher in that staff in such settings may feel that they have enough work to do without the addition of a researcher/research project being conducted. This can have an effect on a researcher's access to a population, staff's communication of a negative or positive view of the research to clients, and the ease with which researchers may dialogue with potential subjects of the research. Establishment of good relationships with institutional staff can make or break a study. Clear explanation of the project,

including potential expectations of staff, and the researcher volunteering to assist staff in certain tasks can greatly assist in the work of relationship building and subsequently the success of the project.

### *Who Conducts the Research?*

Understanding of culture, use of language, dress, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and more play significant roles in the potential for success in qualitative/ethnographic research (Bolton, 1990). Should the researcher be an “indigenous” person, a woman/former drug user/HIV-positive so that there is a deep understanding of the population being studied? In some cases, this is entirely appropriate and desired, as in the study of youth involved in same-sex relationships; reviews of studies have indicated that the sexual orientation of fieldworkers is critical in their ability to access the youth (Boxer, Cohler 1989). Likewise, women have been used to contact and do research with women participants due to cultural constraints and issues of safety concerning male-female relationships (Watters, Biernacki, 1989).

In contrast, it is clear that it “is not enough to be a member of a group to provide a cultural account of it” (Herdt, Boxer, 1991, p. 173). Being a gay Latino man with HIV does not take into account issues of class, knowledge of local slang (and the ability to comfortably use it), research training and sophistication in the interview process; these characteristics can mark the researcher as an outsider within a group and can be the downfall of the relationships that need to be constructed so that accurate data can be gathered (Carrier, 89).

Training or preparation of the ethnographer/interviewer must take place before the fieldwork begins, whether this is training others to conduct the research or if an

“outsider” will be the researcher. An understanding of the culture of the population (as best as possible given that the population is hidden) and use of language, as well as the cultural implications of the research techniques, must be included in the preparation for research or the training of researchers. Researchers working in teams may provide opportunities to discuss unearthed cultural and linguistic mores, leading to the development of richer relationships with those in the population being studied and a deeper understanding of the community and its workings (Herdt, Boxer, 1991).

### *Ethical Considerations and Hidden Populations*

Ethical considerations, particularly those of risk and safety in research with hidden populations, involve those studied and those person(s) who do the studying demand careful thought. Morgan, in his discussion of hidden populations, refers often to the “gaze of power”; that “what becomes incorporated into the ethnographic gaze of power is driven as much by the political priorities of the time as by the characteristics of the subject populations. As such, knowledge is linked to power” (1996, p. 2). The gaze of power links the ethnographer to the existing power structure, politically, as ethnographic study must be approved and funded by existing political and social institutions (Fitzgerald, 1996). Fitzgerald states, “to be enumerated is to be subject to the gaze of power and to be controlled. . . not being enumerated is as much a function of the characteristic behavior of the population as it is a function of the indicator and of the costs involved with constructing the indicator” (1996, p. 8-9). However, there is another side to this potential dilemma, that of “giving voice” to a population that is hidden so that they can tell their story in their own words. Researchers must be clear about the potential pitfalls to the population even when a study or journalistic piece is designed to

provide an opportunity for members of a hidden population to be heard.

In light of the consequences of the “gaze of power,” ethnographers have a profound responsibility to understand and question the origins of the research project, their place within the existing social/political structure and the consequences of that position (Fitzgerald, 1996), to determine the “client” of the research (Rainwater, Pittman, 1967), the audience for the results, and, as best they can, the benefits/pitfalls for those being researched; hidden populations under study, in short order, are no longer hidden (Fitzgerald, 1996). Who will use the information? For what purposes? (Rainwater, Pittman, 1967).

Questions of ethics weigh the individual’s right to privacy and protection from harm against the value of the research to the larger community (Hannigan Millstein, Dare-Winters, Sullivan, 1994). How will participation in the project affect the life (lives) of the person (people) participating? Will their physical person be in jeopardy? Their emotional health? What about those around them, including family, friends, acquaintances? How will the researcher gain safe access to people and groups where the incidents of physical violence are significantly higher than the rest of the population; where they might be witness to criminal activity? (Feldman, 1974; Polsky, 1967). What will the informed consent include, and how will it be agreed upon? Will subjects be compensated in any way? How will the researcher present him/herself in dress, mannerism, speech, and in relation to institution/authority? (Liebow, 1967). What is the responsibility of the researcher when the person participating needs help, legal, medical, or financial? How will data be collected and stored, and how will results be presented and used afterward?

Each of these questions represent an ethical dilemma that the researcher must

face in planning, conducting, and disseminating study results in any study, but even more so for hidden populations. Because hidden populations are often engaged in illicit or illegal activities, there may be a great number of groups interested in getting information about them; it is the responsibility of the researcher to make sure that the people she/he is working with are safe. However, researchers are divided in weighing the individual versus the larger good. Feldman (1989) states that in any situation where contributions to science are pitted against benefits to the research subjects, he would opt for the latter. Other researchers refer to "legitimate intervention," the need to gather data to stem the spread of disease (Carey, 1971). Power blends the two in suggesting the ethnographer assume some of the functions of health educator and caseworker (1989).

Examination of the underpinnings of one's own motivation for the research, considering the research from the subject's point of view, and being as clear as possible with the research subjects about the project and information dissemination throughout the study are factors and plans which must be acted upon throughout the project (Hannigan Millstein, Dare-Winters, Sullivan, 1994). Whenever possible, promises made to research subjects must be fulfilled by the researcher. External forces (media, law enforcement, etc.) might apply pressure in an effort to gain access to information that is confidential or is not ready to be released. Ensuring that these forces do not sway the commitments of the researcher to the participation is an ongoing task, and at times may place the researcher in difficulty or jeopardy, particularly when the external stakeholders are not in agreement with the researcher's contract with the participant (Rainwater, Pittman, 1967).

The National Association of Social Workers, the American Sociological Association, the American Anthropological Association, are a handful of US-based

examples of organizations that have developed codes of ethics around research to protect the people participating in studies. Psychological associations in Canada, the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, etc., all have codes of ethics (American Anthropological Assn., 2001; American Sociological Assn., 1996; NASW, 2001).

The following sections will address the ethical issues associated with each of the questions posed in the paragraphs above; they will not present air-tight solutions, but will raise the questions from the sides of the researcher and the researched that need to be considered.

### *Physical and Emotional Safety*

Issues of physical and emotional safety can surface with any research population; however, the study of hidden populations may present new dilemmas. Revelations by drug users, about self or others, such as who one uses with or buys from, can have physical and/or emotional consequences for the research subject (Power, 1989; Watters, Biernacki, 1989). These consequences can come from someone feeling they have been exposed; anger may result and physical or emotional abuse can be inflicted. Recalling loss or abuse, without an adequate support system, can cause a recurrence of grief or negative self-ideation that might lead to further self-endangering behavior (Herdt, Boxer, 1991). Data that has been intercepted or subpoenaed can be cause for criminal proceedings (Rainwater, Pittman, 1967) or ruin one's place in the family or community (as in the case of revealing HIV status) (Herdt, Boxer, 1991). It is critical for the researcher to have a clear legal knowledge of what persons or bodies can subpoena information and what control they can exert over data (Rainwater, Pittman, 1967).

From the side of the researcher, going into areas where illegal activities are the

norm without experience with a group, knowledge of the geography, or contacts with group members can be dangerous. Hidden populations are, by their nature suspicious of outsiders. Unknown persons showing up in an area and taking notes or asking questions may be exposing her/himself to harm (Power, 1989).

### *Responsibility of the Researcher re: Intervention*

Responsibility of the researcher has been defined previously in this section; here it is discussed in terms of the level of intervention in the lives of research subjects by the researcher. Decisions need to be made early on in the project, and revised as the work progresses. In the process of building trusting relationships to gain access to the hidden population, their culture, activities, and structure, “affectionate attachment” can result (Feldman, 1974). What are the implications of that attachment? In drug and HIV studies, does the researcher provide information or recommend treatment or treatment facilities or programs? Will he/she intervene in a medical emergency? Help someone obtain benefits or legal aid? Provide transportation? (Power, 1989). Each study will present its own array of potential involvements; the more these can be thought through beforehand, the easier it will be for the researcher to conduct her/himself in a consistent manner during the study.

### *Reciprocity*

Other than informed consent, what can the researcher offer the person under scrutiny, particularly when the goals of the research project may not benefit her/him in any direct way? In some research contexts, money is used as an inducement (Watters, Biernacki, 1989), although the introduction of money can cause skewed samples and expectation of future payment for participation in research. In their study of drug users, Watters and

Biernacki offered a stipend of \$8.00 to anyone willing to come in for an HIV test. Many people had to wait all day for the test, and they realized that the people who were coming were those to whom it was worth waiting all day for \$8.00. This limited the sample to that group and did not capture those who could potentially access the \$8.00 in other ways; data gathered from this sample would have been less generalizable to the overall population (1989).

Robert Power, a researcher in the United Kingdom, writes that the media often give monetary compensation to people interviewed, and they did not want to be perceived in the same way as the media during their study. He suggested that researchers might provide a “jump” in the line for drug treatment, sandwiches, or coffee. In some instances, the relationship that develops between the researcher and the participant is seen as giving something to the person participating. A ride to an appointment, as long as there is nothing illegal involved e.g., carrying drugs, may also be a way of giving back (1989).

### *Cost*

Finding and studying hidden populations can be more time consuming and costly than generating a random sample and distributing a questionnaire due to their low frequency in the general population. Screening geographic regions and households for those targeted for participation is “always many times the cost of interviewing subjects that are members of the population of interest” (Sudman, Sirken, Cowan, 1988). Funding studies of hidden populations will be dependent on the desire of those in positions to make money available; what are the factors that go into the decision-making? Cost/benefit to society? The need for demographic information e.g., public health research? A way for a

government to indicate it is taking action around an issue? All of these, including public pressure and funding agencies, in their choice of research projects, will often decide which population is studied (Fitzgerald, 1996).

### *Informed Consent*

Informed consent originated and grew with the practice of medicine based on the idea that the individual is the best position to assess self-interest. Information included in informed consent must include risks, benefits, and the purpose of the research project. In the past, risk referred to physical risk, harm from a medical intervention counterpoised against a common agreement of benefit to society. In work with hidden populations, risk may also be equated with physical harm, but can also include criminal prosecution and/or emotional distress. In assessing risk, the question must always be asked, "Who benefits from the research?" (Hannigan Millstein, Dare-Winters, Sullivan, 1994).

Unlike clergy, therapists, and lawyers to whom people come for help, informed consent is used by researchers as a way to "reduce the potential costs of participation" (Epstein, 2002); the promise of confidentiality and/or anonymity is one of the few reassurances available in psychological or sociological research (Rainwater, Pittman, 1967). People seek out clergy, therapists, and lawyers for help because of the common acceptance of their expertise in an issue. There may be a power imbalance, but the person (client) enters freely into the relationship because of the perceived benefits. Researchers may seem like "non-experts," asking for something from someone with no guarantee that the results will directly or indirectly benefit the participant.

In institutional or therapeutic settings, the request for participation in research

may present the participant with an untenable dilemma, particularly if there is reluctance to participate. The power imbalance between the client and the therapist or the doctor and the patient may make saying “no” almost impossible, raising the question as to whether consent can be given freely (Hannigan Millstein et al, 1994).

In reflecting on practice evaluation, ongoing debate exists as to whether or not to inform the client. One camp advocates for not being transparent so as not to skew the data. Others strongly advocate for disclosure for ethical reasons and for the integrity of the therapeutic relationship (Hannigan Millstein, et al, 1994)

What does informed consent cover during the research process? Does it protect the participant through the editing and information dissemination stage? The scope of confidentiality is often unclear in the informed consent document (Hannigan Millstein, Dare-Winters, Sullivan, 1994).

Researchers are bound by the right of privacy of the informant and by the fact that a commitment of confidentiality was made. The researcher has an obligation not to release any information that could identify an individual or link her or him with the information gathered. A significant problem with confidentiality occurs when the group being studied is small in number and when individuals within the group are considered responsible for the behavior of all other members; it may not be possible to protect their identities (Pittman, Rainwater, 1967). There is general agreement that more work needs to be done on informed consent (Pittman, Rainwater, 1967; Hannigan Millstein, et al, 1994; Power, 1989).

### *Protection of Information*

Informed consent can create a sense of security for the person being interviewed during

and after the study concerning anonymity, but plans need to be developed to protect raw data between the time it is created during interviews and the time it is destroyed after data transcription. The researcher, once trusted, has access to information that has the potential to be personally damaging or harmful to participants in the study; the researcher must ensure that this information is protected (Power, 1989). Names, addresses and other identifying information may be collected in multi-part studies of drug users; this information can be scrambled or encoded to protect the identity of the research participant (Hannigan Millstein, et al, 1994; Power, 1989). A drawback caused by disguising data can be a “flattening” of the rich dimensionality of the results and the researcher may add more of his/her own interpretation, lessening the voice of the participant (Hannigan Millstein, et al, 1994).

### *Memory*

Respondent memory is a critical factor in qualitative and quantitative research, and a great deal of controversy has grown up around the issue of memory over the past decade. The sides in the Recovered Memory debate are deeply polarized, one camp studying and writing that totally repressed memories of childhood abuse can and do emerge in adulthood, the other that recovered memories are false memories, created through the suggestion of the therapist or others (Koriat, 2000).

Memory and recall in hidden populations will contain elements that may interfere with recall in addition to ways that fall into the memory/recall problems of the general population. Jerome Bruner, in *The Process of Education*, states, “the principal problem with human memory is not storage but retrieval,” basing one’s ability to recall information on the capacity of a person to place a situation within an organized cognitive frame at and

after the time of occurrence (Kadushin, 1992, p.195). Lives of those in hidden populations can, at least at times, be fairly disorganized physically, cognitively (due to substance use) and emotionally. Reports gathered from drug users may indicate lapses in time and accuracy of recall due to the effect of the drug on the central nervous system. Severe alcoholism has been shown to produce Korsakoff's psychosis, resulting in permanent and profound memory loss caused by alcohol's damage to the brain (BBC News 2001). Adults may suppress or repress memories of childhood or adult sexual history, or may change the content of the incident if it does not correspond with the way a person either sees him/herself or wants to represent him/herself to his/her surroundings; this is especially salient with same-sex relations (Herdt, Boxer, 1991). Two additional bases may produce inaccurate recall; they are: the frequency/rarity of an event in one's life; and the amount of time between the event and the interview/conversation/survey. A study testing the reliability and validity of recall in AIDS-related research found that highly sexually active men had greater difficulty recalling sexual partners, and infrequent sexual practices were more likely to be remembered than frequent practices. For these men, recall of partners after one month was considered difficult (McLaws, Oldenburg, Ross, Cooper, 1990).

### *Data Use/Misuse*

A question that arises when researching hidden populations is whether the research, by its nature, hurts the very people it is attempting to help. Will the study reinforce stereotypes as in the early days of HIV/AIDS research and its being seen as the "gay men's disease"? (Rainwater, Pittman, 1967). When does the need for information supersede the potential damage to a group, and in these sensitive cases, what has the

researcher done to provide a cultural, social, and economic context for the population under study?

The media often want provocative, “juicy” pieces of information, both during and after a study. For many reasons, it might be tempting to promote an in-process study through the media, and in some instances, this might benefit the population under study. In studying hidden populations, this is most often not the case. Hard-won trust can be destroyed in an instant if research participants feel that they have been exposed in any way. Agencies may refuse to cooperate further if their name appears in the press connected to an evaluation (Rainwater, Pittman, 1967).

Another set of concerns arises when research is completed and information is disseminated. Should implications from the research be drawn if it means that there may be punitive policies put in place against the subjects of the research? (Power, 1989). What control does the researcher have over the spin that the media gives the outcomes? What is the responsibility of the researcher when information is misused? Rainwater and Pittman, in 1967, wrote that it is the responsibility of the researcher to correct misinterpreted or skewed analysis of study outcomes.

### *Conclusions*

At the beginning of the study of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the early 1980s, Herdt and Boxer called for dialogue between researchers and service providers, each contributing their special knowledge to stem the tide of the epidemic (1991).

The products of research with hidden populations cover the spectrum from the development of knowledge and theory, the development of programs, and the creation of policy. Power describes four specific contributions:

- Researchers have valuable contacts with often previously unreachable populations.
- They are often held in high esteem by the people with whom they have worked.
- They are generally deemed impartial and non-judgmental.
- They have inside information on location and arenas of drug use which are often unknown to others (1989, p.51).

This information can then be used to develop theory for quantitative evaluation, can open lines of trust and confidence so that participants may feel safe enough to access services, and can provide detailed information for the development of culturally and geographically appropriate program and policy design.

### **Research with Abused Children/Youth or Children/Youth Subjected to Violence**

Research with children holds the same dilemmas as research with adults, and more. Issues of age-appropriate interview techniques, confidentiality, consent, and legal intervention present different dimensions in study design development than with adult populations. This section reviews the literature on studies of children who have been sexually abused, physically abused, or exposed to violence; to uncover issues which may have arisen for researcher interviewing the girl, and to provide the widest possible range of research/interview techniques with children/youth.

#### *Definitions*

Operational definitions in studies of abused children or children subjected to violence differ from study to study. In cases of sexual abuse, variables in determining an

operational definition include: the actions/non-actions that constitute abuse; gender; relationship between victim and perpetrator; age of victim and perpetrator; perspective of the victim; witnessing abuse vs. being abused; etc.

In studies of children subjected to violence there seems to be less agreement on definitions between studies, definitions pertained specifically to the scope of the individual study without reference to definitions from other studies. These individualized definitions included children living in situations of domestic violence (within the family) and youth living in South Central Los Angeles after the Rodney King beating (outside of the family, in the neighborhood or larger community) (Taylor Gibbs, Bankhead-Greene, 1997).

Children having suffered abuse, sexual or physical, and those witnessing violence can be separated into two categories. The first are children who have been abused and are being interviewed and/or examined to determine whether the abuse happened, and the type and extent of the abuse to establish legal grounds for arrest and trial. The second are children who might have been abused or have witnessed violent conflict who are being included in a research study. If a child is in the second category and abuse is discovered, a report needs to be made to the authorities immediately.

### *Methodology*

In the literature reviewed for this study, research methodologies for studying abused children primarily involved qualitative interviews; however, an increasing number of researchers are combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the same study (Protacio-Marcelino, de la Cruz, Camacho, Balanon, 1990; Segal, 2000; Taylor-Gibbs, Bankhead-Green, 1997). All methodologies took into account the age of the child and

the nature of the concern, utilizing play interviews (dolls and other toys; drawing) with young children (Edwards and Forman, 1989), and moving through more structured forms of interview as children grow older. This does not imply that more formal interviewing techniques are not utilized with young children. Herman and Bernet state that children as young as three can be interviewed successfully as long as they can separate comfortably from their parent (1997).

In their qualitatively and quantitatively based study of youth attitudes in post-Rodney King Los Angeles, Taylor-Gibbs and Bankhead-Green utilized qualitative methodology to “develop research hypotheses for later experimental testing, [to] analyze complex attitudinal and emotional responses to a range of issues in families and groups, [to] provide deeper insights into the dynamic interactions and processes underlying change and conflict within organizations and communities and in exploring controversial community issues from different perspectives” (1997, p. 42). Quantitative tools were used to complete the picture with demographic information, behavior inventories and questionnaires.

Survey instruments should be normed on the population under study. In addition, if the researcher’s language is not the language of the population under study, the instrument should be translated from English into the participant’s language, then back-translated by separate translators into English for accuracy. It has also been found that not all assessment tools are appropriate for all cultures; this must be considered prior to the start of a study to ensure that the tool fits the study and the population for the most reliable results (Boushel, 1994).

Whether the methodology chosen is quantitative, qualitative, or a combination, any study with children must provide an encompassing and integrated method to

addressing children's psychosocial needs to help with the potential ramifications of revealing information (Protacio-Marcelino, de la Cruz, Camacho, Balanon, 1990).

Studies with children have utilized in-depth interviews, focused group discussion, indigenous methods, and networking (Protacio et al, 1996), and semi-structured interviews (Boushel, 1994). Study designs have been developed to provide optimal access to the population under study through a process of contacting key players for access and information, and to establish researcher credibility in the community (Glasgow, 1981; Taylor Gibbs, Bankhead-Greene, 1997). Taylor Gibbs and Bankhead-Greene decided to write thank you notes to all participants, and to provide outcome data to all interested (1997).

In most of the studies reviewed, audiotape was used to record the interviews with the consent of the participant (Herzberger, 1990; Taylor Gibbs, Bankhead-Greene, 1997). Horowitz identified one of the pitfalls of using a tape in her interviews with gang members; one of the members, when confronted with the tape recorder, significantly embellished his presentation to make a better story. Discrepancies were discovered during cross-referencing in other conversations (1986). In some of the studies, notes were also taken by the researcher(s).

### *Sampling and Access*

Defining the sample, access to participants, costs involved in gaining access to the sample, knowledge of the population, time, the culture, and the geography all play roles in determining the sample chosen for a particular study.

How a sample is defined and then selected will have a great deal to do with the findings of a study. In inner-city situations, or in certain cultural settings, gender may

present a sampling difficulty. Exposure to violence on the street may cause parents to keep girls indoors. In some cultures, it is completely inappropriate for a girl to be alone with a person, researcher or no, of the opposite sex (Boushel, 1994; Taylor Gibbs, Bankhead-Green, 1997). Cost is another factor in determining sampling. In some instances, the costs of random sampling can be prohibitive due to the size of an area being studied. In contrast, time may be the determining factor. Preparing an exhaustive targeted sampling strategy, taking into account the necessary mapping, meetings with community leaders and organizers, and finally with the representative sample themselves, may be prohibitive (Taylor Gibbs, Bankhead-Green, 1997).

### *Interview Guide Development*

In developing an interview guide, wording of the key question is critical for the most inclusive pool of defining variables. Wording that opens the definition of abuse, that allows the child to present his/her own story, creates the opportunity for new areas of exploration and potentially new interventions (Kaufman, Zigler, 1987).

### *Role of the Interviewer*

Interviewing children who have or have potentially suffered abuse has received a great deal of attention over the past two decades. Questions have arisen as to whether children accurately report abuse or whether external events in interviewing situations influence the report, polarizing mental health workers, the legal system, and the public (APA Online, 2001; Schetky, Boverman, 1985). There are those who state that any disclosure of sexual material by a child indicates abuse due to the child's lack of information about sex. The opposing camp holds that many, many reports of child sexual abuse are false due to the child's passively ingesting hints or suggestions made by the interviewer and

restating them in courtrooms. Ceci and Bruck believe that these positions are based on “partisan advocacy” rather than information gleaned from research (2001).

There are a number of factors that may influence the ability of a child to provide information in an interview situation. They include: interviewer bias—keeping the interview conversation based on the things the interviewer wants to hear and other subjects; repeated questions—children will change their answers to yes or no questions over the course of an interview; over the course of a number of interviews, the child will state her/his answer with more conviction whether the answer is correct or not; authority figures—power differentials are very obvious to most children and have the potential to effect differing responses depending on the perceived role of the researcher/interviewer both in everyday life and then in the research/interview situation, e.g., a police officer interviewing for evidence, and depending on the cultural community from which the child/youth comes. Young children may be frightened by a person in a uniform, potentially causing intimidation and skewing the report (Ceci, Bruck, 2001). In cultures where authority is highly respected and rigorously obeyed, as in Vietnam, the internalized norm may override the refugee participant’s inclination to hold information back, but only after a level of rapport has been developed. A single contact with participants will yield little (Segal, 2000). Determining the way the researcher is perceived by the participant can provide a good deal of information on social roles in an ethnography (Horowitz, 1986); leading questions—using particular words or structuring sentences in a particular way can imply meaning which children will pick up, and may alter their response to what they believe the interviewer wants to hear; premature closure of the interview—in exploring difficult material, the interviewer may feel uncomfortable and “shut down” the story before the child has time to complete the account (Schetky,

Boverman, 1985).

Recommendations for interviewing and events following the interview(s) have been developed. Interviewers must look at the whole picture of the child's life and potential past abuse, not only the present abuse, so that an understanding of the current situation is more likely. Interviewers should video- or audiotape interviews so that the child does not have to testify in court. Legal professionals, judges, lawyers, and police officers should be trained to interview so that the child is intimidated and retraumatized as little as possible and accurate information can be obtained (Schetky, Boverman, 1985). Custody issues must be taken into account; the incidence of reporting sexual abuse may arise as an actuality and reason for custody, or a way for one parent to gain custody by making abuse claims against the other parent (Herman, Bernet, 1997). Roles for the interviewer, the therapist, and the expert witness should be kept separate and performed by different specialists due to the differing natures of the jobs (Ceci, Bruck, 2001). Consequently, it is the job of the interviewer to build rapport with the child/family and to protect the child from harm (Edwards, Forman, 1989).

### *Establishing Credibility*

The researcher must establish credibility with the community and those specifically participating in the study. Differences in language, what is discussed, and dress can be indications of "otherness," and can be reasons for mistrust and fear with children and their families. These differences can limit the amount of engagement possible. Being seen as other can hold positive and/or negative consequences; being seen as part of the group studied may allow the children and their families to behave in a more natural manner and to be more open with the researcher. It can also blur the boundaries

between the role of interviewer and the role of friend/confidant/peer. Remaining separate may limit the discourse in the early stages of research, but this resistance may fade in time. Keeping separate may allow the researcher to remain more objective than if she/he were to become part of the action (Segal, 2000).

Having the researcher seen as knowing about the culture he/she is studying is critical in building credibility for both children and elders (Segal, 2000). Access to children is often provided through “gatekeepers,” leaders in the community, parents, clergy, public institutions such as schools; building credibility with them is critical for access to the desired population (Taylor Gibbs, Bankhead-Greene, 1997).

### *Data Analysis*

Interviews can be recorded on audiotape (with the consent of the participants) with responses summarized on interview forms, and should be transcribed by at least one bilingual person other than the interviewers, then checked by the interviewers (Boushel, 1994). It is also suggested that interviews be transcribed and coded by two raters to achieve inter-rater reliability for content and thematic analysis (Miles, Haberman, 1994).

### *Ethical Considerations*

#### **Confidentiality**

Issues of confidentiality in interviewing abused children are particularly difficult. Law and ethics mandate the reporting of abuse to legal authorities, rendering the promise of confidentiality and anonymity moot (Herzberger, 90). Building rapport with refugee children who have experienced traumatic life events may be impossible; anyone outside the immediate family may be perceived as an authority figure and likely to bring harm (Boushel, 1994). Past or anticipated experience of negative ramifications of study results

may cause failure of participation, the results being interpreted as a breach of confidentiality. Concerns of others accessing information about drug use, gang or other criminal activity can cause participants to “shut down” if the interviewer offers confidentiality and has not established credibility in the community (Taylor Gibbs, Bankhead-Greene, 1997)

### **Use/Misuse of Information**

As with hidden populations, use of outcomes in studies of children/youth who have been abused or witness to violence has provided great insight and also has been used to the detriment of the populations under study. Policy development and professional intervention are often next steps after research results are disseminated. The general public forms opinions, and the victims of abuse/witness to violence may try to identify with findings. This is illustrated by the now conventional wisdom that abused children will grow up to be abusers, a finding that has been taken to task by a number of researchers. Providing a more concise definition of child sexual abuse, which then provides more opportunities for specificity in research and intervention, presents a positive outcome of information (Herzberger, 1990).

Qualitative studies of African-Americans post-WWII have provided a wealth of salient information, but have also created negative stereotyping of the African-American community due the deficit-deviance perspective taken by researchers (Allen, 1978). As a result, people in the African-American community, from leaders and gatekeepers to the average person have been reluctant to participate in studies; this is particularly true when studies involve children who are accessed through community gatekeepers (Taylor Gibbs, Bankhead-Greene, 1997).

### *Culture and Children*

Due to communication barriers, personal and family background, and ethnic community identity that pertain to all research participants (Lum, 1992), the researcher needs an understanding of the protective environment of children, including the structural, cultural, personal and interpersonal factors which combine to make a child's world more or less safe. It is critical to understand the wider cultural context (Boushel, 1994; Protacio-Marcelino, de la Cruz, Camacho, Balanon, 1990). What are the cultural expectations regarding the presence of a parent or guardian during the interview process? In some cultures in Africa, it is inappropriate for a girl or woman to be interviewed without a male elder present (Montero, 2001). Does this affect the data provided by the participant? In refugee communities in the United States, children are more likely to be factual in their answers if they believe their behavior is socially sanctioned, anonymous, and that there will be no ramifications. There is some indication that interviews with naturally occurring groups in a community, taking place over several sessions, has the potential to generate factual and rich data (Segal, 2000).

### *Conclusions*

In qualitative studies, generalizability has been difficult if not impossible. A number of researchers believe that by studying the problems of an inner city situation, the results can be generalized to other inner cities with similar long-standing problems so that social and economic development policies can be developed or changed (Gibbs, 1993).

### **Domestic Violence and Sexual Harassment**

Studies of domestic violence and sexual harassment against women are included for

review in this chapter due to the variables of gender, violence and potentially hidden aspects of the victimization, potentially reflective of the study of girls in armed groups.

### *Contextual/Conceptual Starting Point*

Partner violence against women and sexual harassment may be two of the most contentious issues in research circles given their socio-political-gender nature. Researchers bring vastly differing worldviews to studies, deeply influencing the concept, context, methodology, and outcomes. Conceptual frameworks range from “controlled, systematic, and dispassionate observation” to ensure the “best interest of advocacy” through identification of variables that delineate and describe partner violence (Jacobson, 1994, p. 83), through feminist research, including and utilizing a careful conceptual framework of the socio-political-gender structures that influence the ways in which research is conducted and how the information gathered is used.

Studies of partner violence against women and sexual harassment often originate in the context of the woman as victim, omitting the survivor strengths also present. Alternatively, studies seeking strengths can have impact on therapeutic intervention and program design. The researcher, in their approach to the participant, should hold both victim and survivor ideas in mind (O’Donohue, 1996).

### *Defining Terms*

Years of studying partner violence has led to a plethora of relevant concerns which have been defined both through the voices of the people studied and the writing of researchers. In early studies of partner violence against women, both the study and the instruments were designed to capture the abusive incidents that occurred with a concentration on physical acts and excluding sexual and psychological abuse. Because of

the voices of those interviewed, other physically abusive acts were included, including sexual abuse and rape. Most recently research has focused on psychological abuse in the context of the physically and/or sexually abusive relationship (O'Donohue, 1996).

Terminology used to define partner violence against women often originates through the political/theoretical orientation of the researcher. Feminist researchers may feel that the term "domestic violence" is in itself excessively neutral and lacking in specificity given the predominance of women abused over men (O'Donohue, 1996).

It is agreed by a number of authors that much work needs to be done to define partner violence against women and sexual harassment against women by carefully delineating variables (Arvey, Cavanaugh, 1995; Jacobson, 1994; O'Donohue, 1996). Does partner violence include only visible physical injury? Do attempts at injury count? How does the researcher measure emotional and psychological injury? Sexual harassment against women may be even more difficult to quantitatively define, given that it can run the gamut from unwanted looks, standing too close and "accidental" touches, through verbal threats and use of physical force (Arvey, Cavanaugh, 1995).

### *Methodology*

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods have been used in studies of partner violence against women and sexual harassment. Variables, including the nature and use of the information that the study wants to capture, constraints of cost, access to sample, and time frame of the study, and the conceptual framework of the researcher, determine the use of method (Arvey, Cavanaugh, 1995; Jacobson, 1994; O'Donohue, 1996).

Formats for qualitative studies of partner abuse include open-ended interview (asking the woman to "tell her story") and semi-structured interview, often in two stages

with the open-ended interview to come first, then the semi-structured to follow. Within the semi-structured interview, it is suggested that questions be phrased in such a way as to capture information but not to blame the woman (O'Donohue, 1996).

Because both sexual harassment and partner violence against women are often hidden, it may be difficult to find corroboration of the incidents by others, and researchers have found that self-report is often the preferred method of research. Care must be taken by the researcher if self-report is the sole method of information gathering, due to the dilemmas associated with retrospective reports (these are discussed later in this section). Time limits of 12 months are recommended for self-reporting (Arvey, Cavanaugh, 1995).

Quantitative methodology has been used in studies of sexual harassment. To establish prevalence of sexual harassment of women in a particular workplace, an anonymous questionnaire might be sent to every woman in a workplace. Researchers suggest that the wording of the instrument should specifically omit the words "sexual harassment" in the questions/statements, and should describe behaviors of sexual harassment and the feelings associated with those behaviors for greater accuracy in the self-report (Arvey, Cavanaugh, 1995).

In both qualitative and quantitative literatures, it is recommended that there be triangulation of data collection, open-ended or semi-structured interviews combined with a survey instrument (Arvey, Cavanaugh, 1995; O'Donohue, 1996). Other methods to establish accuracy of data include gathering data from other individuals in proximity to the person affected (difficult due to the often hidden nature of the incidents), asking the participant to recall already discussed events at a later time to compare for consistency, and test-retest sessions when using survey instruments. Including those in

an organization who have not experienced sexual harassment to report on what they have seen and the overall environment of an organization can provide valuable data in assessing rates of sexual harassment. Comparing interview outcomes with company reports (job evaluations, sexual harassment reports, etc.) if possible, can provide additional information for comparison (Arvey, Cavanaugh, 1995).

### *Sampling*

Sampling considerations for partner violence against women and sexual harassment share many of the difficulties associated with hidden populations. As previously stated, partner violence against women and sexual harassment are often invisible events unless visible physical evidence of abuse exists or there are corroborating witnesses to acts of abuse or sexual harassment.

In incidents of partner violence against women, the location chosen for the study is very important, given that this will determine the sample. Women living in a shelter specifically for protection due to the potential of more severe abuse and uncertainty about the future may report more severe abuse, and present greater post-abuse symptomatology, than women remaining in their homes with the person doing the battering (O'Donohue, 1996).

Convenience samples of women who have experienced sexual harassment utilizing survey methodology have pointed to two possible sampling errors. Women who have been sexually harassed may be more likely to return completed surveys than those who have not, or, women who have been sexually harassed may not want to dredge up painful memories and may decide not to complete a survey. The use of a control group is recommended, paying particular attention to demographic data and job performance

information (Arvey, Cavanaugh, 1995).

### *Ethical Considerations*

#### **Safety**

Safety and confidentiality are critical in studies of partner violence against women and sexual harassment. Sample recruitment, study design, and data analysis and dissemination should place the woman's safety above all else (Jacobson, 1994). In controlled environments, such as prisons, women may choose not to volunteer for participation in a study of physical abuse within the institution in fear of retribution. One study of incarcerated women was designed so that signed consent forms were given to them by the trained student interviewer, and neither the superintendent of the facility or the head researcher knew the names of the women participating (O'Donohue, 1996).

#### *Memory and Retrospective Reporting*

The controversy over memory is as strong with adults as with children. Once again, researchers, the press, and the general public have opinions about the ability of people to remember accurately. Is memory an actual "storehouse" of events, or a "representation and reconstruction of past events?" (Koriat, 2000, p. 2). Can people suddenly remember events which previously they were not able to? Significant division exists among researchers.

Fugue amnesia (hysterical amnesia) has been shown to exist, and occurs when a person is traumatized to the point where the mind is not able to cope with the stimulus. In fugue amnesia, the memory often returns within a few hours or days, albeit often incomplete (BBC News, 2001). Conversely, studies have been designed to test for spontaneously occurring false recalls. These studies presented participants with a list of

words that were synonymous with an omitted word, and then tested for recall of the words on the list and the non-present, synonymous word. The longer the list of words became, the poorer the recall of the words on the list, but the more the non-present word was “remembered” (McDermott and Roediger, 1998).

The further away from a specific event one finds oneself, the more difficult it may be to recall as it happened due to personal feelings about the event, depersonalization, and/or derealization at the time of the event, or one’s present life circumstances, which may alter the way one views the past. In addition, definitions of abuse and harassment have changed over time, and memories that were stored pre-definition may have been reduced or lost over time (Arvey, Cavanaugh, 1995).

By contrast, events of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, and sexual harassment may be so strong that one remembers clearly each detail, including sounds, smells, and tastes.

It is clear that there are cases and studies that present both ends of the memory spectrum, and all points in between. Koriat may sum it up best in his statement, “...despite the enormous amount of research and theorizing on memory in the past century, there is still no consensual conceptual framework for thinking about memory...[T]his state of affairs reflects the multifarious nature of memory itself, calling for a pluralism of approaches to the study of memory” (2000, p.1).

### *Culture*

In addition to the lack of delineated variables, culture plays a significant role in the interpretation of partner violence against women and sexual harassment. If a woman is told, and witnesses, from a young age, that men “flirt” with women as a part of the

culture, their ideas of what may constitute sexual harassment may differ significantly from what the law has determined to be sexual harassment (O'Donohue, 1996).

Studies have shown that many women who have been violently abused by a partner have developed behavioral adaptations to protect themselves from the abuse; this can be interpreted as a "culture" of women who have been abused. These behaviors may present in the process of a study, particularly during an interview situation. They include: "manipulation," the belief that she must control all aspects of any situation to keep herself and her children safe; this can result in power struggles; expression of anger, often internalized and expressed indirectly during the battering relationship. Once free of the relationship and having feelings validated, these feelings can emerge as rage; dissociation, which may include memory loss; denial and/or minimization of the violence, to maintain self-esteem and rationalize staying in the relationship; and compliance, stemming from the attempt to protect herself from abuse and this may result in lack of follow-through (O'Donohue, 1996).

### *Use of Data*

As with the previous two sections on hidden populations and children, the press, television and radio will often pick the most sensational study results on which to report, or they may pick certain conclusions of a study and report them out of context of the study as a whole (Jacobson, 1994).

### **Cultural Context and Research**

The exploration of the impact of culture on research has been given greater attention in the past two decades. It has finally been recognized that the basic tools of research, the construction of methodology and survey instruments, are biased toward one group or

another (Yoshioka, 1999). IQ tests and college boards in the United States have been shown to be flawed in that the type of questions presented may not be understood by groups who do not have the life experience of the population on which the test was normed (Fallows, 1980). Questions developed for semi-structured interviews may or may not be understood by a participant, or the participant may not, due to cultural norms (including taboos of subject matter, gender of researcher, etc.), feel it is appropriate that they answer (Boushe, 1994; Protacio, et al, 1996). Given these circumstances, an exploration of the impact of culture on research is vital for the construction of a reliable instrument.

### *Conceptual Frames and Models*

To begin effective cross-cultural research, the researcher must have a desire to move from the conceptual framework in which s/he lives and works to a realm of uncertainty in which some of his/her primary assumptions about research, and indeed, the world, may be questioned (Azmi, 1999). What is considered healthy and permissible in one culture may be shunned in another (Ibrahim, Arrendondo, 1986). The framework of a study must be grounded in the perceptions of the targeted population because it is from these concepts that accurate information can be gleaned. Azmi, in his overview of research with Muslim communities in Canada states, "Despite rigorous research methodologies and despite the best of intentions, the result [of a study] will be that gathered data will be of dubious value" (1999, p. 153).

There are a number of principles that have been defined in relation to culturally sensitive research. They include the recognition and address of such cultural factors as ethnicity, race, religion, gender, life-style, language, values, modes of problem-solving

and decision-making, and social and economic structure and norms. Designing methodology that is culturally appropriate to the group and topic under study, and working to unearth definitions of terms that may seem transparent to the researcher is a complex and time-consuming task (Azmi, 1999; Caplan, Nelson, 1973; Ibrahim, Arrendondo, 1986).

Within cultures dwell other cultures; this was made obvious to the world during the World Trade Center and Pentagon catastrophes, acts committed by Muslim extremists. The vast majority of Muslims through the world do not identify with the group(s) that perpetrated the acts, the definition of the religious foundation and interpretation of the Koran differs significantly among groups. Exploring the meanings that specific groups attach to their religious beliefs and the ways in which those beliefs dovetail with their lives will provide more accurate conclusions in research.

The need for openness in the cross-cultural research process demands flexibility in methodological design that might not be necessary in same-culture studies; at least at the start, cross-cultural research is an inductive process, and key or cultural informants can play a vital role in helping to define cultural norms and terms, and to formulate questions (USAID, 2001; Yoshioka, 1999). A willingness to try new options and develop innovative solutions in an ongoing manner in sampling guide, or survey instrument development, timing, and cost, without sacrificing the integrity of the study, will be necessary. A team approach is recommended so that many sides of an issue can be considered and reflected upon (Yoshioka, 1999).

Research is essential to theory building, particularly qualitative research. Triandis and Brislin have questioned the universality of psychological theories based on western research methodologies; they believe that psychological theories should be crafted based

on cultural relevance (in Ibrahim, Arredondo, 1986).

There are a number of established theoretical models from which one may develop a culturally competent study. The ecological metaphor, popular in social work and social science, draws from analyses of race and power, and a host of socio-psychological and political theories for understanding those of another culture. The cultural literacy model states that social work holds many of the answers to providing culturally relevant practice and research models, that it knows the problems, the solutions, and the cultures. This is a broad claim that does not take into account the “culture within a culture” dynamic and grants too much knowledge to the profession (Tsang, Bogo, 1997). Dyche and Zayas, and Greene provide another model, one in which the practitioner/researcher does not deny that s/he has a base of knowledge, but is willing to suspend what s/he knows when confronted with the diverging views of the participant. The approach is to learn from the participant by expressing curiosity and engaging in a course of mutual learning and transformation for the researcher and person participating. (Dyche, Zayas, 1995; Greene, 1995).

### *Definition of Terms*

Defining terms, in this section, refers to defining terms that are included in the hypothesis of a quantitative study, or the initial question of a qualitative study. Blumer states, “human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them” (Blumer, 1969, p.2). If a quantitative study were being conducted to determine the need for welfare/public assistance among devout Muslims, traditional western or Judeo-Christian definitions of welfare might be very misunderstood.

To most Americans, the word “welfare” connotes the receipt of public monies

for food, clothing, and shelter. It often carries a negative connotation. In the devout Muslim world, welfare does not fit into the general American definition. The giving of charity is one of the five pillars of Islam, and as such is seen as mandatory and sacred. Native Americans, and African and Asian populations may have views that differ from the mainstream, and also from those of the Muslim culture (Azmi, 1999). The cognitive associations and attitudes toward welfare, expectations of whether the community or the government provides for the poor and the perception of one's role in the helping process are all affected by the cultural views embraced by a particular group (Yoshioka, 1999). If the researcher understood "welfare" to mean public assistance, and went ahead with a questionnaire using the term welfare in that sense, the study would be flawed from the start and the conclusions would be skewed. This is but one example of ways in which terminology can undermine the outcome of a study.

### *Methodology*

Qualitative methodology is used in cross-cultural research when the main purpose of the research is to generate recommendations, when qualitative information is sufficient for decision-making, when the researcher wants to know the how and why of a situation, and when preliminary information is needed for the development of a quantitative study (USAID, 2001).

To begin the exploration of a topic such as HIV/AIDS, it is imperative for the researcher to understand what the group under study understands HIV/AIDS to mean. This necessitates beginning research with a qualitative methodology to discover the meanings the group associates with HIV/AIDS. Here again, cultural informants and community leaders can play an indispensable role in helping the researcher to formulate

her/his inquiry and in directing the researcher to the appropriate people to interview. Researcher credibility, discussed later in this section, is a critical component of success in this early stage (Azmi, 99).

In cross-cultural qualitative research, it is suggested that questions be grouped in three categories, beginning with facts, moving to opinions, and following up with questions of judgment (USAID, 2001). Seidman follows a similar method, suggesting the progression of questions from the public to the personal to the private (1998). These methods promote a feeling of natural progression in questioning, not jumping to intrapersonal queries so quickly that the person being questioned feels exposed and vulnerable.

Participatory Action Research is a research methodology in which the researchers are people within the group being researched. Participants are trained to develop instruments, administer them or interview participants, collect data, analyze it, and draw conclusions. Although people in a group or community cannot pretend to be familiar with everything about the community or group, they have a much broader and deeper knowledge base than someone from outside. Participatory research was developed to “level the playing field,” to let people know that they can be producers and owners of knowledge within and for their communities instead of having an outsider come in and tell the community what they have “discovered” in their process of research (Healy, 2001).

### *Research Teams*

Utilizing a team approach is another method of conducting research. Unlike participatory research, teams are gathered from the country/region/city to be studied,

but are not necessarily part of the population being studied. This does not mean, however, that conceptual understanding on research methodology is shared with the originators of the research. All that a member of a research team is and brings to a study will penetrate the interactions between researcher and participant. Life experiences, conceptions of illness, health (both physically and psychologically), and treatment, patterns of interaction will all “play out” during the course of a study. This is particularly true when studies are qualitative/ethnographic (Yoshioka, 1999).

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Data collection has been accomplished through the use of note taking, video or audiotape (Tsang, Bongo, 1997).

Throughout the study process, attention must be paid to the impact of the specific culture/cultural group on the conceptualization of the study, the development of methodology, and during data analysis. The researcher, having (hopefully) gained some experience and understanding of the group or individuals participating will need to interject this understanding into data gathered. Understanding the problem and priorities within the problem through the lens of the participant will not only allow for a more accurate description of the problem, but will also allow for the development of culturally relevant, and subsequently useful, interventions (Yoshioka, 1999).

It is recommended that, in interview research, 1-2 pages of notes should be written after each interview, breaking them down into themes, issues, and recommendations. These should include: position of the person interviewed; reason for inclusion in study; main points made during interview; potential implications of these points (USAID, 2001).

### *Trust/Engagement/Role of Worker/Communication Skills*

When conducting the research with people outside of the researcher's own culture, the first task is to create a space where the participant can feel safe and that his/her differences are respected, whether in qualitative or quantitative studies. This space is created by clarity of explanation of the research project, exploration of concepts and definitions underpinning the research, use of the information obtained, and, in the case of qualitative or ethnographic research, may include some self-disclosure by the researcher (Azmi, 1999). In qualitative studies, it should be stated up front that agreement on terms does not need to be reached, but an understanding and mutual respect should be developed between the researcher and the participant (Sue and Zane, 1977). The expression of empathic understanding, authentic curiosity about the person and her/his life, and a non-judgmental attitude can facilitate trust-building (Azmi, 1999).

Situations may arise when a specific type of person should be selected to conduct interviews or deliver survey instruments. Older women interviewing younger women may be more appropriate and culturally accepted than older men interviewing younger women. People from outside a religious or ethnic group may not be able to gain entry into that community; working in a team with a person who has access may be the only way for information to be gathered (Azmi, 1999).

### **Journalism in Situations of Violent Conflict**

The role of journalists in conflict situations is to report the situation on the ground for distribution to newspapers, periodicals, wire services, radio, and television. Journalists are often called to place themselves in situations of great personal jeopardy to obtain timely information. Safety, objectivity, ethics, desire to intervene, understanding of a situation

before entry, and other concerns are ever present in reporting violent conflict. This section will review the purposes of war reporting, ethical concerns, information needed before entering a conflict situation, and safety concerns that journalists experience when reporting in situations of violent conflict.

### *Purpose of Reporting on War*

The primary purpose of reporting in general is to provide information to the general public (Adie, 1993; Blakemore, 1999; Gelb, 1999; Gjelten, 1998). The same holds true for reporting on situations of violent conflict; helping the public (American or other) to understand the international theater in which conflicts are taking place is the journalist's job (Blakemore, 1999; Gutman, 1999; Kalb, 1999). There is a need to get to the heart of a situation to determine what is actually happening, to separate the stories and/or rumors spread by troops, governments, politicians, aid agencies, and civilians.

"...[W]orthwhile reporting always involves getting to the heart of the story and seeing for yourself. It's the only way you can stand by your words afterwards, the only guarantee that you can give your listeners, or viewers, or readers." (Adie, 1993, p. 6).

Journalists have the capacity to provide information using a critical eye, (at their best) they do not have a stake in sides or the need to project an image so that policy is shaped as do governments and the information they may provide (Gelb, 1999; Vulliamy, 1999).

Having accurate, unbiased information is particularly necessary for those caught in the midst of a conflict. Refugees need food and shelter, but they also need to know where to go to obtain it that is safe, how to deal with life in a camp, the manifestations of traumatic events, and illness. Training local people to be journalists can be a great asset in times such as these (Girardet, 1999).

The access to conflict zones that reporters have in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have created new niches for the information provided. Military planning rooms are now equipped with television monitors and military personnel carefully follow the reports of journalists from CNN, etc., to develop fighting strategies (Gjelten, 1998). Reporters provide insights into the multiple sides of a conflict, depicting not only the battles and the political ideas behind the conflict, but also the social, economic, and environmental consequences (Olorunyomi, 1999). There are times when the presence of a journalist will alter the course of action of a soldier/politician because s/he knows that the eyes of the world may soon be upon her/him; this can also backfire for the journalist and s/he can find her/himself in situations of grave personal danger (Kurspahic, 1999). Politicians are informed by the press in addition to other sources, and policy development is often influenced by the media's presentation of an event or subject (Powers, 2001). Journalism can provide the ground to stimulate research.

### *Role of Journalists in Situations of Violent Conflict*

There is much current debate on the role of the journalist in situations of violent conflict. There are those journalists who feel that they are there to gather information, tease out facts, and relay that information in an understandable form to the public (Adie, 1993; Blakemore, 1999; Gelb, 1999; Gjelten, 1998). Another point of view is that journalists, often knowing the situation on the ground in detail, should make recommendations as to the direction of policy formation (Wolfsfeld, 1999). Other journalists feel that they should, in situations of humanitarian crisis, become involved in helping by providing their labor or by giving journalistic emphasis to the "side" that is suffering, or to move the world to become involved as in the Rwandan genocide or the

death camps in Bosnia (Vulliamy, 1999). Acting in ways that provide conflict resolution is another, relatively new, theme in journalistic discussion (Wolfsfeld, 1999), as is reporting on non-violent alternatives and peace in the hope of preventing deadly conflict (Olorunyomi, 1999). Finally, there is a movement in war journalism to not only report events, but to help to build community through the study of the same civil society to which journalists report (Rosen, 1999).

Many journalists would say that their job is to tease out the facts in a situation. This moves from reporting strictly on what one sees to beginning to develop probing questions that explore more deeply the roots of what one is seeing so that the information can be reported. At their best, journalists "...go in with naïve questions and the deliberate aim of educating ourselves and at the end of the day, we hope we figure it out" (Gutman, 1999, p.17). Tom Gjelten believes that mining the situation for facts is the job of journalists, that determining "truth" (a process of discernment) is better left to editorial writers, and that recommendations are better left to politicians, the military and the public (1998).

Journalists have editors, and editors have responsibility both to the news and to the selling of the news; their job is to see "that the world is explained, not that it is improved" (Gjelten, 1998, p. 17). The rule of thumb in determining whether a story is worthy of reporting includes: importance of the story, including broad values, interests, and resources at stake; dynamism, there is suspense with changing events and an uncertain outcome; illustrativeness, the story explains the event and suggests trends; and interest, the story must hold the attention of the public (Gjelten, 1998).

Like social researchers, journalists face structural limitations in obtaining information in a situation of violent conflict. Issues of military clearance, communication

of the limits placed on reporting, and access to geographic areas can limit a reporter's access to information (Blakemore, 1999).

### *Safety*

Journalists, other than fighters and more recently civilians, face the greatest personal safety risk when covering situations of violent conflict. To "get the story," they often place themselves in situations of great peril, interviewing military personnel behind lines of fire, photographing scenes of battle. Because of this risk, the International Federations of Journalists, located in Belgium, has developed a Code of Practice for the Safe Conduct of Journalism. The Code includes roles for the individual reporter, the organizations for which they work, the governments involved in the conflict, and the general public in areas of conflict. In summary, the Code states:

- Journalists shall be properly equipped for all assignments, including first-aid materials, transportation, communication tools, and Kevlar vests if necessary.
- Media organizations shall provide pre-assignment risk awareness training and will provide social protection, medical treatment and health care, and life insurance, and will protect freelance or part-time staff in the same manner as full-time staff.
- Public authorities shall inform their personnel of the need to respect the rights and physical integrity of journalists (IFJ, 2001, p. 1).

Assessing risk is critical for a journalist's survival. Working with a team, discussing the situation and making joint decisions should be the bedrock of risk assessment. To enhance this decision-making, Anne Nelson, Director of the

International Program of the Columbia School of Journalism, has a “wish list” for journalists going into the field:

- Knowledge about the region and the conflict
- Some linguistic proficiency
- An understanding of geopolitics and diplomacy
- Knowledge of military conflicts, including armaments and strategies
- Knowledge of international law and the laws of war
- Logistical safe functioning in the field, such as avoiding landmines, car tags, etc.
- Training in technology

She states that gaining this knowledge would take about 10 years and \$300,000 worth of academic training. As much of this as possible is desirable, but at a minimum, the person must have the skills to report “who is doing what to whom, as well as the analytical capacity in order to say who are the players and what are their motivations” (1999, p. 14). Kemal Kurspahic, former editor of *Oslobojenje*, a Bosnian independent newspaper, stated that journalists who come to a situation with no knowledge of the history of situation are vulnerable to misinterpretation of events and to being swayed by those whom they interview (1999).

In war reporting, there is a critical need for backup and support. Journalists who have been in the field know that having an organization behind one is critical to one’s safety and access. The team approach and credentials can make the difference between living and dying. If one becomes injured, who will help if s/he is traveling alone? How does one establish neutrality if one is taking photos of an operation or troops with no credentials? Having an institution behind one and a decision-making team on the ground

(even if the team is two or three) can be the difference between good and bad decisions and life and death (Adie, 1993).

### *Ethics and Journalism*

Journalists, by the very nature of their work, have long been caught in situations that call for ethical examination. Journalists face many ethical dilemmas, including witnessing laws (local, national, and international) being broken, atrocities that violate human rights, suffering of human beings (Adie, 1993), the inherent dilemma of covering war as a stimulant to the general public versus covering peace or peace processes thereby potentially exacerbating conflict (Wolfsfeld, 1999), pressure to use the media to help stop war (Gjelten, 1998), potential censorship for gaining access to areas, reporting facts in opposition to disseminating propaganda (Blakemore, 1999), placing one's self and others with whom one works in the line of sight of those whom a report may make look bad (Olorunyomi, 1999), reporting on an activity in which others may be harmed (Blakemore, 1999), the extent of what is shown or reported, and the "race to be first" (Powers, 2001), who to believe, who the "enemy" is and how a reporter treats stories concerning that "enemy" (Ignatieff, 1999), use of language to incite or calm a situation (Gutman, 1999).

Codes of ethics for journalists have been developed in many countries; these can be of significant assistance in determining a course of action, and clarify many of the contradictions faced by journalists in the field and presented in this section. In addition to these codes, there seems to be an underlying sense that journalists are first and foremost human beings, and that as a human being, one has responsibilities to the larger human family. In post-conflict situations, reporters have chosen to testify in courts of

law and at war crimes tribunals such as the one in Rwanda due to their witnessing of crimes against people and humanity (Gjelten, 1998). On the ground, however, human kindness can lead to death or injury of journalists. Katie Adie relates a story of helping a wounded woman in Bosnia by transporting her to a medical facility. Three days later, a press vehicle much like the one in which they were riding was attacked, and two journalists were wounded. The attackers stated that if the press helped the enemy, that they, too, were the enemy (1993). Situations such as these indicate the difficulties of instantaneous decision-making, and illustrate why journalists most often opt for non-intervention. From experience, they know that they do not know enough to make appropriate decisions even when their humanity is telling them to intervene.

### **Common Themes in the Literature Review**

This is a long review of the literature; however, it is not solely a review of one literature, it is a review of five literatures. Surprisingly, much commonality emerged throughout the five. Themes emerged in each subject area. These themes were fairly consistent from subject area to subject area, and determined the structure of this chapter. Conceptual starting points, defining the population, methodological and ethical considerations, safety, and outcomes were topical areas that most of the subject areas had in common. Each of these areas had a number of sub-themes, which also were common throughout the literatures.

Two main themes emerged in the literature on definitions, defining the population for study and defining the language used by the population; this second category was especially true for populations who may have slang terms for many ideas or actions. Operational definitions may vary within a named group; the category “abused

women” may be comprised of sexually, physically, or emotionally abused women, and can range in age anywhere from teens through old age. In the literature concerning partner violence against women, many studies have been conducted; new variables on types of abuse have emerged during studies. This has led to the possibility of subsequent studies, either including the new variables in an existing definition of abuse, or developing a study to look at the specific variable that emerged. Expanding definitions have led to both more inclusive and more in-depth studies being conducted.

Words describing groups can become stigmatizing or infer responsibility in either unfair measure or where it does not exist. The term “prostitute” has recently been changed to “sex worker,” implying that trading sex for money is work and that there is another party involved in an exchange. This type of change may lead to a greater understanding of the population and may help to de-politicize work with populations considered taboo by various cultures and groups.

Methodology, in all of the studies mentioned, is either qualitative or a blend of qualitative and quantitative, with the quantitative piece focusing on demographic data. There was concern around the establishment of culturally and linguistically appropriate quantitative instruments, and most of the methodology suggested movement from qualitative to quantitative. When possible, secondary and tertiary sources of data were obtained for corroboration of interviews or questionnaires. Focus groups formats were utilized with community groups to gain understanding of the environment and issues the community was facing and to build relationships. Work with children was presented as particularly amenable to qualitative work depending on the age of the child and the topic of the study, however, there was a call for researchers to consider children in a holistic manner and not just to focus on the specific issue of research. Participatory Action

Research was cited as a way to reduce power imbalances and to create ownership of the process and the material by those affected by the issue being researched.

Pragmatic concerns were presented in relation to methodology, including purpose of the study, time frame, cost, and access. Safety, both for the researcher and the participant, was also given as criteria for method choice.

Sampling and access were concerns throughout all of the literatures. In public health, it was clear that there was a need to determine numbers of HIV-infected people in relation to the general population to determine whether rates of infection were rising or falling over time, and to determine spread. This was not the case when the study sought to determine the effects of physical abuse in the home on the children present. The purpose of the research determines the size and criteria for the sample, and in turn that sample (in conjunction with the reliability and validity of the research instrument and the researcher) will determine the results of the study.

Study results may differ depending on whether the sample is institutionalized or is truly voluntary. Institutional situations may include a women's shelter, prison, or a program. Does the person feel coerced into participation? Does she believe she they will be treated badly if they do not participate? Can the researcher get into the facility? Often, a relationship with the gatekeeper of the institution is mandatory for access and success of a study.

The literature introduced the idea that mixed societies need a broad representative sample, or there is no ability to generalize results. This would also hold true for a wide age range, or a mixed male/female study; however, cost is seen as a factor in both the size and representativeness of the sample.

Ways to establish the most representative sample possible for a particular study

were discussed, and there was concern indicated in using convenience sampling methods in relation to the reliability of study results. Significant work has been done on targeted sampling; other studies utilized snowball methods. Samples often evolved during the course of an ethnographic study, leading to the need for an expansion of the subsequent study components (IV users including amphetamine users as well as heroin users).

Development of research guides was mentioned in the literature concerning research and children which stressed guide wording to allow children to tell their stories, but was not considered in detail in any of the other literatures.

Building relationships and establishing credibility with gatekeepers and participants were stressed in a number of the literatures. Credibility and trust were seen as necessary not only with the participants in the study, but also with families, program, or institutional gatekeepers, the wider community, and legal authorities such as lawyers, judges, or government representatives. Without the endorsement of community gatekeepers, research might be impossible due to lack of access to potential participants. Controversy exists around the potential benefits/deficits of either being one of the group being interviewed or outside of the group; being seen as part of a group, e.g., HIV-affected, can be a bridge to others who are HIV-affected, and speaking the same language or wearing similar dress can be immediately comforting to participants. On the other hand, being like the participants may blur the boundary between being seen as a researcher and being seen as a friend or peer, and being other than the participants may allow the researcher a greater degree of objectivity. This is not the same as being ignorant of a participant's culture; one can be other and have a deep understanding of the context from which a participant comes. Gender and age of interviewers/researchers can also play a very important role in trust-building.

A team approach, when a researcher is unfamiliar with the group to be researched, may be a way in which the researcher can gain access to the community and build relationships. Team members who are of the same geographic region, speak the same language or share the same culture have the opportunity to contribute at least some indigenous understanding to a qualitative or ethnographic study; however, the “culture within a culture” idea should be kept in mind at all times. A team approach was also seen to provide a second set of eyes and ears in the interview and data analysis process, and a source of backup in situations of uncertainty.

If the people conducting the observations or interviews are not researchers or if the researcher is not from the community or group, training needs to take place for familiarization with methods, culture goal of the study, etc.

Creating a safe space is viewed as critical in relationship-building, particularly if one is not part of the participant identity group. Being clear and transparent about roles, concepts, definitions, showing empathy, and being genuinely curious and non-judgmental were seen as ways to create a safe space. The issue of self-disclosure arose; it was seen by at least one author as being alright as long as it was not extensive and was within an ethnographic or qualitative study. Almost all of the literatures agreed that without gaining the trust of the participants, information provided may be useless as data.

The role of the interviewer, including interviewer bias, the way questions were presented, use of authority, and separation of roles (interviewer, not crossing over the line to therapist) emerged as themes. Literature from research with children indicated that the researcher needs to consider and be interested in the entire life of the child, to see the child in a holistic sense and not just as a “case” from which to gain information.

Issues in data collection included the responsibilities of the interviewer, what the interviewer was willing to do for the participants during the course of the study, and ways in which the interviewer build positive rapport with the participants. Questions were raised as to the positives and negatives of the interviewer being of the group participating in the study. Questions about the need for interviews in the participant's language, interviewer's dress, and manner of speech, etc., arose.

The place where interviews are conducted was seen as important. Being with people in their own setting (even outside ethnographic interviews) seemed the method of choice. Techniques of interviewing were also discussed; children being accompanied by a sibling, or asked to draw and talk about the drawing or play with dolls or toys were methods used in studies of child abuse. More traditional interview techniques were also used. In situations where English was not the participant's first language, interview guides were created in English, translated, and then back-translated by another person for accuracy. Persons present during the interview changed depending on the study and the population.

Further concerns included the use of technology (computers and tape recorders) during the interview sessions, as to the distracting potential of the technology on the participant and the possibility that the participant will "ham it up" for the tape recorder, or withdraw if they feel unsafe. Corroboration of the participant's story was considered important, and methods such as comparison to existing records and the stories of others were presented as cross-checking possibilities. Finally, the issue of memory factored significantly in the accuracy of reporting; how well people remember over time, whether memories spontaneously emerge, and reality vs. fantasy reporting for children were all discussed.

The literature concerning qualitative data analysis focused on issues of transcription and translation, qualifications of the person doing the translation, reliability in qualitative analysis, and inclusion of cultural context. In a situation where data is collected in one language and analyzed in another, it was suggested that interviews and translation be done by the same bilingual person. It was also felt that data analysis would be enhanced by a person who knew the culture of the participants so that cultural context could be added around the analysis. In one literature, it was suggested that at least two people separately code qualitative data for inter-rater reliability.

The literature on the ethics of research with hidden populations, abused women, children exposed to violence, and journalism in situations of war was the most extensive of any of the categorical groupings. It is suggested in the literature that researchers, prior to beginning any study, ask him/herself “who will benefit from this research?” Is it the population being studied? Is it programs that will use the information to design or improve programs to better assist the population? Is it for professional advancement of the researcher? The answer to the question should be weighed against potential danger and emotional distress to those participating in the study.

Within ethics, the physical and emotional safety of both the participants and the researchers was given the greatest consideration. The concept of safety included a debate over the security/safety of the individual versus the need for information, e.g. the method of transmission of HIV. In the literature on hidden populations, conducting research and producing information exposes the hidden population and moves the population into the “gaze of power” which may mean control by authorities. Confidentiality and informed consent were cited as contributors to or detractors from anonymity and, consequently, the physical and/or emotional safety of an individual or

group.

By retelling their stories, participants in studies can experience retraumatization; researchers need to be aware of this possibility and be able to provide support for participants. At the same time, researchers are subject to secondary traumatization, and may need help dealing with their own feelings. Physical safety for both the participant and the researcher are of paramount importance. Creating a safe space for interviews can help alleviate distress on the part of both, and minimize fear of retribution on the part of the participant. To maximize safety, journalists should have an organization backing them up, some training in the culture and the conflict, and necessary first-aid supplies and communication tools.

A final safety issue identified is that of “siding”; if one is interviewing participants from one armed group, and providing balanced pros and cons of that group, will they be perceived by the group as pro-armed group or pro-government? Journalists are in particular jeopardy where this is concerned; if they are seen as taking sides, they can be expelled from a country, or at worst killed by the side that feels slighted.

Confidentiality, guaranteed as much as possible through informed consent, can also help participants with their anxiety around participation. The consent form should, as much as possible, protect the participant from the beginning of involvement with the project through the data analysis and dissemination of results. Encoding identifying information was suggested, as was disguising identifying characteristics of participants in a small sample; however, flattening of the data was viewed as a possible negative consequence.

How the researcher uses the analyzed data is another ethical consideration. Does the language used in data analysis reinforce negative stereotypes which may cause harm

to already vulnerable groups? Is context provided around culturally, socially or economically sensitive issues? Will press releases be written when the study is released, and how will they be worded when it is increasingly difficult to grab the attention of the media? What if a magazine/newspaper/news program picks up one sensational piece of data from a study and omits the context? Planning to include context and for the possibility of data abuse is suggested.

The issue of reciprocity arose frequently in the literature. Examples of reciprocation for participation in a study included a token payment, a jump in line for food, or a car ride. At least one of the literatures expressed the idea of the relationship that develops between the researcher and the participant as reciprocity. Linked with reciprocity is the making of promises to participants; a researcher must be clear and careful about what is promised and what can be delivered; promises made must be fulfilled or trust is broken.

If a researcher spends a significant amount of time with participants, as in ethnographic work, there is the chance that the researcher will become attached to the participants. A suggestion was made in the literature that the more the potential situations that may result from attachment can be thought through prior to the implementation of the study, the easier it will be for the researcher to be consistent with all participants.

One of the most important issues in all of these studies was the physical and emotional safety of the participant. Retraumatization through retelling one's story, being seen speaking with someone outside of the group, or having one's name mentioned in a study report can lead to significant emotional and/or corporeal harm. Safety (in the form of potential disclosure of information) came into question when the needs of the society

came into conflict with the needs of the individual, as in the case of HIV/AIDS. In ethnographic studies of hidden populations engaged in dangerous illegal activity, and in journalism, the safety of the interviewer/researcher came into question. Being connected with an organization, such as a newspaper or the United Nations, was determined a good way to help avoid harm.

Categories emerging from the literature review hold numerous questions, ideas, suggestions, and cautions when developing, conducting, and disseminating the results of a study. They follow the progression of a study, from conceptualization through term definition, sample, guide development, conducting research, data analysis, and dissemination. The importance of culture, safety, and ethical dilemmas were interwoven throughout. These categories will be the primary source of information and will provide the structure for the development of an interview guide for this study.

## **CHAPTER 4: GOALS AND INTELLECTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

This study is intended to describe the implementation of the 2001-2 study on the demobilization and reintegration needs of girls who have participated in armed groups with categories emerging from current research literature, within the theoretical framework of reflective research. As demonstrated in the first chapter, social work is a profession committed to the use of socially sensitive research to expand the many fields of knowledge in which it is engaged, and has its origins in work with immigrants, demanding a cross-cultural and international point of view. Social work, as a profession, is currently exploring and moving into the international arena in education, practice, and research. As the world changes and becomes more interconnected, social work will most probably be called upon to recognize political, social, and economic inter-connections and their effects on clients in their home country, as well as the effects of the inter-linkages on people around the world, for example, the sale of diamonds dug in Angola, smuggled to Europe for sale, the funds from which used to purchase arms produced in Ukraine from brokers in the Middle East. The “by-products” from this chain of events include the creation of refugees, child soldiers, and trauma symptoms. Social workers in the United States are engaged with clients from countries in conflict in immigration and refugee work, in mental health clinics, in the social welfare system. Outside of the United States, US-trained social workers have been called to work abroad at the grassroots with

children in Bosnia during and after the war, with families of the dead in Bosnia during exhumation of bodies buried in mass graves, and to work on the policy level at the United Nations.

Social work has developed and integrated holistic theories into practice since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Field Theory (Lewin, 1951), Systems, Ecological, and Ecosystems (Payne, 1997), Network Theory (Trevillion, 1988). Within the last 20 years, researchers, practitioners, and academics in the disciplines of social work, education, and conflict resolution, have developed a body of research theory based on “reflective thinking,” conceptualized by John Dewey in relation to education in the 1930s (Haroutunian-Gordon, 2004; Lang, Taylor, ). Reflective thinking involved “discovering what was already there but previously unrecognized” (Haroutunian-Gordon, 2004 p. 2), as a child would “discover” that letters strung together make words. Dewey’s idea of reflective thinking was expanded by Gadamer in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; he stated that reflective thinking is characterized by interaction with one’s surroundings and not only discovery, but in addition the creation of meaning that ensues from that interaction. Meaning is created from being in relationship to one’s environment; talking, viewing, hearing (Haroutunian-Gordon, 2004).

The concept of reflective thinking was utilized by another education academic, Donald Schön, who further defined and applied the idea. Schön looked at the separation of theory from practice in education, stating that theoretical knowledge, historically, has been viewed as “higher” and more valuable and status-filled than experiential knowledge. This paradigm is based on one person or group having knowledge, and imparting it to others (Schön, 1987). In more strident terms, Nigel Parton states that the basis of most education was “traditions of abstract and instrumental reasoning where the pursuit of

knowledge is intertwined with the pursuit of control” (2003, p. 1). In contrast to this formal, structured type of knowing, Schön introduced a new type of learning through discovery and making meaning in the moment, and called it “reflection-in-action.” He said:

“This reflection-in-action is tacit and spontaneous and often delivered without taking thought, and is not a particularly intellectual activity. It involves a surprise, a response to surprise by thought turning back on itself, thinking what we’re doing as we do it, setting the problem of the situation anew, conducting an action experiment on the spot by which we seek to solve the new problems we’ve set, an experiment in which we test both our new way of seeing the situation, and also try to change that situation for the better. And examples lie in ordinary conversation, making things, fixing things, riding bicycles...the capacity to respond to surprise through improvisation on the spot is what I mean by reflection-in-action” (1987, pp. 4-5).

Schön states that given the standard conception of a classroom operating under a hierarchy of knowledge paradigm, where a teacher has the knowledge and gives it to the children they teach, children are left with the feeling that what they are learning has nothing to do with their lives. They are not allowed to bring what they have learned through their own experience into the classroom; the teacher owns the knowledge and the student does not. There is little room for creation, for artistry (Schön, 1987). In contrast to an ownership/hierarchy/imparting of knowledge, teaching using a reflection-in-action model is a process where teachers and students create knowledge together. Teachers do not abdicate or deny the theoretical knowledge they have, but they engage in testing knowledge with their students.

Schön does not ignore the difficulties in teaching through reflection-in-action; teachers will feel vulnerable, they may feel out of control because they don't own the knowledge, that they are incompetent and that they have lost confidence in their ability to teach. Through practice and patience, these feelings can be worked through and an exciting, dynamic learning environment will emerge. Dialogue, willingness to be surprised, working against the idea that theory is a privileged form of knowledge, and listening are keys to this dynamic learning environment (Schön, 1987). Learning lies in experience and in critical reflection on that experience, by both teacher and student (Kelly, 1997). In his writing, Schön applies these same concepts to research (1987); professionals in social work have taken these ideas to heart.

In the past 20 years, ideas about reflectivity in social work research have grown; this has not been without controversy. Positivist versus post-modern and feminist discussions take place in schools of social work and in social work research literature. Is it possible to develop and conduct research without bringing one's life experience to the study? Does one group have the best method to create knowledge? What is the purpose of research; whose interest is it in? What is the role of the researched, are they a passive subject or an active participant? (Floersch, 2004; Fook, 2000, 2003).

Psychology, along with other professional disciplines, has moved from a reductionist view of human behavior to a more holistic view (Kelly, 1997). Although social work has held a more holistic, person-in-environment and systems theory view of the situations and lives of people with whom social workers worked, older research models often followed models from experimental psychology and medicine (Fook, 1996).

From positivist roots, social workers have been moved by critical social and

feminist theory (Pease and Fook, 1999, in Fook, 2003), constructing an inclusive, adaptive paradigm for social work practice and research variously referred to as radical social work, critical social work, reflective social work, and reflective research. Critical social theory calls for a challenge to domination and oppression in all forms; states that people can believe paradigms outside of their own do not exist and cannot change; requires an evaluation of positivist principals based on power imbalance and the person as “other” or “object”; a challenge to dominant ways of knowing and creation of knowledge; the need for self-reflection; and valuing the possibility of social change (Agger, 1998). Feminist theory calls for the raising up of multiple perspectives in practice and research, beginning with women’s thought, and extending to under-represented, under-heard and groups other than those who have throughout history and until quite recently, had the market on knowledge creation cornered (Fook, 1996).

Critical or reflective social work mirrors reflective education. It is a model that calls for assistance to a client to be created between the practitioner and the client. There is clarity that the purpose of the work is for the benefit of the client. Although the social worker has theoretical knowledge, this is utilized when appropriate, and suspended when the situation demands. The experience of the client is valued and given weight. Surprise, dialogue, uncertainty, and creativity are valued within the relationship, and the social worker, as well as the client is called upon to be ongoingly reflective. Knowledge, in both word and action, is owned by all (Schön, 1987).

In most ways, many would agree that this is a description of good social work; however, when it is applied to research, things become less clear. Social workers are generally taught quantitative and qualitative methods within a positivist framework as the ideal way to create knowledge. Generalizability is often seen as the primary goal for

research. If studies are not rigorously constructed within strict experimental constructs, particularly in qualitative studies, how can one be sure that results are valid? But what happens when the “gold standard” of scientific method is not possible; perhaps even the “silver standard” may not be possible, and information is still needed to inform practice (Epstein, 2002).

In response to this dilemma, new models of research were developed, including action, participatory and collaborative models. These models work to reduce power imbalances in the research situation, to empower research participants, and to collaboratively create knowledge that will be used for social change. These methods are particularly useful in situations that are outside of the researcher’s cultural experience and/or where research is being undertaken with people in marginalized or formerly colonized groups (Fook, 2003).

In social work practice, it is clear that the work is for the benefit of the client. As stated earlier, benefits of research are a bit less clear. Given the pressure to publish that academics face, the benefits of research to the academic is clear: tenure, promotion. Research for headline-grabbing or partisan politics is unethical, but occurs. Even when the goal of the research is completely in the best interest of the client or population, research methods may inadvertently do physical or psychological damage to the people participating in the study (Fook, 2003; Lynn, 1996). Jan Fook writes:

“As critical social workers interested in informing and developing their practice in systematic ways, I would argue that we need to recognize different forms of knowledge, and different ways of creating that knowledge, if we are to begin to gain a better representation of our own experiences, and that of the many different groups with whom we work. In this respect, qualitative approaches to

social work, which recognize the political, changing and multiple dimensions of research situations, share the same concerns with critical social work” (2003, p. 126).

Fook, Floersch, and a group of social work practitioners, educators, and researchers have worked to develop a basis for social work research that integrates theory, practice, and research, called reflective research. Reflective research states that in contrast to the idea that theory precedes action in a linear fashion, social workers actually utilize an inductive approach which may or may not be derived from formal theory, and, by being identified, can contribute to the body of social work knowledge (Fook, 1996). Gathering the data that will provide this information needs to be done a way that echoes the inductive process itself, the method needs to be inclusive, adaptive, and context-specific so that a creative process can develop within the research and new learning can emerge. Reflective research, with its openness to surprise, can also generate unexpected outcomes.

In “The Reflective Researcher,” based on this paradigm, Fook and her colleagues describe creative methodological responses to knowledge development. Reflective research is inclusive. It allows for the existence of different types of knowledge, from formal theory to heuristics, and believes that by codifying heuristic knowledge into theory, and regularly testing that theory, the credibility of the social work profession will be enhanced. Researcher and participant own knowledge, and differences in meaning applied to events and situations are welcomed; through openness, surprise, and artistry, deeper levels of meaning are created and understood (Fook, 2000). A reflective research model will seek to engage the participants in the study from the beginning to make sure that the project is seen as serving their interests project and the results as their results

(Doyle, 1996).

Research methods in reflective research are adaptive, depending on the participants, the subject being researched, and the physical conditions present. Taylor, in Healy describes it: “The researcher who searched for and discovers a research method is similar to a traveler who sets out on a journey with an anticipated itinerary; sometimes things go to plan and sometimes things change according to contingencies along the way” (1996, p. 93). The social world is a complex place, and therefore requires multiple methods to accommodate that complexity. Reflective research continually questions the choice of method in relation to the study and the participants. “The real world is not considered a fixed objective reality but is made up of the ways people see it. Conclusions and theories to describe relationships between people are drawn from the study and are not formulated before the research begins. In this perspective, learning is always viewed as an active process in which the facilitator and the learner reflect on the new knowledge and fit this together with past understandings” (Laragy, 1996, p. 88). Almost no possibility is excluded when designing methodology; however, the integrity of the participants is always paramount in any design, and a strict positivist stance is contradictory to joint creation of knowledge. Components can be put together in a variety of ways depending on the situation. For example, a participatory research model, which typically includes data analysis by participants, might include data analysis by the originator of the study if the participants request it (Ingamells, 1996).

Reflective research is context specific; it acknowledges that using a reflective method, researchers cannot know the entire experience of the participant or of an experience; it can only know a part, even though the knowledge is gained through a holistic lens (Fook, 2000). It upholds the idea that behavior and perception of events and

one's reaction to those events is based on the situation or context in which one lives (Healy, 1996). It accepts and welcomes changes that may be required in mid-study as the research progresses and new information becomes clear (Laragy, 1996). It asks how we access frontline practice in ways which will best enable United States to theorize from it, instead of what instruments allow United States to collect the best data on frontline practice for research purposes (Fook, 2000).

Unexpected outcomes are seen as a natural component of reflective research for both researcher and participant. Collaborative research designs can be viewed by participants as too much work (Lynn, 1996), but participants have also had the experience of feeling sad that the research was coming to an end (Hawkins, 1996). Initially hidden agendas of politicians or gatekeepers, on a seemingly whim-like basis, can change access to a population or the timeframe of a study (Healy, 1996; Hough, 1996). Coming face-to-face with an actual context in which research will take place, in contrast to a hypothesized context, can lead to a complete overhauling of methodology. Hawkins, as well as Fook, describes her/his personal journey from positivist mindset to reflective research, and the deep personal struggles that accompanied this change (Fook, 2000; Hawkins, 1996).

Inclusiveness, adaptation, context-specificity, and unexpected outcomes are not the only components, but are four main columns of reflective research. Reflective research is the theoretical perspectives from which this study is focused. Because so little has been written in the social work literature on the subject of conducting research in countries engaged in violent conflict, and because of the increasing need for such information in social work as well as in other professional areas, this study seeks to describe the qualitative methods actually used in a study of girls in armed groups in four

countries at war, with both the literature on the process of the study as well as the theoretical framework presented above.

As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, there is need for information in specific thematic areas or on specific populations during situations of violent conflict. The actuality of the conflict situation, role of gatekeepers, uncertainty around travel, operating in different countries with different cultures and ability to move around, indigenous support methods existing and how those methods can be enhanced are some, but not all, questions which arise from both the preceding chapters and the original study on girl soldiers. Although the methodology being used may not be generalizable beyond the current study because of the small size of the sample (N=4), it is hoped that the comparative analysis of the data, when considered within the context of the literature and the theory, can provide some guidance for future researchers.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

A country at war, in this study, is defined as a sovereign nation engaged in an internal conflict in which weapons of any type are being used. The genocide in Rwanda, where clubs and machetes were the main implements for killing, would be an example, as would Sierra Leone, where political parties use guns as well as machetes in their efforts. There are times when external countries intervene in internal conflicts, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These conflicts would be included in the definition of a country at war for the purposes of this study due to the fact that the conflict originated within the DRC and was focused on the DRC political regime.

Research, in this study, is perforce defined as qualitative methodology due to the use of qualitative methodology in the original study. Future studies may be proposed to

determine guidelines for quantitative methodology or combined methodologies, particularly in the area of epidemiological research. Given the increase of communicable diseases in countries at war, this is greatly needed.

Based on the request of the original interviewers, safety needs of the original study sample, and the preceding review of the literature, this study begins with the question "How does the research methodology used in the study on girls in armed groups inform our reflective understanding of the current body of literature in social work research?"

## CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

This dissertation concerns the implementation and impact of the methodology and methodological process used in the prior study on girl soldiers involved in armed groups. It is designed to consider the methodology of the study employed within the context of current social work research literature and reflective theory.

The original study, upon which this study will be based, was designed to determine the demobilization and reintegration needs of adolescent women who have participated in armed groups during civil war. Prior to implementation, an advisory group was formed to ensure the quality of the project and the methodology, as well as to ensure the safety of all participants. Because the project was not affiliated with a formal or informal IRB, the advisory committee, comprised of practitioners and researchers who had long worked with children in situations of armed conflict, acted as the vetting organization for all aspects of the study. Informed consent forms were modeled, in each country, after

Due to the potential safety issues surrounding the girls who would participate in the study, it was agreed by the researchers and the advisory committee that no country names would be used; this study will follow that precedent. Four teams were identified in four countries to work with the team based at the Quaker Offices in New York and Geneva. It was originally agreed that the in-country teams consist of three to six people including a liaison between the team and the United States, two interviewers, a person

experienced in mental health work, and a person who would be able to provide cultural context for the data. For some of the teams, one person fulfilled multiple roles.

“Dialogues on methodology” were scheduled in each of the countries over a period of seven months, from November 2000 to June 2001; the time frame was due to the illness in the family of the researcher in the present study, and also so that the principal investigator, Dr. Von Keairns, would have time to analyze the data sets by country before doing a combined analysis (Dr. Keairns holds a full-time position in addition to her research). Dialogues on methodology were held in each of the four countries over a period of three to four days, and included an introduction to the study, development of interview guides and informed consent forms, use of technology (laptops, voice recognition software and tape recorders were provided by the project), western ways of eliciting information and interviewing skills, role plays, western delineation of trauma symptomatology and suicidality, mental health interventions (indigenous and western), transcription and translation of data, and safety issues. Each meeting was conducted as a dialogue, with the US-based researcher providing an initial agenda that was reviewed and further developed and/or changed with the team on the ground. All topics were presented as western in orientation, and as much time as possible was allowed for exchange.

It was agreed that teams on the ground would best be able to determine the sample given their knowledge of the situation and their access, and they agreed that a three-interview process would be optimal, but could not be guaranteed due to potential movement of the girls, safety issues, and access. It was also agreed that all data transcripts would be emailed to Dr. Keairns. The advisory committee was scheduled to meet again during early September 2001, but due to the events of September 11, this

meeting was moved to spring 2002. This significantly delayed the outcome document for the study, and limited the ability of this researcher to access the final data analysis as a supporting document for this study.

A great deal of work was done in the dialogues on methodology around the study for the girl soldier project. Relationships were built between the researcher from the North coming in and the people doing the interviews; trust was developed through the process of exploring the research methodology and creating the interview guides. This relationship was the foundation upon which all subsequent work was based. At the conclusion of the first dialogue, I ("I" will be used in this dissertation to refer to the researcher/author of this study, to distinguish between the head researcher of the original girl soldier study, Dr. Keairns, and the author of the present study) was asked by the team on the ground if I would be able to return to debrief the experience with them. In the third country, when I decided to undertake this work for my dissertation, I asked the team if they would consider me returning to debrief the project and to use it for a dissertation. The response was that a debriefing was expected, and that they would welcome it. A similar conversation occurred in the fourth country.

Because of the trust that developed during the process, and the request from the teams on the ground, a self- or interviewer-administered quantitative survey with limited response categories might be non-productive, and might be considered inappropriate. It would, for the most part, not get at the information stipulated by the core question, nor would a self-administered open-ended survey. New ideas and thoughts emerged from the people being interviewed. The dialectic, the emergence and growth of ideas from the interaction between people was critical to the understanding and information-gathering process (Guba, Lincoln, 1994).

As was described above, and given the specific cultural nature of the information desired, new material emerged during interviews. The need for flexibility in study design is critically important to capture emergent information and ideas (Patton 90), although the core question, “How does the research methodology used in the study on girls in armed groups inform our understanding of the current body of literature in social work research?” remained the “spine” of the study (Janesick, 1994). Theoretical framework for the project lies within phenomenological and ethnographic constructs (Patton, 1990). It is hoped that this work will lead to subsequent inquiries into findings that emerge from this study.

### **Study Design**

This study took the form of a comparative case study across the four countries involved in the original project. This is not to infer that “comparative” indicates better or worse; it is an attempt to consider the different ways in which four teams/regions approached the same study methods to see how the method relates to the current body of literature on social work research and reflective theory.

Due to the in-depth information needed for the formative nature of this study, a qualitative, interview-guide format design was used (Mintzberg, 1983). A guide of this type is oriented to understanding the perspective of the participants in the study (Bogdan, Bilken, 1983), and began with a core question: “How does the research methodology used in the study on girls in armed groups inform our understanding of the current body of literature in social work research?”

As enhancing and corroborating information, written documents from the original study were reviewed; these documents include email correspondence, field notes

from the dialogues on methodology, notes from phone calls with the head researcher and others, notes from advisory committee meetings, data sets, and the final report.

### *Interview Guide Development*

To obtain the needed information, a process-oriented, open-ended questionnaire was developed using:

- information from the literature review and theory and intellectual framework chapters
- the structure of the proposed methodology for the study on girl soldiers
- information from the experience of the dialogues on methodology

Interview guides were structured utilizing the cross-cutting categories emerging from the sections of the literature review so that data could be compared to the literature. Questions and prompts within those categories were developed from the literature review and from questions that arose during and after the dialogues on methodology. Some of these questions were identical in both the literature review and the dialogues, e.g., safety and informed consent; some are specific to one or the other, e.g., the 3-session interview process agreed upon in the dialogue. Questions were ordered in time sequence from the beginning of the project through the interviews, transcription, translation, and sending the data off to the U.S./Swiss team. Post-study questions were included.

Questions moved from general to more specific, and from less intrusive to more intrusive; they were worded as neutrally as possible. Types of questions were varied to prevent mechanistic answers, moving from primarily behavior/experience questions to knowledge questions to opinion (Patton, 90; Seidman, 98). Difficulty in recollection

emerged due to the time that has passed. Space was made for a response of “I don’t remember,” and also for error in recollection. Interview guides may be found in Appendices II, III, and IV.

### *Sampling*

Qualitative research, in its orientation to deep mining for information rather than skimming, requires purposive instead of randomized sampling. Glaser and Strauss present four categories to be considered when deciding on a study sample: criteria, procedures, profile, and limitation. To develop grounded theory, the objective was to select a sample that described the group’s fullest possible development (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The sample in this study is, by its very nature, limited to the four sets of participants in the project. The units of analyses for this study are the individuals and the teams, and the head researcher. All team members still remaining in the four countries involved were interviewed in person as much as possible, allowing for the schedules of the individuals. Attempts were made to contact team members who have relocated. In addition, the head researcher was interviewed, as well as at least one member of the project advisory group. The constraints on the sample in this study include costs due to travel and time required. Individual guides were developed, utilizing a similar structure, for each of the three groups of respondents.

### *Informed Consent*

Informed consent is a critical and controversial factor in this type of study. The (US) National Institute of Health (NIH) and the NASW code of ethics address this, as do many other organizations involved in research (NIH, 1993; NASW, 2001). NIH

describes informed consent as “a process, not just a form” (1993, p.1); informed consent is a tool to provide education around the project, the benefits the project hopes to produce, and the ability of the person to withdraw at any time. It is in this spirit that informed consent was developed and discussed with each participant.

There are at least two dilemmas around informed consent in situations of violent conflict with girls. The first is that at least some of the girls interviewed will be under 18, the age of consent, at the time of the interviews. The second is that of the safety and security of those being interviewed. The consent form had a detailed explanation of the parameters of confidentiality vs. anonymity, and contained descriptors of protection not commonly found in US-based consent forms.

During the girl soldier study, more time was spent on design of a consent form than on any item other than the development of the interview guide. This has provided a great deal of input into the consent form developed for the current study. Participants in the current study had already participated in the design of the consent form (however, not as study participants) for the women whom they were interviewing; this information was incorporated into the consent forms for each region. Informed consent forms were developed and, along with the mandated application, were submitted to the City University Graduate Center Internal Review Board (IRB) for modification and approval. Approval was granted by the City University Graduate Center IRB prior to any of the interviews being conducted.

All forms were signed and collected at the time of the study and were kept in the possession of the researcher until her return home, at which time they were stored in a locked cabinet. The Informed Consent form may be found in Appendix V.

## **Data Collection**

### *Interviewer*

The principal investigator carried out all the interviews.

### *Conducting the Interviews*

The original qualitative study of adolescent women in armed groups drew heavily on the work of Irving Seidman's "Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide of Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences" (1998). In this study, it was felt that a similar approach would be familiar to the individuals being interviewed, and would provide a common foundation upon which dialogue through interviews could take place.

The purpose of the original study and the methodology based in Seidman's work has generated the selection of a semi-structured, open-ended interview strategy.

Although this appears to be a surer method than a survey instrument to gain an in-depth assessment of the research process, there were many intervening variables that needed consideration in the interview process and during data analysis and dissemination: who has the knowledge, who will use it and how, cultural/gender influences on an interview situation (Wax, 1983). Transparency is critical in interview sessions such as these.

Interviews included thorough explanation as to the format and purpose of the study, assurance of confidentiality, and encouragement to ask questions during the interview if the person being interviewed has any concerns or need clarification (Patton, 1990).

Each member of the team available (some will have moved, some will be traveling) was interviewed. Group interviews are impractical in this study due to the time pressures on each of the participants. In addition, the head researcher for the project was interviewed. Individual interviews were expected to take two-three hours, but additional

time was needed for re-introductions, and to debrief after the interviews (Schatzman, Strauss, 1973).

### **Data Recording**

All interviews were taped except one; this was due to it being a phone interview and the possibility that the line was tapped. Taping was only done after permission of the participant was obtained, and notes were be taken by the interviewer. Transcription followed after return to the United States.

### **Data Analysis**

I transcribed and analyzed all data sets and was in contact with the participants so that nuances of the information would be captured. Data was then coded, grouped by subject/theme, and similarities and differences between the data and the literature are described (MacQueen, McLellan, Milstein, Milstein, 1998; Patton, 1990; Seidman, 1998). Utilizing the groupings as a framework, a narrative was developed and supported by the words of the people interviewed. All documentation from the dialogues on methodology was reviewed and incorporated into the coding process. Due to the small number of participants (15), qualitative data-analysis software was not used.

This chapter will conclude with a brief introduction of the four countries in which interviews took place, and an introduction to those interviewed in each country.

For reasons of safety and confidentiality, none of the countries are named in this study. Instead, Africa is used for the country in Africa, Asia I and Asia II are used for the two countries in Asia, and Latin America is used for the country in that region.

The country in Africa has been involved in civil war for decades, for so long that two generations do not know what it means to live in peace. At the time of the

interviews, one principal rebel group was actively fighting the government. The team in Africa had four primary members, all of whom conducted interviews. One of the four was the liaison for the project, and all worked at the same NGO. All were present for the dialogue on methodology and were interviewed for the current study. Three of the interviews were done in person, in a room at the NGO, and were conducted through an interpreter. The fourth interview was done by phone from the United States, with an English-speaking team member.

During the course of the original study with the girls, the head of the organization in Africa, who was doing a good deal of the translating, left for another job in another country. This necessitated the hiring of a person to do translation. All team members were working their regular full-time jobs while doing the girl soldier project.

Contact with the Africa team came about through their NGO counterpart in the United States; this NGO is part of a coalition working to stop the use of child soldiers. The United States liaison heard about the NGO through the coalition and, after exploration with the African liaison, asked if this NGO would be willing to take on the project. The African liaison was invited to the advisory committee meeting, but could not attend due to scheduling conflicts. A person in the United States working for the same NGO substituted for the team leader at the advisory committee meeting, relaying all the information and decisions made.

Asia I has been involved in civil war for decades. At the time of the interviews, one principal rebel group was actively fighting the government, although in the past there was at least one additional insurgent group. The team in Asia I had three primary members; two conducted the interviews and one was the liaison for the project, providing financial and security oversight, liaising with the United States team, with the

head of the demobilization center, and with the girls interviewed. All three were all present for the dialogue on methodology and were interviewed for the current study. Two of the interviews were done in person, in a hotel room, and one was done by phone. The phone interview was abbreviated due to the insecurity of the location of the person being interviewed, and the risk that the phone line was tapped.

One of the interviewers and the liaison had worked with children in the past, one in the educational system, and the other in medicine and national and international policy on children and child soldiers for over 20 years. These two had participated in research prior to this study, one in a single project and one in multiple studies. The third person had no experience in either research or working with children; however, she had a deep understanding of the conflict situation, the culture and the girls. The interviewers were not working at the time of the study, and the liaison worked as a quasi-governmental official in addition to other professional responsibilities.

Asia II is a country that has also been in conflict for decades. Post-WWII, there was one primary group fighting the government; however, as time went on, other groups with other goals began to take up arms against the government, and currently there are several in active violent conflict. The Asia II team had five members, three original members and two people brought on later to do transcription.

The team learned of the original study through a former co-worker of the Principal Investigator of this study, the co-worker and the team leader sit on board of an NGO that focuses on children, and the co-worker mentioned the project to the team leader. Soon after this meeting, the team leader was in New York, and met with the PI of this study to discuss the proposal for work. The team leader then returned to Asia II, spoke with two colleagues, and together they decided to participate. Each of the original

three had many years experience working on the issue of children in armed conflict, on the rights of children, and had worked for an NGO that focused on these issues; the three also had a long history with the opposition movement, but had left some time ago. Two had experience doing research. All members were women and all were indigenous to the country. The original three participants were interviewed for the current study.

Latin America is composed of Central and South America and Mexico. The country in conflict has been involved in civil war for decades. At the time of the interviews, there were a number of rebel groups fighting government forces, and government paramilitaries were growing in number. The team in Latin America originally consisted of five members; during the course of the project, one person dropped out and three came in. All team members were women except for the person who did some of the Spanish-to-English translation; this person was a man.

The team leader was primarily responsible for gathering people to be part of the interview team. She brought people together who she knew had a wide range of knowledge and skills so that a holistic approach could be taken. Compatibility and trust were very important criteria for the safety of the team and the girl, "...she made sure that the group was going to come together, that we would feel comfortable with the other people, she wanted to make sure that all of United States were kind of a team." and, "I think it's important to have the previous connection...so in a way, we feel as though all are responsible, all to take care, we are very careful, and I think that helped."

### **Overview of Data Analysis**

During the interviews and the transcription process, a structure for organizing the data began to emerge. The structure grew from the interaction between information from the

review of the literature and the data, and was shaped by the unexpected impacts of the study on the girls being interviewed and, subsequently, the in-country research teams. In the review of the literature, these impacts fell mostly in the “Implementation” section.

Data analysis will be divided into three chapters; the first will present findings on the implementation of the study utilizing categories from the literature review. The second will present findings on the impact of the study on the girls; some of these categories are from the literature review, and others have emerged from the data. The third will present findings on the impact of the research on members of the interview teams; this chapter will also utilize categories from the literature review and will include categories that have emerged from the data. The data in each chapter will also be related to reflective theory; however, reflective theory will be utilized most prominently in the second and third data analysis chapters.

## **CHAPTER 6: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ORIGINAL STUDY**

This chapter will compare ways in which the specific components of the research method for the original study on girls compared to the research methodology described in the literature review and reflective research theory. Utilizing the categories and sub-categories arising from the literature review, upon which the interview guides were based, data gathered from interviewing the sample will be compared and contrasted with the literature. Data will also be compared to the four emphasized components of reflective research, i.e., inclusion, adaptability, context-specificity, and unexpected outcomes. Conclusions will be drawn at the end of each section and at the end of the chapter, and recommendations will be made in the final chapter.

### **Conceptual Starting Point**

The conceptual starting point of a researcher undertaking a study is cited numerous times in the literature. How the researcher views research (Azmi, 1999; Blumer, 1969; Gelb, 1999; Gjelten, 1998; Hannigan Millstein, Dare-Winters, Sullivan, 1994; Jacobson, 1994; O'Donohue, 1996; USAID, 2001; Yoshioka, 99), how they see the participants in a study (Adie, 1993; Blakemore, 1999; Gelb, 1999; Gjelten, 1998; Gutman, 1999; Olorunyomi, 1999; Rainwater, Pittman, 1967; Rosen, 1999; Vulliamy, 1999; Wolfsfeld, 1999), whether they are familiar with the nuances of a culture (Azmi, 1999; Boushel,

1994; Fitzgerald, 1996; Herdt, Boxer, 1991; Ibrahim, Arrendondo, 1986; Lum, 1992; McLaws, Oldenburg, Ross, 1990; Power, 1989; Protacio-Marcelino, de la Cruz, Camacho, Balanon, 1990), whether they are willing to be flexible in their approach (Dyche, Zayas, 1995; Greene, 1995), are cited by each of the literatures as important points of self-knowledge because they will influence the study outcomes.

Team members in Africa began from the point of a collective, community view of the world. They did not see people as individuals; they were of the mind that events are collectively experienced and that the response to events also comes from the community. One is part of something larger than oneself.

The teams in Asia II and Latin America were of the same orientation. One of the Latin American team said, "We are not individuals. We are communities." By virtue of living in Latin America, all of the interviewers had some experience with the conflict situation. Living in a country at war has shaped the perceptions and the lives of most people in the country, and has had an effect on all of the participants in this study. Everyone on the team had an in-depth understanding of the conflict, as well as the international dimensions of the conflict. Most had experience in human rights work and human rights were one of the main lenses through which the team members viewed the situation and the girls. Team members knew the geography and former population distribution, as well as current patterns of displacement. In one area of [main city], the hillsides, formerly verdant, are now brown and dotted with plastic and found-materials makeshift shacks where the displaced live.

There was a hunger for the truth of the situation in Latin America to be known on a broad scale, not as it is told in the United States, but as it is for the people on the ground. There was a desire stated by all team members that the government of Latin

America repair the social sector so that the most vulnerable, children, would have some recourse to services.

Except for one individual, all of the other team members had been involved in research prior to this study. Research methods in Latin America tend to be more oriented to “action participation, because we think it is not about were searching for the sake of having more knowledge, but also to transform reality. And that was the main issue that I addressed when we started discussing with the friends that I was going to invite to this research.” There was concern about, as well as interest in the method that was being proposed for the original study, and a number of the team members wanted to learn and compare the original method to methods they had used previously.

Team members had, other than one person, worked with children of war, whether they had been exposed to war or were part of it. The experience of this project touched the team members deeply. As one put it, “Personally I have had so bad experience with a former girl soldier that I had accompanied that the sense that her story was so sad, so difficult, that I was truly in my heart, engaged with the issue of violence.” This led to a deep desire to help.

Through their work with girls in the past, the team had developed a way of working which included changing the word intervention to interaction, moving from the idea of doing something “to” someone to doing something “with” a person,

“...we had no answers on how to have an interaction with girls. We don't say intervention because we have had in December 2000 a seminar on methodologies to work with disarmed child soldiers. And this seminar sponsored by UNICEF and for international agencies amongst them the American Friends Service Committee we had invited to former child soldiers and they had made us

reflect on how we would intervene, which means treating them like minors who have no rights and no possibilities of deciding what they want so this approach was different. We started using the word interaction. So with that idea I also came here, how to interact? But I think that was part of our methodological approach, a Latin American view how to relate this with the interaction issue.”

This thoughtfulness about use of language reflected the desire of the team members to meet the girls with respect; they were clear that the girls were survivors, that they had made difficult decisions that affected the course of their lives, and that they were resilient. This sense of respect for the girls was pervasive throughout the interviews for this study.

The teams in Latin America and the Asia II, and to a lesser extent, Africa, viewed the girls as survivors and not victims. They were very clear that once one is identified as a victim, one loses self-efficacy and the ability to move on. Interviewers thought of the girls as survivors, from a strengths perspective.

The team in Asia I was much more individualistic in its orientation to life; people were of one religious group or another, of one ethnic background or another, but they were seen as individuals within that context. They also tended to view the girls in terms of victimhood instead of as survivors.

### **Conceptual Framework, the Literature and Theory**

As indicated in the literature of how participants in a study are conceptualized by the interviewer (Adie, 1993; Blakemore, 1999; Gelb, 1999; Gjelten, 1998; Gutman, 1999; Olorunyomi, 1999; Rainwater, Pittman, 1967; Rosen, 1999; Vulliamy, 1999; Wolfsfeld, 1999), team members had very specific views on how they saw the participants in the

original study. Three of the teams explicitly viewed the girls as resilient, with the emphasis on being part of a community rather than as being an individual. There was indigenous understanding of the culture in which the study took place; it was clear from the responses that the views and experiences of the interviewers had been shaped by living in a long-term conflict situation. At least two of the interviewers talked of having been changed by a prior experience working with war-affected children as their motivation for participation. All but one talked about prior work with war-affected children as the way they developed their conceptual orientation to the original study. This, too was consistent with the literature on the need to be familiar with a culture prior to research (Azmi, 1999; Boushel, 1994; Fitzgerald, 1996; Herdt, Boxer, 1991; Ibrahim, Arrendondo, 1986; Lum, 1992; McLaws, Oldenburg, Ross, 1990; Power, 1989; Protacio-Marcelino, de la Cruz, Camacho, Balanon, 1990).

The implications of language emerged as a key issue in program implementation. As an example, the difference between the words “intervention” and “interaction” were stressed to indicate that the teams felt they were in partnership with the girls, not doing something to them. The reflective idea of inclusivity emerges here; girls are not intervened upon by this research, it is an interaction between the researcher and the girl. Although this was stated by one interviewer, it was implied in the answers of the other teams.

Team members in Latin America were interested to know about the method of research used in the original study, but were concerned that it was not more action-oriented. This did not stop them from going forward; they found enough in the method that was context-specific to allow them to participate in good faith. In contrast, the conceptual framework of the method was closer to the norm for Asia I, and adaptation

was easier for the team. This is not a value judgment; it is a way of attempting to differentiate the cultural context between Asia I and the other regions. The research context of this particular group in Asia I is closer to that of northern/western methods, making the research method more congruent with prevailing research norms and therefore easier to accept. These are examples of ideas of uncovering how researchers view research and whether they are willing to be flexible in their approach to research methodologies cited in the literatures on culture, journalism, children and violence (Azmi, 1999; Blumer, 1969; Dyche, Zayas, 1995; Gelb, 1999; Gjelten, 1998; Greene, 1995; Hannigan Millstein, Dare-Winters, Sullivan, 1994; Jacobson, 1994; O'Donohue, 1996; USAID, 2001; Yoshioka, 1999).

As this chapter unfolds, team members' views on research and flexibility within research will be more fully revealed. Whether this influenced the outcomes of the research is unknowable; however, the respect shown by the teams for the girls seemed to help the women process their experiences and contributed to their psychological and emotional healing.

## **Definitions**

The literature separated the theme of "definitions" into two sub-categories: the definitions created within the study for the sample, the operative terms (Arvey, Cavanaugh, 1995; Fitzgerald, 1996; Taylor Gibbs, Bankhead-Greene, 1997; Wiebel, 1990; Watters, Biernacki, 1989), and the meaning given to words by the participants in the study (Fitzgerald, 1996; Herdt, Boxer, 1991).

The term "girl soldier" used for the sample in the original study was conventionally accepted by people in the human- and child-rights community, and by the

U.S./Swiss team. This was gleaned from the conventional “child soldier,” meaning anyone conscripted and participating in an armed group who is under the age of 18.

Three of the four country teams came to agreement on the definition of the term “girl soldier” in different ways and for different reasons. In Asia II, “war,” “armed struggle,” and “girl soldier” were defined both during the dialogue on methodology, and by the team before and during the project. Team members held conversations on definitions, and since they had already worked together on children’s issues and had been part of the movement in-country, definitions were arrived at fairly quickly.

During the dialogue on methodology in Asia II, the target population for the research and operational definition of the sample was clarified with the team members, relieving some of the tension around getting to the sample. One team member stressed the importance of coming to a clear definition during the dialogues. Another said:

“We actually asked you to qualify what are the target interviewees for this particular research, [girls] who involve themselves in the armed group when they were 10-12 years old, and out of the armed conflict for at least two years.

Because before, we have this notion that what we are looking for are the girl combatants. It’s only then that we realized that even non-combatants could be part of this research.”

There was some confusion about the sample criteria because of the understanding the team had of what the armed group was and the possible roles for girls in it. For the team, the definition of girl soldiers had been linked directly to the idea of “armed struggle,” it was clear for them that “girl soldiers” were not only fighters, but could equally be organizers, educators, or service personnel:

“...[I]t’s just that I think one of the things the group was very conscious about

was that the context of the armed struggle in [Asia II] is not just the armed struggle per se, but because the armed struggle is the main strategy of what they call [X], or the war of national liberation. So it's very hard to say that only this part is the armed struggle, where people actually bear arms. And the armed struggle... here is very much linked to organizing people, educating people, in a way sometimes providing basic services for the people, that it's so hard for people who are very involved to have such a clear-cut view that it's absolutely bad or absolutely good, that's a difficulty that we have here in [Asia II]. Because for the girls, a lot of the activities they were involved in was not so much military, but more with education, for example."

In Africa, the team agreed on the definition of "girl soldier" at the start of the project, due to their prior personal experience of war as well as their history of work with children affected by war, "I think that the fact that we already had the experience helps us to understand the problem and helps us to understand most of the situation." However, by the end of the project, defining "girl soldier" became more difficult:

"...I must tell you that the majority of experience of girls in terms of being a girl, were new for us, but the experience of war itself was not new for us. Do you understand the difference? Because it is different to be a girl, this was new for us, but the experience of war itself, participating in attacks, participating in all the different situations, was something that we expect that this could happen, but the new situation was all the situation girls passed through during the process of being involved in the war."

Team members had an idea of what a "girl soldier" was at the beginning of the study, but that definition was expanded and deepened by the end of the project. The

team was clear what combat was, what the roles in war were, but only within the context of men and boys, not with girls. The question then arose, "What is a soldier? Because sometimes a soldier can be a cooker, can be a helper, can be a medic, but [team member] said when we talk of boy soldiers, this means that these boys was in fighting. And [team member] wants to know what it means, 'girl soldiers' in the context of other countries." In some ways, clarity of definition was lost; now the information obtained through this study has opened new ground for exploration and definition.

Latin American team members had differing definitions of "girl soldier." The team held deep discussions about defining the terms used in the study, including "girl soldier" and "conflict"; for some of the participants who had worked with children affected by armed conflict in the past, the definitions changed over the course of the girl soldier study. Two of the participants had little or no experience with girls from armed groups; their learning curve was steep and they formulated their own definitions as the project progressed. One of the team members stated that she wanted the experiences of the girls who had been in the armed groups in Latin America to be known in relation to the girls who had been in armed groups in other countries, because the situation of the girls in Latin America is different from the more widely "accepted" version of girls in Africa, who were kidnapped and abused.

The team worked together to describe their definitions of terms relating to the original study, such as "girl soldier," "combatant," "voluntary participation," and to understand the definitions of the other members. Commenting on their capacity to reach consensus, one interviewer said, "I think there were no obstacles, but on the contrary I think it was an improvement of each one's point of view. By sharing our different views, we took advantage of that and now we are clear that we can continue working on the

topic because we were sharing together, we did share, and we did comment on these differences.” There was a general understanding of the terms; however, there was also an acknowledgement of the subjectivity of applying a label to a person, particularly as you bring your life experience to the interview, and they bring theirs:

“The simple fact of touching somebody, of having a relationship with that person, of meeting that person without only looking at that person as a person who was a former combatant or who used to have weapons, but it’s just a human being, that makes a difference because you start seeing the person as a person with affections, with attributes, etc. If we don’t have this part, we are wasting our time.”

Team members in Latin America also referred reflexively to the complex environmental/political/ economic/historical context as part of the defining process. “We used actually a definition of child soldier to adapt this definition to the Latin American case. So we started before meeting or engaging as a team in this research. We had a very long and interesting discussion not with all the members of the team, but with some of us that participated in the Latin American coalition. We discussed what it means to us to use the term ‘child soldiers’ and ‘girl soldiers.’” Competing interests of the drug cartels, the government, and organized crime, and a lack of political will to make peace were factored in during the dialogue. Team members talked about these factors leading to a degraded economy and poor social service delivery systems, creating a dearth of opportunities and a profound desire on the part of the girls to get out of their living situations by any means necessary. Most of the team members had a deep and holistic picture of the context in which the girls lived that aided in a full discussion of definitions. There was very little moralizing in the defining process. For example, one team member

said, "Right. Here we have girls who have been bad and good, but we are also bad and good. So that was our approach. Yes?"

Alternatively, in the dialogue on methodology, there was no discussion on definitions from Asia I, and there was no effort to change definitions through the interview process.

### *Definitions, the Literature and Theory*

By the end of the original study, each team that held discussions (LA, Asia II and Africa) had come to call the girls they interviewed "girls who have participated in armed groups"; this was a product of the interviews with the girls; it was the term that the girls themselves wanted to be called. Similarly, the domestic abuse research has uncovered, through the use of probing questions, multiple forms of abuse (Arvey, Cavanaugh, 1995; Herzberger, 1990; Jacobson, 1994; O'Donohue, 1996) and consequently has expanded the definition of domestic abuse. Within the present study, a multitude of roles emerged for girls who were originally defined as "soldiers," creating a broader definition of their experiences, employing the phrase, "girls who have participated in armed groups."

Consistent with reflective theory, the definition of "girl soldier" changed during the course of the work. Girls were part of the armed group and held many roles within the group, from fighter to sexual slave, and wanted this to be acknowledged; the interviewers recognized both the girls' desire for a term change, as well as the descriptions of the expanded roles of girls in armed groups. The interviewers were willing, eager, to change the term. This outcome was not anticipated by the principal investigators of the project.

On the other hand, there was no discussion about a need to define terms with

the girls interviewed as cited in the literature on hidden populations (Fitzgerald, 1996; Herdt, Boxer, 1991), there seemed to be agreement between the girls and the research teams on the meaning given to words by the participants in the study. The only conflicts that arose involved translation when an interviewer might not be familiar with a word in a language that was not her first. This indicates another difference between the experience of this study compared to the research literature, which described the possibility that interviewers and participants might understand terms differently.

### **Sampling and Access**

In the original study on girl soldiers, sampling and access were deeply interconnected. The sampling criteria for the original study was six to eight girls from each country who were under 18 at the time of recruitment/kidnapping/volunteering and who had been out of the armed group no more than two years. The literature on hidden populations (Fitzgerald, 1996; McKinlay, 1996) emphasizes the need to determine the size of the population to obtain a representative sample within the general population; the sample in this study, however, was congruous with a very different approach to sampling, i.e., that the purpose of the research should determine the sampling unit (O'Donohue, 1996).

Since this was the first study of its kind, there was no way to know the numbers of girls involved, and given that the original study was qualitative and generalizability was not a desired outcome, a purposive sample was developed. There was some concern among team members that the small number of girls interviewed would skew the analysis of the data; their concern corresponded with the literature on mixed societies needing a broad representative sample. Six to eight girls in armed groups represented a potential age range from five to twenty, possibly multiple tribal or ethnic associations, and

involvement with one of as many as five different armed groups in a country. In the beginning of the project, team members were concerned that they would not get enough of a cross-section of girls to develop a complete picture of the situation of the girls.

Girls in armed groups are a hidden population voluntarily or involuntarily, they live in areas that are dangerous to them and posed danger to the team of interviewers; the teams took all of these things into account when determining who and where they would interview. Although at least two of the groups expressed a desire to have interviewed a wider cross-section of girls, they all agreed that gaining access to those actually interviewed was already quite challenging. In fact, none of the girls interviewed were interviewed while still in the armed group; all were either escaped or captured and were in government centers or programs. To accomplish this, the teams had to utilize connections with other organizations and governments, had to work with and gain the trust of gatekeepers, and often had to travel significant distances to access the girls.

### *Sampling*

All of the girls interviewed in Africa were conscripted by the opposition group, and had run away from the group. They were living in either communities around a main city or in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp. All girls met the criteria set by the original study. Those from the major city came as a group, they all knew one another.

All of the girls interviewed in Asia II were part of one armed group, and all of the girls fit the original sampling criteria. The field research team gave a great deal of consideration to whom they would interview, to obtain the widest cross-section of girls fitting the criteria. All of the girls interviewed had been captured by the government, so none were currently active with the armed group.

All of the girls in the Asia I group were already housed in a government center and met the temporal sampling criteria with the exception of one girl who was more than two years out of the armed group. She was the only one in the center who did not fit the criteria; however, the team interviewed her in the same manner as the rest of the girls so that she would not feel ostracized and to maintain harmony in the center. The team gave her the same gift that all of the other girls got as an incentive to participate.

All of the girls in Latin America met the criteria for the study and all were from opposition groups, however, they were from two different political parties and different geographic areas. Most of the girls were 16-17. One of the girls was over 18 at the time of interview but had been in the armed movement since the age of 13. Since the team had enough girls to interview under the age of 18, they decided not to interview this girl. All but one of the girls had never been interviewed prior to this project, and all were quite willing to participate upon initial contact.

### *Access*

Initially, the team from Africa was concerned that it might not be able to identify girls who had participated in the armed group; the girls by and large did not want to be identified due to the shame associated with the abuse they suffered during the time of their participation and because the girls, by and large, had never spoken about what had happened to them before. The team also did not know how the families of the girls would react to them being interviewed for the same reasons of stigma.

The team did not decide whom to interview; they asked advice from colleagues in the province:

“We address them the problem, and we said, [NGO] is involved in this research,

and we need to meet girls who were involved in the war.' It was, at the province level, they were working in the communities and they were working directly with youth. It was easier for them to meet the girls through our volunteers who we have working the community."

These primary data sources were important in helping the team establish an understanding of the context and reality of the situation of girls, and in who to look for in accessing the girls.

Knowledge of the preliminary study sample in Africa came from three primary sources: the team's prior work experience with boys who participated in armed groups; a young man who participated in an armed group and who worked with the husband of the liaison; and, as discussed above, from colleagues working in the same NGO but in field programs. The team liaison said of a young man who worked for her husband, "He told me that when he was kidnapped, all the girls, all the children in the village were kidnapped also. So through this boy, we learned a lot about the situation of girls in the war."

Access was much more complex than geography and cost. Layers of protection have been developed by people in the country, by the local community, and by the girls. In a country at war, trust is the most valuable commodity of all. Certainly, within the context of access, trust is a crucial component. In a situation where girls who have participated in armed groups are stigmatized, may want to blend in, to be part of society, and not draw attention to themselves, how does one identify them? It was clear that the team knew the difficulties that going into a camp or community as outsiders would present; they would be "unknowns," strangers in person, in class, in language. They knew that they needed assistance, and asked for it; all of the girls interviewed were

introduced to the team through the field workers of the team's NGO. "...[I]t's not easy to identify these girls because in the IDP community, the [NGO] works there. And you have these older women, and you talk with this older woman, because they are respected in the community, and they are asked to identify the girls. Because they [the girls] choose to open up to these old women."

In Africa, girls often trusted the [NGO] workers and female elders in the community. Family was also a key point of access. "I have a little time to contact the family, and also I didn't contact any families, and these people who live in the camps, they talked to the family, and all the contacts were made by the volunteer and our provincial representative."

Being an outsider had ramifications for both the interview team, as well as the people in the camps. "They [NGO workers] made the contacts, and I came from [major city]. My presence in the camp was not positive. It created expectations of the people." This participant went on to say that due to her "white skin," people thought that she was not from Africa, but was a person coming in from a relief agency to bring assistance. Little of this sort of thing was dealt with in the research literature, the concept of raised expectations was mentioned in hidden populations around reciprocity to participants, and in the literature on journalism in situations of war where a journalist helped a person and was later attacked for their assisting someone from "the other side."

It is clear that workers from this NGO and elders are respected and seen as confidantes, and that without the help of these trusted persons, expectations are raised and access to accurate information will most likely be limited. As indicated in the literature on hidden populations and children and violence, trust-building with credible gatekeepers can be the lynchpin to accessing valid and reliable information and in

building the foundation for trusting relationships with the girls for subsequent interviews.

The team in Asia II contacted over 20 groups, both governmental and NGOs, trying to gain access to girls for their own study purposes. Eventually, through connections from previous work, the team gained access to a group of girls through a government department of social services. One team member said, "...we had followed up as much as possible until we saw that it was a dead end, and then we had to drop it. So in the end, finally when we got the approval of the national level of [a government department of social services] to go ahead and interview the girls in their custody, then we jumped at that because that was the only available one at that moment." The team needed to obtain clearance from the head of the department before beginning the work; this was done by the team and through the provision of a letter from the US/Geneva team explaining the study and the partnership. The lack of access was a limiting factor to the breadth of the sample. Another limiting factor was the narrowness of the dialogue in this country. The team preferred to interview girls whose language they knew, although they sought ways to get around the language problem through local translation.

Their first step was to network at a national conference on children in the armed conflict. Letters were then drafted and sent to organizations that were interested. Ironically, as former members of the revolutionary movement, the relationships of the team members were at the time of the study much more cordial with the government and the government department of social services than with people in the armed movement. This led to the team working with the government to access the women:

"Why? Because in the first place, the three of us are no longer in the movement.

So if we have to talk to the people again who we are working with before, it's

either that would be the start of a debate again, why are you doing the research, which is in a way negative to them, negative to the movement. So what can we expect from these people? So we really have to look for other ways so we can do access to the girls. So in our experience, access to the government through the government department of social services is far better than access to former comrades.”

This statement relates directly to the literature on researching hidden populations when the researcher has to consider who the study is for, who will be affected by the results, and what will be the ramifications for those both participating in and conducting the research. Another team member said, “It was not a major problem for us, the good thing for us is that the [representative] of the government department of social services is a friend of ours, so we did not have to establish credibility with her, we did not have to go through the same protocol as others did, and they did not have to check us in terms of security. So it was not a major thing for us.”

There were four criteria set forth by the government department of social services as to who could be interviewed:

“...the representative said, ‘you can interview all these children who are girls who are in our custody as long as they haven’t been interviewed before, there will be no photographs taken, their identities will be secret, and that the money that will be given to the girls will not be given to them in cash, but will be given to them in another form with the knowledge of the social worker, the local social worker.’ So we had to agree to all those conditions.”

The team felt that the government department of social services was genuinely looking out for the safety of the girls. Girls who had been interviewed previously could

not be interviewed again out of concern for their retraumatization.

All of the girls interviewed were from rural backgrounds. An attempt was made to gain access to urban girls in the armed group, but geography and safety made this impossible. There was also consideration of interviewing girls who were of another faith, from another part of the country and fighting for another cause, but the team considered that these girls came out of a different situation, that they had been trained from birth to actively defend their area: there was no “leaving” the group, no demobilization or reintegration, hence they were excluded from the sample. The team wanted, but was unable to interview girls from paramilitary groups. A number of difficulties arose around paramilitaries, and in the end, the team was not able to access or interview any girls from the paramilitaries. One factor cited by team members regarding paramilitary interviewing was safety; it was deemed too dangerous as it was in Latin America. Another factor was that one would need access to the girls through someone the girls trust. This would be someone in the government, and since the government does not see paramilitaries as a great problem [one team member said that they are often paid by the government to stir up unrest or to act as handmaidens to the army], they would more than likely not help in providing access. Finally, one team member said, “...that’s a problem, how to get access to that kind of link. Because I guess, if the Quakers are working with human rights groups, these are the kind of people you’re most likely going to find to do these study.” This was a very interesting comment, indicating that the sample would be influenced by the type of group one would partner with in-country; the past work of the group would determine the type of access available, and the actual sample would be determined from there.

Cost, cited in the literature as a prohibitive factor (Fitzgerald, 1996; Sudman,

Sirken, Cowan, 1988), did not play a significant role in accessing the sample in Asia II, the team felt that it had the funds to travel to the girls for the interviews. Funds for team travel were built into the original proposal. However, time was a critical component that needed to be taken into account. Consequently, the team "...maximize[d] the days wherein we could actually interview the girls while they are still in the center so that we don't have to go and locate them in other places, that would be impossible to find them." In addition, the team needed to complete the interviews quickly due to the impending release dates of the girls.

The team did a great deal of networking to obtain access to the girls interviewed. It was a long process, and a complex one. They met a number of dead ends in their search; however, they continued and were able to do the interviews. One team member said, "So that the feeling is of course different when we are not just sure who to interview, because we are expecting that we might be looking for these girls on the mountains, or in... but happily, we didn't have to go that way."

Another concern was the threat of being taken hostage, primarily in the south of the country. Traveling in areas and attempting to interview girls in unprotected settings was deemed too dangerous by team members. Therefore, interviews that could be conducted safely in controlled government settings were seen as the best option, even if it meant a more limited sample at the time.

There were a number of factors involved in gaining access and the trust of the girls through the government. First, one of the team members was a personal friend of one of the high-ups in the government social service sector. This opened the door to all subsequent contacts in the field:

"In the government, actually, when the head or the boss have the

recommendation for you to go on with the interview, they pretty much respect that. They even entertain you well. That's what our experience was with the government even before. They entertain you well, because perhaps these people would have the feeling that after you do the interview or the research, their boss would ask them, "Were you treated well?"

People were obviously concerned about negative feedback from the higher-ups if they did not respond well to the team's time with them. There was also the ethical dilemma, as will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, of the head of the government department of social services wanting information gleaned from the interviews. It is unclear whether this issue arose early on in the process, or at some time during the interviews. This issue of "forced reciprocity" is of deep concern and will need consideration in other field research of this kind.

The people working directly with the girls in centers or NGOs were seen, by both the research team and by the girls, as credible care-givers, hence they had the trust of the girls. This paved the way for trust to be built between the team and the girls, because they were introduced by people the girls were comfortable with:

"But the timing, when to come in and out of the place was a major consideration. We have to respect the dates given to us by partner agencies, so if they say that they are very busy at this time, then we have to reschedule and we have to respect that. If the child cannot be brought in because someone has to fetch her, we have to respect that."

Clearly, flexibility and respect on the part of the team was a trust-building mechanism with the caregivers and other staff.

Issues concerning legal processes in different regions also arose. In one area, girls

faced criminal charges for their participation in the conflict, had to plead guilty to then be released by the government; and were then placed on probation. In this case, pleas were made after the interviews. In another area, the military and the legal system were clear that children under 18 were not allowed to be prosecuted for participation in the conflict. The idea that one might be prosecuted for crimes and that the information given to an interviewer might be used against one holds the potential for grave consequences to the person being interviewed; if authorities obtain incriminating information, the person may face incarceration or worse. Moreover, if a respondent feels that information may be disclosed to or overheard by authorities, she might alter the information s/he gives for self-protection. Parallels are found in the literature on the reliability of information obtained in an institutional setting in contrast with information gotten in interviews with non-institutionalized samples (O'Donohue, 1996).

The liaison in the Asia I team explained that the sample was determined by access and safety of both the interviewers and the girls:

“That’s all we had. Because the others, [to whom] we had no access, were in army camps or in prisons or were separated geographically in [X]. So the process was going to be difficult. On the other hand, if we do this research in a conflict area, the safety of the interviewers would have been negative, and there would not have been any takers on the interviewee part in the conflict area. Then if you take the prisons, and I’ve had this experience before, it’s that in a prison, all these people live together, the ‘hard core’ and others. And if anything is said, and broadcast, and anybody learns about this, the hard core people, I mean, they’re really going to cause trouble to them.”

Potentially, even talking to an interviewer, for girls inside the facility, could mean

death after release at the hands of a member of the group they were originally part of. The liaison clearly knew the situation well and knew the locations in which the girls and the interviewers would be safe; safety was his primary concern. Establishing the safety of an interview venue provided the girls with the opportunity to speak frankly with the interviewers.

Two key factors emerged regarding access: first the prior relationship between the liaison and the state that allowed the team into the rehabilitation center, and second, the actual admittance to the center to do the interviews. The credibility of the liaison, from prior work done with boy soldiers, with both the state and the officers of the center, provided the team with access to the girls, "...otherwise no one would be allowed into the rehabilitation center." Government and center staff trusted this person. The liaison knew some of the girls from other work done with demobilized child soldiers, and apparently this was helpful in building credibility with them.

Second, each day that the team came to do the interviews, they had to meet the person in charge at the gate to be let in. They often chatted informally with this person for a while prior to the interviews to maintain a good working relationship. The staff of the center had a general idea about what the team was doing; however, they did not know the specifics of the work and the information the girls gave was not relayed to them. The relationship-building done prior to the interviews by the two interviewers was recognized as very helpful to the process.

Team members in Latin America wanted to include girls who had been with the paramilitaries, but there were, as with Asia II, logistical and security constraints that got in the way. Girls who are recruited by the paramilitaries are taken away, trained for a number of months, and then secretly returned to the communities, making it very

difficult to identify them. Another reason was "...that there is legislation that talks about ex-combatant children that are captured and ex-combatant children that escape. There are benefits for those who escape from the [opposition], but not for those from the paramilitary...they are not part of the legislation, they are just seen as children by [government child protection authority]." Individuals in governments that use children in situations of armed conflict can be charged with war crimes, and since paramilitary forces are often associated with governmental forces, the creation of demobilization programs for them may well be an admission of the violation of international law. Having no reason to seek out help because they know there is no help to receive, girls in the paramilitaries generally do not escape to centers, making them very difficult to find. It was also felt that contact with the paramilitaries was much more dangerous than contact with the guerrillas, that the girls in the paramilitaries would still have been active, therefore the risk attached to their discovery and the severity of retribution much greater. Finally, the team cited money and time as limiting factors in accessing girls in paramilitaries.

The team in Latin America had differing views on the ease/difficulty of access to the girls. Most felt that the key to recruiting a sample was access, and that access was sought through government channels. One of the team members stated that she had no problems with access due to her work in a program that works with girls and her friendship with a woman who also worked with demobilized girls:

"I have talked before with a friend who works with a group of these girls and she was very interested that their situation could be known widely in order to be able to bring some support for them. Then it was not the problem of having them easy to access, because I could have talked to other girls or girls, but to me they

were the most appropriate to speak with for this particular working.”

It was not clear whether her friend needed approval or whether she was able to give approval on her own; however, it was clear that the friend was genuinely concerned about the girls and wanted to help.

Those who felt access was difficult explained the process of getting to the girls:

“We explored a while in this team the possibilities to interview children. It is not easy to access these people due to security reasons, and then we had an inventory of institutions and organizations which would provide support to this research. We decided that in [area] we would do some work because I am from there and I know the people there and I had had the experience I mentioned to you a moment ago. We decided that it was good to go to that city to interview the girls and because there had been a new, special reception center created by the authorities, so it was that place to go. At the end, however, we did not choose to interview women in a center or an institution, but we interviewed three girls who are participating in [a program], but they do not live in a facility, but instead in particular homes... Only three out of the total group of disarmed children in this center, this program, were girls. It was very difficult for us to only interview two of them, because the three girls are very united, and they are always working and moving together... Initially we had decided that according to the criteria, the selection criteria, that we would interview two. I didn't count on the fact that there were three. And then after we discussed with the team we decided that it was pertinent to interview the three of them.”

The main concern raised about interviewing three girls instead of two was that they only had funds for a gift for two; the team decided to divide the money three ways

instead of two so that the girls' relationships would remain intact. This was a creative and sensitive decision which smoothed the way for the interview process.

The team looked into interviewing girls in one demobilization program, and for reasons of their own decided against interviewing girls in that program because the program was extremely closed to outsiders. They opted to interview girls in another demobilization program where they were more welcomed.

### *Sampling and Access, the Literature and Theory*

The purpose of the original study was to provide a window into the lives of girls who had participated in armed groups, but not to generalize empirically from the results to the larger population of girls in armed groups. This differed from the sampling literature on hidden populations which cited the need to determine the size of a population to obtain a representative sample (Fitzgerald, 1996; McKinlay, 1996). There is no value judgment implied in this statement, it is solely that the two studies (the original study for this paper and the study in the literature) are for two different purposes; hence the methodology is different for each. The sample in this study reflected the literature on sexual harassment, that the purpose of the research should determine the sampling unit (O'Donohue, 1996).

Given the limit and purposive nature of the sample, the results of the original study cannot be generalized to the larger population of girls who have been in armed groups; however, generalizability was not the purpose of the study. One of the purposes of the study was to conceptually define the target population for a larger future study. This was successful as shown in the previous discussion regarding definitions. At the time of these interviews, three of the teams wanted to interview a wider sample, and two

teams went on to conduct more interviews with a wider sample after the completion of the original study.

In the literature on hidden populations, cost was often a prohibitive factor in sampling due to the time needed to uncover the population (Fitzgerald, 1996; Sudman, Sirken, Cowan, 1988). In this study, cost was not identified as a major problem in accessing the girls other than in Latin America with the paramilitaries; however, time and concern with kidnapping or physical harm were factors. By and large, the budget for the original study took into account the financial resources that would be needed to access the girls; therefore money was not an issue.

On the other hand, good relationships with gatekeepers and the community in which the girls lived, as cited in the literature on hidden populations (Watters, Biernacki, 1989), proved to be invaluable; this was cited by each team multiple times. In the original study, the environment shaped the parameters of access and hence the sample; however, all of the teams were pleased with the sample they were able to interview. The Principal Investigator of the original study also felt that the range of data obtained was sufficient for common categories based on the girls' experience to be developed and for tentative cross-country comparisons to be undertaken utilizing those categories.

Two teams included girls in the sample who did not meet the sampling criteria for the original study in order to maintain relationships within existing groups of girls. The teams were very sensitive to the importance of the relationships between the girls and did not want to damage either the relationships that had been built or the balance achieved in a center where the women were living. If team members had used a rigid sampling plan, without concern for context, the two girls who were included would have been excluded. Because of the understanding of the teams and the gatekeepers, the

sample was expanded, interviews were conducted and the data was transcribed and translated for both these girls, illustrating the inclusive and adaptive nature of the method. This accommodation was also context-specific, because it was only necessary in two countries.

Although the interview materials gained from these two girls was not used a primary source material in the final report, it was used for corroboration and to provide a more in-depth understanding for the head researcher during data analysis. Interviewing, transcribing, and translating these interviews took considerable time, but the teams were clear that this was time well spent, as the relationships between the girls and their safety came first.

## **Dialogue on Methodology**

In the literature on hidden populations, Carrier, Herdt and Boxer call for training of the person conducting research, especially if the person doing the interviewing is part of the local community (Carrier, 1989; Herdt, Boxer, 1991). The training includes knowledge of research techniques (Bolton, 1990; Henslin, 1971; Power, 1989; Watters, Biernacki, 1989), use of the interview process as cited in the literature on domestic violence (Herman and Bernet, 1997; Jacobson, 1994; Protacio et al, 1996), culture of those being interviewed (Azmi, 1999; Yoshioka, 1999), and local language, including slang (Boushel, 1994).

The original girls in armed groups study included, in its proposal, training on research methodology for each of the teams participating. The trainings were held in the country where the study was to take place, and involved a three- to five-day immersion in Irving Seidman's "Interviewing as Qualitative Research"; when possible, Seidman's

book was sent prior to the session so that participants could have an understanding of the method to be used.

Dialogue on methodology sessions were designed so that liaison/team leaders for each group could, if s/he chose, include people outside of the immediate project to increase the pool of future researchers in the country.

An agenda for the training can be found in Appendix VI. It included introductions of participants, introduction to the study, research methods, the technology that would be used, understanding of interviewer ethical responsibilities, creation of the informed consent form and interview guides, role-plays and debriefings, and units on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), dissociative identity disorder, suicidality, and stress management. Discussions of safe spaces for the interviews, language, dress, culture, gender, and safety were also included.

In effect, however, the training effort began before any meetings in-country. The Latin American team leader emailed back prior to the first training on methodology [held in Asia I] to suggest that the meeting be termed a “dialogue” due to the Latin American team’s prior experience of conducting research as well as its in-depth knowledge of the situation to be researched. Significantly, they felt that the word “training” indicated that one party knows/is in possession of the information, and the other does not and needs to be taught what the trainer knows; in contrast, a dialogue demonstrates a willingness to listen and respond, a mutual learning. This suggestion prompted a change in name from “training in research methods” to “dialogue on research methodology,” and was carried over to all of the other country meetings. The change from “training” to “dialogue” set a better initial foundation for trust-building.

Only one of the countries, Asia I, included people in the dialogue not directly

associated with the project. In the early evolution of the conception of dialogues, the advisory group still saw them as an opportunity to provide training in qualitative research methods for those on the team who were doing the interviews, as well as others in-country who were trusted by the liaison. In Asia I, four additional people attended the dialogue on methodology; all of the attenders were cleared by the liaison, two of the four worked at his office, one was a psychiatrist, and the fourth was a religious leader. Three of the four were native to the country and all four were very familiar with the conflict and the culture; all agreed that participants in and decision about the work would be kept confidential. All of the other groups limited participation to the people immediately involved. In Africa, the four main participants were present for the dialogue. The head of the office participated as she was able; her workload prohibited her from attending the entire three days. Because of language differences, simultaneous translation was needed, and was provided by the four participants for one another and for the person from the U.S./Swiss team.

On a very different tack, one team member in Latin America felt that a dialogue on methodology without a “pre-dialogue” on context was putting the cart before the horse:

“Asking the team what is each person’s view on the historical process of conflict, on the inputs coming from different disciplines, and their own discipline, journalism, or law, or education, or political science. And then we would come together for the dialogue on methodology. Because the methodology is not ‘the’ methodology, it’s a tool, a methodological tool, very useful, very important, very nice, that might be employed in a way in which you combine these other things you have. But a good idea is to put those things together so you have this

discussion, a first dialogue, previous to this other dialogue on methodology. I'll put it another way. When you have a project, a proposal, you have to think first not on how you're going to do something, but you say, 'What do you want to do?' and 'Why you want to do that?'"

Another participant from the Latin American team worried that those who read the book prior to the dialogue had a head start compared to those who had not. Participants from all countries contributed to a number of areas in the dialogue on methodology: developing interview guides together; the role plays; parameters/rules; flexibility; and the need for translation.

#### *Dialogue on Methodology and Development of Interview Guides*

Unlike more conventional research studies, site-specific interview guides for the original study were created during the dialogues. This was because the U.S./Swiss team wanted the information gathered to be useful to the teams on the ground, and because it was felt that the teams knew the specifics of the individual situations much more comprehensively than they did. The guides were created in three different sessions, each focusing on one interview session: the girl's past, her present, and what she wanted for herself in the future. Members from each team commented favorably on the process of creating the interview guide in the dialogues, but only one team member stated that she was surprised and a bit uncertain that there was no guide at the outset, and that it would be created on the spot. She said that afterwards she was very happy with the results and felt that it was directly applicable to the context in-country. A more in-depth look at the creation of the guides will come later in this chapter.

### *Role Play*

Role plays were seen, over all, to be an effective tool for team members to gain experience with the interview process. Role plays were conducted after each piece of the interview guide was created, utilizing the questions that arose during the session. Participants were divided into pairs, one of the two was given a “profile” of a girl soldier to role-play, the other person acted as the interviewer. Profiles were developed in advance and, as much as possible, tailored to the specific context of the country.

The role plays were designed to present interviewers with difficult interview situations, and also to help them enter the minds and emotions of the girls. However, one of the participants commented that the reality of the interviews did not match the role plays. “This methodology when you interviewed the children [role plays], this was complicated...the workshop was OK, but when you went into the field, it was complicated. When you did the workshop, people started to cry [part of the role plays]. In the interviews, nobody cried.” It would be important in future dialogues, if this type of role play were used, that participants have the space to discuss the range of possible emotions that a girl might experience, and not limit it to one example, like crying.

At least one of the team members in Asia II talked about the difficulty the team had during the role plays. It was clear that the role plays helped to prepare team members for the interviews, but that there was a problem in separating the awareness of their being interviewers from their pretending to be a girl-child soldier:

“The role play was difficult in a sense that everything was artificial, and even our roles at that time were not defined, we were sort of a mixed bag, to experience it in some ways prepared us for the real thing, made us reflect...we, it was difficult because in the role play we were building, I was supposed to be the child for

example, but all the time, I know that I am the researcher. That was difficult for us. After the session we were talking about it, I cannot recall, but it was difficult, the roles we were doing were sort of mixed up. In reality it was more defined. You knew that they were the soldier, and they did not act out...but we were not very comfortable with the role play. It was like everything was not very realistic to this, of course, it's a role play, but there has to be some semblance, some relation of reality."

One of the most powerful and unexpected occurrences in the dialogue on methodology in Asia II (where members of the research team had also been members of an armed group when younger) was the emergence of painful memories during the role plays; this may explain some of the dissatisfaction with the role plays. Even though the scenarios, as indicated above, were seen as artificial, they had enough of a semblance of reality to trigger memories of the time when team members were in the revolutionary movement, and caused them to question their participation:

"...we were discussing, and we were saying that when we were role playing, we were at a different level, we were also at that point, it was like we were also girl soldiers being interviewed by you and recalling the experiences we had, so it was entirely different than our role then, as we are researchers. We were undergoing sort of a workshop for ourselves as ex-activists and revolutionaries, and it had a different effect on us. Can you understand what I mean? So we started recalling what's the effect on our lives, what could we have done, did we follow the right, were we in the right direction, what were the mistakes, and we said, what were the effects on us that we did not realize then, and then now, at a different lifetime, we begin to think, to reflect on what it did to us. So we were undergoing

a certain process of actualization, or healing, it was like a healing workshop. It was more than preparatory for our project. We were talking about it, but not in a structured way. It touched us at some point. But the agenda was not really for that matter. It made us think again. And our ending was that although there were no regrets, we were happy that the experience and those times, but now if we were asked if you want to do it again, we said we won't do it again, so that was our conclusion... We were thinking that at this point in time if they [the revolutionary movement] asked us to join them again, we would say 'no, no thank you!' That was our conclusion."

For the team members involved, healing seemed to have taken place since; however, it was painful for them to recall the past. When asked if she thought it would have been better if the facilitator of the dialogues had known about this beforehand so that the dialogue could have been changed in some way, one team member said, "No, no, it went well that day because we didn't also know that we were undergoing something else in the training. We utilized it only afterwards."

### *Psychodynamic or Psychosocial Orientation?*

The dialogue on methodology was created in the United States by the Principal Investigator of the original study and the PI of the current study, with input from the advisory group; inevitably, it was very western and psychodynamic in its orientation. There were units on PTSD, dissociative identity disorder, and suicidality. The U.S./Swiss team, as well as the advisory committee, felt that this information on psychological symptomatology was important so that the interviewers would have a frame of reference for interpreting psychologically based behaviors or symptoms. Moreover, it was felt that

some information on suicidality, given the potential for retraumatization, was critically important for the safety of the girls.

In Africa, the organization from which team members came utilized a predominately psychosocial approach to their work. However, there was a sense that the differences were acceptable because "...we could discuss with [the person from the U.S./Swiss team] our approach and give them our point of view..." This knowledge was very important during the dialogue so that the person from the U.S./Swiss team did not lose trust with the participants by attempting to impose a model that is seen as foreign and limited in its scope.

In Asia II, information on suicidality was seen as helpful to the team. Although the team saw very few cases of suicide in their lifetimes of work with children, they are seeing a rise in the number of suicides in-country during the past few years. Consequently, they were glad to have the information, and have reused the handouts and lecture material. However, they felt that the information on PTSD was not as salient. The following is a dialogue between a team member and the interviewer in the current study:

*Team member.* The discussion on the suicide was a tool that made us more confident, although the discussion on PTSD for me was a little bit more confusing because in [Asia II] for example, it's very difficult to determine what is the cause of the PTSD because everything becomes cumulative here. It's not like everything was normal here and then a crisis happened, here every day is a crisis. So the PTSD was a little bit difficult to apply, especially with the girl soldiers.

*Interviewer.* In the North, we have the luxury of thinking about PTSD. And the more that I went around and talked to people and going back, I just think it's a

luxury we have and we don't even know that we have that luxury to think about it in those terms. And I think that the World Trade Center and anthrax, and if these things keep happening, we will have to reshape our definition of what that's about.

*Team member.* It's exactly what you're saying. For example, in the west, PTSD is OK, it's acceptable to say PTSD, but here, it's a little bit different. Especially in these type of children, in child soldiers.

This exchange indicates how the use of the term "PTSD" becomes defined as a political issue when people who are struggling for change in a country are deemed "crazy" by those in power: it undermines the authority of those leading the resistance struggle. There is also a political issue when it comes to determining causality of PTSD, does it happen because the person is "weak," or because the "oppressive regime" utilizes tactics that cause symptomatology? Are people victims or survivors? These are questions that are very difficult to answer, and the issue of PTSD in-country is most often not considered as a valid explanation for behavior.

In Latin America, the entire team felt that the training materials gave too much emphasis to the vulnerability of the girls and individual psychological symptoms, and not enough focus on their strengths, including resiliency and empowerment, because "we were thinking of this, and now I think I can share this with you, which is about resilience. Because we think that Latin Americans have a lot of resilience..." Most participants felt strongly that the girls they were interviewing had survived terrible circumstances, and would continue to survive: they were not victims in their own minds:

"...how there is a psychological response that allows a person who has passed through a very, very bad experience to be able to continue living as a survivor,

but beyond that, as a constructor, and a builder of peace. That's something different. Not a person who is defeated, who is about to commit suicide. But a person who learned a very bad lesson who requires help in order to put out those energies that make resilience more concrete in the conflict."

One of the team members told a story about a young girl that illustrated her thoughts on resilience and her view of the girls:

"...When I was interviewing these girls, one have got a very bad sickness, [name of illness] which is a sickness that happens in the jungle, the tropical jungle that happens when a bug bites you and deposits some eggs or something and that created a big scar or a big hole in your face or the part that it bites. And goes through your circulatory system and kills you. So this girl has got that, but she didn't feel like a victim at all. And then, I was astonished, and I asked her, 'Do you know this sickness is very serious?' and she said, 'Well, yes, but I hope I won't die.' And then I repeated my question and asked, 'Are you taking the medicine?' and she said 'Yes, yes and it's a very heavy dose and it makes you very tired and very weak.' But she still does not mind, you see. She was a victim, not from the armed conflict. You know why? Because the medicine used to treat this sickness is only distributed by the armed forces, by the ministry of defense. So anyone that has this sickness has to go there to purchase the medicine. This is a different view of the problem. And if you don't know that, then you just see this poor girl."

This story illustrates the strength of the girl in that she is not the victim of a terrible disease caused by living in extremely difficult circumstances in the armed group, but that she has been able to cope with this situation and is not cowed or defeated by it.

This view holds that there is a bigger context for the situation of the girls, that even when faced with terrible prospects and a system that is designed not to assist them, they still carry on, and that they would not suicide. There was a sense that with a more balanced approach, including resilience and empowerment, the interviewers could better help the girls, seeing them not as victims but as survivors.

Another Latin American team member wondered whether the U.S./Swiss team was asking them to psychiatrically diagnose the girls, and stated that this was way beyond their capacity with so little training. She felt that it was important for them to know the warning signs of suicide, but that knowing about the rest of the psychological symptoms was unnecessary. The purpose of presenting psychological symptomatology would need to be made absolutely clear in subsequent dialogues so there was no confusion about roles and responsibilities.

### *Role of the Facilitator*

Given the salience of the shift from training to dialogue at the start of the project, it was of great concern to make sure the dialogue was truly a dialogue. Respect for the experience, knowledge, and orientation to research of the team members, and of the conflict were of primary importance. Much time was spent in listening to team members and checking the accuracy of what was heard; this put limits on the content of the dialogue agenda; however, the dialogue in LA was so fruitful the team decided that it would skip the more didactic session on stress management for more group discussion.

The role of the facilitator, as note-taker during brainstorming sessions and someone to focus the discussion, also helped the sessions as reported by participants. One team member talked about the importance of having someone from outside the

conflict in this role, “[the facilitator] was very good at putting things together, because [facilitator] was not involved in that conflict. [the facilitator] had an idea of what was going on, but were able to help us focus and to put it all together, our ideas. And then reading the notes [the facilitator] did was very good because it helped us to concentrate.” Each night, the facilitator would review the notes that were taken during the day, type up those pertinent to the whole group, and in the morning, copy and distribute them. When there were sessions where the team was brainstorming questions for the guide, the facilitator would record all questions on newsprint. The team would then utilize these questions in a role play, debrief, and the facilitator would take notes on the process. In the evening, the facilitator would categorize the questions, and develop an interview guide that moved from the general to the specific, from less intrusive to more intrusive. [The facilitator] also recorded the comments on the role play debrief in two categories, what worked/was helpful and what did not work/was not helpful. These were then printed out for all of the participants and distributed the next day.

#### *Translation of the Dialogue to Spanish*

Two of the team members in Latin America took the information from the dialogue and translated it into Spanish, including the handouts and role plays. They then presented the dialogue for the two Spanish-speaking members of the team. It is currently available for use in Latin America.

#### *Critique of the Dialogue*

All of the teams felt that the dialogue was helpful. In Africa, the team felt that it assisted them in “establishing some parameters, some rules.” This was said even though most of the participants had successfully conducted research in the past. She said, “There are

some scientific issues we should take into account, that with the training, with the workshop that we did, it was more clear for us.” She also felt that the person from the U.S./Swiss team was flexible as a facilitator, that

“[The U.S./Swiss person] came with their knowledge and [she] related a lot to what we have experienced and they accept all of the inputs that we have to them and all the discussion where we had, they took into account our experience. In that sense, it was very good for us.”

Participants in the dialogue from Asia I who were the project interviewers said that they found the dialogue on methodology helpful: “You have your program, then you go into it [the interviews] easily. You don’t go into that life [the life of the girl through the interview process] by just ‘walking on the street.’ When you have the training and know where you’re going, you’re less scared.” The dialogue seemed to provide a foundation from which the interviewers were able to work with lessened anxiety. Team members stated that they learned the methodology for the study both during the dialogue on methodology and from the Irving Seidman book.

The Latin American team said the dialogue was helpful in many ways. They cited the structure of the methodology as being successful, “...the way it was divided, active, thinking of what we were going to do, and the questionnaires, and the other hand, was kind of skills, tips to help us deal with the interview, etc.” Another said, “To me the most important thing I got was the necessity of maintaining a respect for what the person is saying to you during the interview.” A third stated, “One thing was that it was put all together, because in some sense, in one way or another, all of us or some of us have been doing interview research technique, picking up a little bit of information here and there, and in this, we managed to put all of it together, like how you take into

account the person, how you think about trust, and build the person's confidence.”

Team members had many suggestions on ways to make the dialogue more effective and applicable to the Latin American context. The first suggestion was to request that a number of background papers be developed on the history of the issue, what is known about the context of the situation relating to girls, and the educational and legal systems:

“I think that beside receiving the dialogue on the methodological approach, which as I said before is more focused on the psychological view, we should have a kind of exchange to make a context previous to the interviews, so that people can arrange like a little course in which they would have the different elements slated from the historical view, asking the team.”

These background reports would help level the playing field between the team members and would provide a multidisciplinary framework for the ensuing discussion. It was felt that they would also help the team in the development of the interview guides.

In terms of understanding the history of the current situation, one of the participants stated: “There you should analyze the historical context; the approach of the interview is very personal, it refers to the individual herself, and her past and present situations. But that situation is not isolated.” Although the girl's story will be her own, it was felt that it would take on greater illumination if placed in the context of the broader, historical conflict. Knowledge of the legal system was thought to provide knowledge of current legal issues the team might face when approaching the girls for interviews. It was suggested that this would help the team to know what consequences the girls might face for their participation in the armed groups, as well as the laws requiring demobilization and reintegration programs. Finally, legal information might help the team to have a

framework in which to make policy recommendations,

“Because you will make recommendations for the state, but most of these recommendations we got to know only through the interviews without having the total scope or the total amount of elements we needed... And there are penalties if you do not follow the procedure. So you should know that ahead in order to have a better interview, and ask better questions to the girls.”

Queries stemming from this included inquiries as to why programs are not working, the delineated experience of the girls after capture or surrender, whether they had access to a judge and whether this was a juvenile judge, whether they were kept in a military facility, length of time held prior to placement in a program. “...All these little things are required to be included if you want to really produce good recommendations for a document if you want to work with or interact, as we say, with child soldiers.”

Team members cited the structure of the dialogue as moving from the very complex to the very simple, “...How do you sit down, how do you look at the person, that was great. And all aspects working at this same kind of level,” and stated that it was very important in allowing them to think through the details of the initial meeting and subsequent encounters.

One of the main issues that arose was that a working knowledge of English was necessary for participation in the dialogue. The team leader gathered participants for the dialogue and the study based on the assumption that team members needed to be bilingual in English and Spanish. This limited those who might be considered for the project and led to inclusion of a team member with paramilitary connections who, as the dialogue progressed, was viewed as a person that could not be trusted to maintain confidentiality. There were at least two additional people on the LA team who did not

attend the dialogue but who participated as interviewers in the project, both Spanish-only speakers. One of the team members stated that she wished that all of the team had participated in the dialogue from the beginning, that they had made provision for simultaneous translation during the sessions. She felt that much rich and salient dialogue took place and that the latecomers missed that foundation.

In contrast, in Africa, simultaneous translation was absolutely necessary. This was very difficult for the people present, one participant stated, "It was the only difficulty that I feel, because sometimes it was quite difficult for us to translate everything." Indeed, simultaneous translation was very tiring for the team; they participated in the dialogue and translated at the same time.

Despite the differences from site to site, the dialogues on methodology were just that, dialogues. At one site, the facilitator, at one point stated, "I hope you guys are getting as much out of this as I am." Hearing the perspectives of the team was as or more important than having them hear the perspectives of the facilitator, and hence, the U.S./Swiss team. In a dialogue of three days' duration, perhaps this is the best possible outcome, mutual understanding if not total agreement, and mutual learning: a leveling of the methodological playing field.

### *Training in Research Methodology, the Literature and Theory*

The literature on preparation for research and training interviewers provided a vague blueprint in contrast to the richness of the dialogues on methodology. General principles on knowledge of research techniques (Bolton, 1990; Henslin, 1971; Power, 1989; Watters, Biernacki, 1989), how to interview (Herman and Bernet, 1997; Jacobson, 1994; Protacio et al, 1996), culture of participants (Azmi, 1999; Yoshioka, 1999), and local

language (Boushel, 1994) were cited, but without substantive explication of implementation of the ideas.

It was apparent, from the first contact with the teams, that they were clear about what they knew and their competence in and experience with research. "Training" was not an appropriate term for the sessions that were held. Dialogue was a much better term due to the mutuality of exchange that took place; the exchange included information, definitions, techniques, food (as meals were taken together), culture, and ultimately, trust and respect.

Team members in each country felt that the dialogue helped them to ground the work that they would be doing; they felt that they were better prepared by having the practice, the interview guides, the Seidman book and an overview of the project. Since all of the team members were indigenous to the country in which the study was taking place, there was an inherent understanding of the political situation, the culture, and the norms in which the study would have to be conducted. Creating the informed consent forms and the interview guides allowed the teams to experience a participatory equality in the project and provided the opportunity for them to gather useful information and to ensure the best protection for the women being interviewed. Role plays were helpful to some and less helpful to others; a more careful development of scenarios might help this in future dialogues.

Uncovering feelings about a psychodynamic versus a psychosocial orientation may have been one of the most important pieces of information that emerged during the dialogues; Ibrahim and Arredondo (1986) have written about the need to question the universality of psychological theories based on western research methodologies; they believe that psychological theories should be crafted based on cultural relevance. This

was a key to the development of understanding and trust between the facilitator and the teams. Flexibility by both the facilitator and the participants in the discussions, and a willingness by the facilitator to listen, learn, and adapt the material from what was seen as a victim orientation to a strengths perspective was interpreted as a sign of respect for the suffering and resilience of everyone in the country. Both the facilitator and the teams felt listened to, and both saw that aspects of both the conceptual framework for the study and the methodology could and did change in relation to the dialogue.

The dialogues on methodology provided a living illustration of a reflective research paradigm. From the first contact with the Latin American team, it was clear that the research model, while intending to be inclusive, was still operating from an elitist, western pedagogical model in that the U.S./Swiss team believed they owned the knowledge and were going to give it to the teams doing the research. From the results of the interviews, it is clear that the teams had equal knowledge; each had a piece of a larger whole that together was more insightful, had more clarity, and was specific to the setting. In hindsight, from the point of view of the facilitator, continuing down this road would have been a barrier to relationship-building and would have either made a logistically difficult situation even worse, might have caused distortions in the data or may have caused teams to drop out of the project entirely.

The dialogues were more inclusive than the original training model in that they brought the teams together to contribute knowledge, and to build meaning between team members and the facilitator. Out of respect for time pressures on each of the individuals in the dialogues, sessions were shortened from five to three days. The inclusion of a psychosocial and strengths perspective enriched both the teams and the facilitator.

Constructing the interview guides and the informed consent forms so that they reflected the context of the situation in each country was very important both for the teams and for the understanding of the girls being interviewed. This was also an adaptive process in that the guides and informed consent were slightly different from country to country, but remarkably, the core questions and consent information were basically the same in each.

Finally, as stated earlier, there was a fairly significant unexpected outcome of the dialogues, the memories that emerged in participants in the Asia II team when doing the role plays. According to the interviews, the team processed these feelings for quite some time during the study, and felt differently about use of children in the movement because of it.

Implicit in much of this is the issue of power dynamics. The person from the more developed world arrives with the money and the method, and in situations where cash is scarce, people may sign on to things that they don't fully agree with, then either do the work with some resentment or alter the work so that it fits their needs. This maintains the owner of knowledge-receiver of knowledge and is, as was indicated by the teams, disempowering. All of the participants except one had already conducted research. They all had knowledge that would directly affect the research situation that the facilitator or head research did not, and could not have. Would the results of the study have been as rich without the initial sharing of knowledge and mutual creation of meaning? It is impossible to know at this time; however, relationships between the team members and the facilitator continue, four years after the study is over. Teams cited that trust was build due to the inclusive, adaptive, context-specific nature of the dialogues.

## Guide Development

Guide development, in the literature on research with children exposed to violence, emphasized wording that allows a child to tell a story, and the need for flexibility in study design to capture information and ideas while maintaining the core question (Kaufman, Zigler, 1987). This was very different from the quantity and quality of information that emerged when the teams were asked about guide development.

Interview guides in the original study were developed during the dialogues on methodology by the teams, and then sometimes adapted to the individual interview or country situation. The teams came up with almost identical interview guides; this was quite a surprise to the person who facilitated the dialogues, and made for consistency in data gathered across the four countries.

The interview guide in Africa was developed in three sessions over a series of two days, with an opportunity for review at the beginning of each day. Creating the interview guide together allowed for the emergence of subject areas that an outside researcher could not know, and a way of sequencing and asking questions that were culturally appropriate. One of the participants stated, "One part was to think together, and also, to think about the type of the question and what should we use in the interview, and what is not usable." In contrast to the other three countries, the interview guides in Africa did not work in their original form in Africa. The interviewers said, "...we find that here after the work, that the interview guide really needed to be much more flexible," and "...each part that composed the guide, you have the chance to have the sequence of all the issues, just not in the [prescribed] order, you can react to the girls, but you have to be flexible." The team in Africa, as will be demonstrated later in

this chapter, needed to change the sequence of the interviews from early history/life in the armed group/present and future to life in the armed group/early history/present and future.

In Asia II, two main points emerged during questions about development of the interview guide: the first was on the participatory process involved in creation of the guide; the second was on the flexibility of the guide. One team member said:

“First of all, we were all very surprised, I don’t remember I don’t know if it was with [the facilitator of the dialogue on methodology], when we were corresponding about the questionnaire, we were asking, ‘What were the questions you want us to ask?’ And then we realized at the dialogue workshop that we were actually going to generate the questions ourselves. So we said, Oh! So we were happy that we had a big role in making the questions. It put us in, we said, ‘What did they ask the girls in other countries, then?!’ This was a question in our minds, ‘I wonder how they did this in other places, did they come up with the same things?’ I would like to know eventually. Did the researchers in the other countries come up with the same questions basically that we came up with? That was a key, of course you would ask the research team, it would be very dependent on what were the things we were looking for and we were happily surprised that we were going to come up with the questions, the things that we think are relevant, the things we want to know as well. So I think we were pleased with that. Because at first, we were like, ‘What kind of questions are we going to ask?’ Were these going to be questions that are relevant?”

Mutual decision-making around guide development was very important, both in putting the team on equal footing with the US/Geneva team, and to help the team gain

information that would be helpful to them in its ongoing work in-country. There was also obviously some trepidation among African team members about what the questions would be, and perhaps, whether the team would “measure up” to the guides generated by other teams in other regions.

In Asia I, the interview guide was developed by the team over the course of three days, utilizing the three-interview, past-present-future approach. The team stayed close to the interview guide during the course of the interviews in early history/life in the armed group/present and future as well as specific questions and prompts.

Since all but one of the participants in the dialogue on methodology had previous experience either working with or interviewing children and adolescents, they were able to fine tune the questions toward the girls based on their ages. And, since the interview covered the whole of the girl’s life, the core question about demobilization and reintegration needs was a natural endpoint to the series of interviews.

### *Guide Development, the Literature and Theory*

The interview guides as developed by the teams allowed the girls to tell their stories, and were flexible without losing the core question as directed by the literature on children exposed to violence (Kaufman, Zigler, 1987). As stated above, it was fascinating and unexpected that each of the teams came up with very similar interview guides, including similar themes and prompts that allowed for ease of comparative analysis.

Creating the interview guides with the teams was consistent with reflective research theory in that it was inclusive; the process allowed the teams to contribute their knowledge and to gather information that would be helpful to them in their ongoing work with children. Mutual creation of the interview guides provided the opportunity for

the teams to own the knowledge that they had and contribute it to the study. The teams knew much about the culture, the history of the conflict, and the current situation for the girls, providing information that a researcher from the outside could not know. This balanced the power differential between the facilitator and the team members, and, as expressed by the PI of the study, contributed greatly to the richness of the data collected.

Though it was a surprise that the interview guides were so similar, there are a number of factors that might have contributed to this. Most members of the teams were involved locally and also internationally around the issue of children and armed conflict, and were drawing from a similar pool of knowledge from literature, conferences, etc. The same facilitator worked with each of the four teams and may have contributed ideas from previous dialogues. The informational purpose of the interviews (birth to participation, participation to escape/capture, escape/capture and into the future) may have provided enough structure that similar components were generated by each team to fit neatly into each interview. Whatever the reason, it is remarkable that there was consistency across all four countries given the freedom each group had in guide creation.

### **Structures of the Interviews**

The literature on interviewing victimized children considers issues of power differentials in the research relationship, (Edwards, Forman, 1989), interviewer bias in situations where children are being interviewed and the interviewer may side with one parent (Ceci, Bruck, 2001; Horowitz, 1986; Power, 1989), the importance of multiple interviews (Segal, 2000), and age-appropriate methods such as the use of dolls or drawing with children (Edwards and Forman, 1989; Schetky, Boverman, 1985). Issues of power differentials and authority figures in relation to data accuracy were cited in the literature

in a number of forms. If the interviewer is in a position of authority (police, judge), this may affect the type and quantity of information given by the participant. If the person is wearing a uniform and the person being interviewed is a child or has participated in behaviors that are against the law, the perception of power differential might be exacerbated (Ceci, Bruck, 2001). In cultures where authority is respected and obeyed, the internalized norm may override the participant's inclination to hold information back, but only after a level of rapport has been developed (Schetky, Boverman, 1985).

Interviewer bias, defined in the literature on hidden populations, as keeping the interview conversation based in the things the interviewer wants to hear and other subjects was presented, as were the asking of leading questions (Horowitz, 1986; Power, 1989). The literature on hidden populations also indicated that often a single interview will not yield a great amount of data, and that questions need to be carefully thought out prior to interviews due to cultural taboos and norms, e.g., talking about sex or secret societies (Segal, 2000).

In the literature on children exposed to violence, it was stated that the age of a child participant was important in decisions around the type of information gathering to be used. Data gathering can begin with young children through play interviews utilizing dolls, toys, and drawing, and if appropriate, can then move through more structured forms of interview as children grow older (Edwards and Forman, 1989; Schetky, Boverman, 1985).

To help the reader, because this is a long sub-section, the components of this sub-section are: "What a Researcher Must Know Prior to the Interviews; Introductory Meetings Prior to Interviews; Sequence of Interviews and Guide Use; and conclusion of this section."

Team members in all four countries had a great deal to say about the interviews. This segment covers the interviews with the girls, from background information the teams thought necessary to have prior to the interviews, through the interviews process and use of the interview guide. Team members focused on a wide range of areas when asked about the process of the actual interviews; these included what one must know prior to the interview, pre-interview meetings, logistics of the settings, interview skills, who interviewed and why, number and length of interviews, the differences between the first, second, and third interviews, and how the interview guides were used. Some correspond to the literature, but much of it does not because it is much more in-depth and covers more thematic areas.

#### *What a Researcher Must Know Prior to the Interviews*

The team in Asia II talked about what a researcher must know prior to the interviews. Each person on the team contributed to shaping the body of knowledge that they thought was important for them to have prior to engaging in the actual interviews. It was felt that a broad and deep understanding of the conflict, the internal workings of the armed group, as well as the political/economic standpoint of the girl so as not to alienate her was key to getting the most accurate data. Understanding the results of having lived through traumatic life experiences, particularly in relation to the specifics of life in the armed group, was also deemed very important.

Knowing the girl's ideological position was one of the first things team members ascertained during interviews. They felt they needed to discover, without judgment, whether the woman was pro- or anti-government (in this case all were anti-government; however, there are ideological factions within the anti-government movement, and

determining their position on the spectrum was necessary), and what the girl thought about non-Asia II people in their country (e.g., troops from other countries). "... We have to check which orientation the child is coming from, that will depend again, if the girl-child is coming from the [group], then they will have a different way of doing things. And then if you make a mistake of saying something against their beliefs, then that is a dead end for you, so you have to take care." One team member talked about how the team worked to uncover this information:

"... [You ask about] the first time in the armed struggle. The first time in tactics—how you do the revolution, how do you do it? They [the different factions] have different method strategies of doing it, like for example, there is one group [names], they reject, they do not believe that the struggle to have armed groups in the city is not allowable for them, [as it is] for the [other group]. So it depends, again, you have to know the political stand, or is this girl soldier not really inside the communist party, just recruited as a sympathizer?"

It was also important, as part of trust building and information gathering, for the interviewers to uncover the political orientation of the girl's family. "Sometimes the family is part of the revolutionary movement, or sometimes the family is part of the army, part of the government. And it doesn't mean that if the girl soldier is a revolutionary, that the family is revolutionary, sometimes it's the opposite. So this is just an example of where is the girl-child, what is the political belief of her and the family." How did the team manage to strike a balance in situations where the family is pro-government and the girl was pro-movement without alienating her from her family or from the team? Maintaining an inquisitive but accepting attitude toward the girl during the interview seemed to alleviate many of the layers of potential difficulty that might

occur during the process.

The team also knew from personal experience that it was not always personal poverty that moved girls to join the armed movement. Prior knowledge of the economic conditions as well as political ideologies of the girls was very helpful in the interviews. The team also was able, during the interviews, to obtain data it was interested in, such as the livelihood of the family, whether they had a TV, number of livestock animals, savings, etc. It is not clear at this time if or how this affected the outcomes of the interviews.

Within the armed group in Asia II, girls were given alternate identities. Without knowledge of this and planning beforehand, the original study data gathered might lack validity either in its entirety or in parts. "Everything is coded, they have a code name, and areas, and they have their own life story coded, so that any time the military catches them they don't think twice, they have already lived that kind of character." The team knew this ahead of time, and prepared for the possibility. "So especially with the girl soldiers, you have to be very sensitive; is this her life, what she's saying now, her story is the reality, or the coded one? So you have to go back and forth and verify which is which." Moving between time periods, asking for clarification, making reference to prior answers or statements helped the team tease out the identity discrepancies.

Finally, giving "false" data in the interviews was not viewed as malevolent, but rather as part of the "inculcated drama of the girls' lives":

"It's very important, another example when we did the research, children, especially children who have been traumatized, it's sometimes difficult to determine whether what they're saying is what it's supposed to be, or if they were made to believe and then they have already inculcated this, and so they say 'this'

because, not maliciously, they have already, it has already become a part of the drama of their lives. Especially the girl soldiers.”

Knowing this beforehand allows for the possibility of less frustration for the interviewer, the interviewer then knows that she’s not “getting the run around” from the person being interviewed, that it’s not necessarily personal, but that it is her job to work with the girl to get to as much of the “reality” of her experience as possible in a way that does not further traumatize or demean her. This task is so much more complex than conventional interviewing.

Similar to Asia II, in Asia I the team felt that it was most important that interviewers have a deep knowledge of the culture of the girls prior to the interviews, as well as knowledge of the conflict, and the critical importance of confidentiality.

The armed group from which the girls who were interviewed came mandated that all people should look the same, not just in dress. One person said, “Uniform means *uniform*.” This carried over to the center in which the interviews took place in terms of the way the girls wore their hair. Without this knowledge, an interviewer may have thought that the girls were made to wear their hair in a certain way by the demobilization center and might draw incorrect conclusions about the stringency of the rules of the center or the demobilization program. Knowing something about the dynamics of armed conflict came into play in the ability of the interviewers to ask relevant questions when talk of participation in the armed group arose. It was felt that this gave credibility to the interviewers and provided them with the opportunity to ask follow-up questions that made logical sense to the girls.

Knowledge of the nature of the conflict leads to an insight on the vital nature of confidentiality, particularly during the interview process:

“We had a problem there, because when you have 10 children, or 10 girls, who have been involved in conscription, who have been child soldiers, each one we find doesn’t trust the other person. Because nobody knows who the informant is. So each of them did not want the other person to know what they are saying. So when we designed the questionnaire we never referred, or when we were doing the interviews, we did not refer to any other person in that group. Even if they knew each other, and the other person knew about themselves, we kept the interviews quite separate, and did not refer to anybody else, to anybody else’s involvement.”

Keeping the questions on the interview guide focusing directly on the experience of the girl, not asking about the rest of the girls in the center and stating to each that there will be no talk to other girls were, therefore, necessities for this research team.

The culture of Latin America was known well to all team members; however, there were specific aspects of the culture of the lives of the girls that were new or presented challenges to the team during the interviews. All team members had traveled within the country and had worked with Latin Americans of many races and classes; however, all except one member were from urban, middle-class backgrounds. All except one were middle-aged women with families; the one who was not was an indigenous woman from a rural area. All of the girls interviewed were from rural, peasant, or working class backgrounds overlaid with immersion in the culture of the armed group, and all were under 18. This is an example of a “culture within a culture within a culture,” one to two steps removed from most of the team members, and multiple steps removed from the culture of the U.S./Swiss team.

As the interviews progressed, team members learned the gestures and slang used

by the girls in the armed groups, they became familiar with life in the armed camps. “We as a team had not ever been inside a camp, so there were some [things], for example, bathing naked that could be seen as something abusing the intimacy of the person but for others was completely natural and we have to understand that.” The interviewers were, for the most part, able to suspend judgment in the instances when beliefs they held were stretched.

Although most people in Latin America are Catholic, there is a growing Pentecostal movement:

“So there were little things like that that we didn’t know also we learned from speaking about religious beliefs, some of the evangelical churches are very fundamentalist, and you take people in a tropical country like Latin America to listen to music or to dance, and that’s very bad. And that to me was shocking, because I love singing and dancing, so to listen to that was strange.”

As this person said, it was strange. Not bad, not wrong, but strange to her sensibilities.

### *Introductory Meetings Prior to Interviews*

In [major city] in Africa, all of the girls in the sample were “from the same village, and they know one each other. And they were different ages, one of them already was 20, but they were kidnapped together in 1992, and they run away in different circumstances, but they were living in the same community here in [major city].” Since they shared a common experience and confidentiality was not elicited as an issue between them, the team provided an orientation session for them as a group.

Orientation was also provided in the province, and a precedent of mutual

decision-making was established:

“In [province], in the community... they didn’t know one each other. They met for the first time between themselves in our office, but they were from different areas... we asked them to come with us to our office. And they came with us, we identify first them in the community, as a group they came to our office, and we explained to all of them what the research, and we asked them if they want to participate, as a group, and after that, we agree on the steps that we should take.”

This participatory method of decision-making allowed the girls to feel that they had control over the situation, and that participation was truly voluntary.

In Asia II, pre- and post-meetings were held with people working in and running the centers where the girls lived, and with some of the girls, although time was a limiting factor. Some of the girls were visited by the team with a social worker the night before the interview, so the girls could meet the team and get to know them a bit. This was particularly effective in a center where one girl was quite hesitant about participating in the process:

“We visited them together with the social worker the night before the interview, just to know us, to introduce ourselves. At first, she [one of the women interviewed] didn’t want to enter the room. That night she passed by, she looks like a boy. We thought she was just one of the children living in the center, although it was her, she was just passing back and forth, she didn’t want to enter there. The second day, and the day after, she was more relaxed. We talked to her the night before the interview.”

In other situations, the team “didn’t have the luxury of time, so it was straight into the interview.” There was no opportunity to have informal time with the girls.

In Asia I, the team held two to three preliminary meetings prior to the interview sessions. These meetings were held in the language of the girls, and provided a clear outline of the project and what would happen during the course of the interviews if the women decided to participate:

“We said, ‘These two people, they’ll be speaking to you each separately, and none of the other people would know your story, it will be confidential.’ So basically, that’s how we started. They knew they would be questioned; there was no way we could hide that. But the details of the interview, or any of the facts that came out in an interview would not be conveyed to anybody else. Because there are some areas where there’s huge involvement, heavy involvement, which a manhunt which [if] somebody else got to know about it could lead to problems and some of those admissions, they were making the statements for the first time in their life and they never said that to anybody else.”

They asked the girls not to share what they said in the interviews with one another so that all could remain as safe as possible, and all agreed. It was seen by the team that each girl had a stake in not talking to the others about levels of involvement, so that most likely no one would talk specifics outside the interview setting.

At each meeting, the team in Asia I brought gift items. For the first pre-interview meeting, they brought food, including sweets and other items that the girls were not able to get, beauty care items, soaps, cream, toothbrushes, hairbrushes, etc. The portions were small, but each girl got a fairly substantial basket. At the second pre-interview meeting, they brought clothes, particularly underwear; this was something that the girls would have felt embarrassed asking for, but the government issued only a small number of sets per year and the girls really needed them.

Team members felt that coming only at the times for the interviews was not an ethical way to engage in this process, that the girls should not feel that they were only useful for the information they could provide, "...that should not happen. If you do that, it defeats it all. You should if you keep the dialogue moving and visit the place once in a while or you take a few days that then they feel that it was not planned, whatever was given to us was not just to get our story, but these people really feel for us." Providing these preliminary opportunities for the girls to get to know the team, bringing them needed items and spending time were regarded as ways of valuing the girls in a holistic manner instead of focusing solely on their stories of soldiering, one aspect of their lives to the exclusion of all else. Finally, the team did not, until the end of the interviews, talk about the possibility of gifts.

Because of the living situations of the girls and the limited amount of time available, the Latin America team did not hold pre- or post-interview meetings.

### *Sequence of Interviews and Guide Use*

The first group of girls interviewed in Africa came from the city. They participated in an orientation meeting, for the first interview, and then did not return. The team brainstormed reasons for this, and decided that the sequencing of the interviews was wrong for this country:

"The girls had a deep need to talk about their experiences in the armed group prior to talking about anything else, family history, early life, etc., and they were not able to do this the way the interviews were initially set up. At this point, the team changed the order of the interviews, putting the second piece on participation first, and life history second. ...In other provinces it was easy

because we changed the plan of the interview, and I think that this was the actual difference between what we did in [major city] and what we did in the provinces. It seems to us that this was the first opportunity [for the girls] to talk about this war experience, and that for the girls, it was like a break, because they knew what the interview talked about, and they were very anxious to talk about war. And also [it] was the first time that some girls wasn't so depressed to talk about this experience. We start with the basic information about the girl, and then you take the different experience that the girl was happened... So, in the beginning, we start with the aspect of the present, then the traumatic war experience, and again, we talk to the past of the child, but the child would not want to. But then we talk again about the present, and also about the future."

Team members found that the past, the present, and the future were mixed for the girls, that due to physical displacement, treatment received while in the armed group, including being told to "forget your family, forget your village, you are with us now," and being kept awake for long periods, being repeatedly abused physically and sexually, they had lost their sense of the chronology of events in their lives. In response, team members were very flexible and allowed the girls to talk in whatever sequence they wished. They took careful notes, and in subsequent interviews, clarified things that the girls had spoken of in previous sessions. This made a great difference, and none of the second set of girls left before the interviews were completed.

Each of the second set of African girls were interviewed three or four times. Interviews were held in three- or four- day sequences due to logistical constraints; interviewers had limited time in the province because of other commitments for their work and because it was possible that the girls might be moved or might leave the IDP

camp. In the major city, time was also a factor, for many of the same reasons described above.

Interviewers found that the first day was the most difficult, emotionally, for both the girl and the interviewers themselves. The second day was less difficult, "Sometimes on the second day, you have to clarify some things, but essentially on the second day you talk about positive things, and this helps to create a good climate." Another team member talked about the way communication patterns between people in Africa have been affected by the conflict. She stated:

"As a group, all the girls, they want to talk about it (their experiences)...Our experience says that people really want to talk about...they never talk about what happened to them, they never have that possibility. So the first possibility that people have to talk...when you have an opportunity to talk about your suffering, the pain inside you, you use it. And this is what happened in our work."

In Africa, with such a history of conflict and displacement, people seize on opportunities for debriefing experiences when they know there is a trusted, genuinely interested person available. This short-term relationship begs the question of post-interview meetings and/or follow up after the interviewing relationship ends.

The guides developed during the dialogue on methodology in Asia II were used in each of the interviews. The three-part structure of the guide was followed by the team; however, they did not have the luxury to conduct the interviews in three separate sessions. Time, as indicated above, was the most precious commodity during the interviews; each of the team members interviewed stated this. The course of the interviews ranged from three completed in half a day each, to one that took place over the course of two days.

The team talked about how the interviews went:

“...It did not happen as we planned it, the first day, we just get to know each other, however, it still we still managed to go through the three-part process, but under time pressure. So for example, in the morning it was the “getting to know you part,” for most of them, I think, we spent about three hours just getting to know you. And then in the middle part, when everyone is relaxed, we go into the major substantial part, your role in the armed group, how you were recruited, what were you doing there, so that was the middle part. That was very for us, it was the most substantial part, and the most difficult part. The first part was easier, the getting to know you was very light, light moments, the middle part was the heavy part, and the last part was also light in the sense that it was easy to discuss what they are doing now, their plans, etc. the major difficulty was the middle. Sometimes we have to stop because it was very heavy for the child to keep on going. so in some of the cases we had to stay for two days, like for [X], we had a preliminary talk to her, and the next day we had to come back, because she was not ready that first day, and we had to finish it on the second day. For some of them it was very short, only a half-day for the three processes. One of them, for example, has a baby, and she has to go back to the community, she was really under time pressure, the baby was there and she had to take care of the baby, the baby didn’t want to separate from the mom, we had to divide, we had to take turns playing with the baby, so that was difficult.”

Although under time pressure, it is clear from this vignette that the team was very sensitive to the needs of the girls, and was willing to be creative and flexible in difficult circumstances.

A natural movement led from one part of the interviews to another. One team member said, "...It was also very hard to stop because it flowed so quickly from before getting involved in the armed conflict to getting involved in the armed conflict and after, it sort of flowed very naturally. So we could practically finish it in one sitting." The seamlessness of the guides worked in multiple sessions and in one longer session.

The team did not eliminate questions from the guide; on the contrary, questions were added in the form of full questions and follow-ups. Most of these additions occurred spontaneously during the interviews.

The interviewer allowed for stories to emerge during the course of the interview, and although they followed the guide's three sections, they let the girl talk away from the guide if she wanted. They would then review the guide and go back to questions that were not covered. Two of the team members cited the discussion of family as the key entry point for openness:

"What I think was really crucial in the interviews with all the girls was the discussion about the family. Once it started about the family, and you listen really intently, sort of follow through what she was talking about her family, the rest of the discussion was easier....So it's not always, it's not something we realized from the start, but as we went on, we instinctively saw that that was the first thing that they would be willing to open up about, was their family situation."

Another team member talked about how discussion of the family was the most difficult to listen to, that the girls often had extremely painful family experiences to recount and this often prompted them to join the movement. Deep discussion of the family often occurred during the middle phase of the interviews.

The style of the interviewer in relation to the guide was cited as another

consideration in future studies. The contrast between someone who wants to get through the guide, and someone who leaves time for the girl to talk, utilizing follow-up questions, was made. It was felt that leaving time and using follow-up probes was a much more effective way of gathering material than pushing relentlessly through the guide.

The Asia II team asked the same questions to all of the girls interviewed; however, the answers to the questions varied depending on the length of time the girl had spent in the movement, and the job she was given during that time. Girls in longer had more experiences from which to draw, and specific jobs or positions shaped the responses many of the girls were able to relate.

As was stated previously, the girls were often given alternate identities and life stories in case of capture. To tease out the accuracy of the responses, the team utilized secondary data sources; cross-checking the girls' reports with family members, significant others, and the social worker. In addition, the team was allowed to access case files:

“We were very lucky, because we were permitted access to the case study, the case file. These are confidential papers, but if you will notice, we have some of the confidential papers, so that they trusted us very much, to the point that we were able to look at the case files, and from the case files, we were able to verify which was factual and which are sometimes the coded ones, or the child is trying to protect herself, which is OK also.”

A trusting relationship between the interviewers and the staff of the center is cited as the cornerstone of obtaining secondary sources of data, as well as providing access to the girls.

The team in Asia II, having worked together previously, seemed to be able to

reach decisions about who team members would interview, and the process of interviewing. Two team members acted as the formal interviewers, and one as the documenter. This was primarily due to knowledge of the local language. Roles and strategies were clearly delineated; anyone could interject a follow-up question, but only after the primary interviewer had finished the set of questions. Nonetheless,

“It was difficult to shift roles, and then the child starts talking to [interviewer], because of course she is talking to the child already, it’s in the middle of the discussion that I pick up a question and start doing that question all throughout. We cannot interrupt in the middle of the transcript. Once you started interviewing, the girl needs to stay with that same person until they finished the question, the topic on which they were talking. Now if you come in and ask a question, then she stays with you for that particular question.”

A set of heuristics was developed that would invite other team members to ask questions,

“...or if A is tired, and wants to change person, she tells the girl, [interviewer] now also would like to ask a question,’ and that’s the signal for me to come in...or she might just say directly, ‘OK, we just have to check with everybody to see if we missed out on anything’...that’s the signal again that you have to pick up. Or what I do is write the question on the pad, and [interviewer] looks at it once in a while. [Interviewer] knows now my question, and follows up with my question, it’s a matter of strategy. I write it on the same questionnaire that she used so that she knows, and now she comes back. It’s actually follow the guide through that. It really capsulized everything we wanted to know.”

All team members reported that this was an effective way to deal with multiple

interviewers.

The girls were told at the beginning of the interview that although there would be one primary interviewer, any of the team might ask them questions:

“When both [interviewer] and myself forgot something, every time [interviewer] comes in at the end, and reminds us that we need some more data on the last part, she might say... Actually, the girl of course is conscious that it is not only [interviewer] who is interviewing her. Because in the introduction, [interviewer] also introduced us, or we introduced ourselves, and of course we make this rationalization why the three of us are there. And of course we do expect that the girl would relate more with [interviewer] because [interviewer] speaks their dialect. Perhaps they have this notion that, “A could understand me more because she speaks my dialect or my language.” But of course from time to time, they welcomed our questions, questions from us.”

One of the great positives, as well as a drawback to being the primary interviewer was having the closest relationship with the girls. This led to feelings of trust, but it also put a great deal of pressure on the primary interviewer. “So the girls kept on saying, Auntie [interviewer], you listen to me, listen to me, and [interviewer] was saying, hey wait, I have to have some coffee! Even if [interviewer] and I wanted to talk to her, she kept saying, hey Auntie [interviewer], you listen to me!”

With regard to the use and flexibility of the interview guide, team members stated that they used it only as a “guide.” Although it was felt to be very detailed through having the level of detail in print, interviewers could easily adjust, include, omit, and move forward with the girl being interviewed. The team also determined how questions could be asked so that the relationship could be built, and the most information

gathered:

“In our experience is what we found out later that is that it would be pretty much easier if the interviewer herself started the questions like, ‘tell me about your experience about your family when you were not in the movement yet.’ like it would give the girl most of the time talking about her experiences rather than asking her a series of questions like, ‘What is the work of your father and mother, how many brothers and sisters do you have?’ Series of questions like those looked like the only option for the girl is to answer yes or no, or seven or eight.”

Utilizing open-ended instead of closed-ended questions produced more conversation and provided richer information during the interviews.

Responses to reflective questions about interviewing skills in Asia II included how questions were asked, support needed during the interviews, qualities needed by the interviewer, use of humor, language, history of interviewing, and the past experience of the interviewers in the armed movement. Options other than talking during the interviews were also discussed. One team member began,

“...for example, in the formulation of questions. Technically, you’re supposed to ask the questions in a very neutral way. But sometimes I felt that the girls needed a handle on how to answer the questions. So sometimes, I would give them one or more options of, ‘Well, was it like this, or was it like that?’ And [another team member] at one point said, ‘isn’t that a leading question?’ but my feeling was that they could always say ‘no,’ or you could always double check later, but my main concern was to make sure the interview flowed, that we didn’t get stuck up at one point. Because my feeling was that if the girls get stuck up at one point, then this is when all the doubts would come in again, so that was the dilemma, when

you would say, 'Was it like this or was it like this?' Was that a leading question, or was that not a leading question? Sometimes you have to give them true/false or multiple choice. Just give them a handle, what exactly are you asking them, just give them a direction to what the questions are leading towards, I think that was one."

This was one of the first times this team member conducted interviews. The team discussed this method after the interview and came to the conclusion that this was fine as long as it was not a pattern throughout the session.

Part of the explanation for the possibly leading questions was provided by one team member. She talked about the excitement the team experienced when they were conducting the interviews and hearing about things that were familiar to them from their experience:

"Sometimes we get carried away. And then you ask, since [team member] has been active in the armed movement, the experience is more vivid to her. So when we talk about life in the mountains as [armed group] and policies, etc., there's a tendency to dig deeper, and not to have breaks for the child. so it's more of getting carried away and sometimes preempting, and we have to guard and realize it, we think, OK, we can do this when that happens again, this would be better, etc."

The personal histories of individual interviewers became relevant in these situations. Often, the interviewers were personally interested in what was currently happening in the movement and in comparing their experience in the movement previously to the experience of girls now that the interviewers noticed the effect on the sessions.

The team was clear that the person who spoke the language best should conduct the interviews; this meant that one person did almost all of the sessions with the young girls. The girls formed a bond with the interviewer that at times made it difficult for the others to participate. On some occasions, for example, the girl spoke so quietly to the woman doing the interview that other team members had difficulty hearing her.

During one interview, the team member conducting the interview made a translation error; she thought that the girl was talking about a baby, when she was actually talking about a duck. "I thought the word was for 'baby,' so I kept on following up the question. And finally [another team member] said, '[word x] is not 'baby,' it's 'duck!' She's referring to a duck!' So I was asking the same question over and over, and then we were laughing." Each of the team felt that humor was an important element in building trust.

The Asia II team was the only one to suggest that drawings be done to accompany the oral interviews. This was seen as a way to get into the material or as a break during the session. It was used mainly at two points, when the girls were tired from talking, and toward the end of the interviews regarding how the girls saw their future. "At first we did some drawings, actually, but in the end, we found that they were actually easier to talk with things like this were not necessary to bring up more information from them. So you can talk about their experience directly, actually." Some of the girls took the drawings with them; some left the drawings for the team.

One of the girls being interviewed was very shy, and had a difficult time talking. At some point during the interview, she suggested that the interview be conducted as if it were a TV question and answer show. The girl and the team together decided how this would be done, with the interviewer being the moderator of the "show," and the girl

answering the questions. This worked for a time, then the girl began to become anxious once again, asking, "...Am I answering this in the right way?" she was asking, "Let me look at your questionnaire...again, again, let's do it again." she would say. The change in format seemed to provide some relief for the girl for a time, and is an example of creative interviewing techniques that include the person being interviewed. This flexibility allowed the girl to feel some sense of control over an uncomfortable situation.

In Asia I, the team did three separate interviews with each girl. They utilized the interview guide that was created during the dialogue on methodology, and added questions as they went along. The two interviewers stated that the guide was helpful, and that "Once we follow the first one or two, then you get used to it. It was not difficult. We were not going on referring to it all the time. As we went along, you did not have to stick to the plan as much, it was easier." Each time they returned to do another interview, they checked with the girl to get her feelings about the previous interview.

The guides were translated into the language of the girls. Both interviewers felt this made it easier to conduct the sessions; they could refer to the questions directly without having to translate on the spot. One person talked about the need to interact differently with different girls: "Sometimes we had to change the interview techniques. Sad ones, oldest ones, physically hurt ones. It was different; we had to change in our way of talking. It was generally the same, the oldest one had two long stories to tell us, so we had to listen to them all. Sometimes she did not want us to take down part of it." When this request was made, the information was not taken down. The team set up a schedule that was effective for the most part, except for when a girl was ill; then they rearranged their timing.

The team experienced the three interviews differently; one member felt that the

first interview was the most difficult in terms of content and remembering traumatic events for some of the girls, another felt that the second was the more difficult. One person on the team said that the first interview was a bit scary, but once it started, it became less so. This person felt that the first interview was more of a getting to know you session, the second was deeper and more difficult for the girls, and the third was more upbeat, looking to the future and possibilities:

“It was a journey to go with someone’s life, it was not easy. I wondered if they were saying the real thing or not. The second was the strong one. The third one was pleasant, in the sense of something to look forward to. They had a happy way of thinking about the last one. The first one, we had to be a little careful, we were learning. The second one was easier, you had the experience to carry you along.”

She also said of the second interview, “...For some girls it was difficult type thing to answer certain questions. Because some, they were hesitating to answer. This one girl, she had shot so many persons, so she was reluctant to tell us at the beginning.” By the middle of the second interview, the girls were talking in detail about their soldiering experiences; this was reported to be difficult for them and for the interviewers. The second interview was the longest for the girls, there was much to talk about on their parts. This team member said she could not be sure whether the girls were telling the truth all of the time.

Another interviewer said:

“This work [research] was quite different. It was entering into life of someone. The quality [sic] [qualitative] thing came into it there. It’s more kind of sharing than interviewing. You might find another name [for it]. When we started our

conversations, it didn't feel like an interview. You briefed us on how to make things easy [in the dialogue on methodology section]. The situation from the other side was stiff [the girls in the beginning]. When things are made easy, you have sharing."

This was the first time this person had used this technique in research, and seemed quite moved when saying this. She said that she did not know that the interviews would be so different from one another, or that the initial phase would be as long as it was. She felt that the first interview was "more traumatic in a way, many were crying and all sorts of things...they show something on the surface, but there's something deeper. The first interview was more difficult in those people and that was only after we did the interview that we found out." The reason given for the emotional difficulties of the first interview was the extent of the involvement; girls who were in the group for the longest were the most wounded and had more difficult and prolonged first interviews than girls who were in for shorter periods of time.

The Latin American team had the most to say about the actual interviews. Most were conducted by two team members together; however, some were done by one person alone. All team members felt that there were advantages to working in pairs, and disadvantages to working alone: "Working together has an advantage in that nothing escapes from your notes, and all of the questions are asked, and that is a very good."

Interviews were structured in the three-step format of life up till joining the armed group, time in the armed group, and post-armed group into the future, although these were not always done in three separate sessions. All of the team felt that sorting the interviews into the three above-mentioned components was a very effective way in which to conduct the interviews; the early life experiences of the girls provided context

as to why she decided to join the armed group, including economic, familial, and educational components: "Otherwise it will be a very cold analysis." They felt that the interviews flowed naturally, one into another and provided an opportunity for the girl to look ahead into the future. The questions were felt to be well organized and were "...very simple and easy for the girls to respond to."

In Latin America, interviews were conducted in one, two, and three sessions. Decision-making was based on time, budget, and the needs/desires of the girls. As much as possible, these needs and desires were taken into account when deciding whether to press on, or to stop. Interviews held near the major city were more likely to be segmented due to accessibility of the women and time of the interviewers. In the interviews done at the pool, all were done back to back in three days due to time constraints.

Team members described times when the interviews were moving seamlessly from one topic to another, and the decision was made with the girl to continue. They expressed the desirability of having separate sessions, for debriefing in between to make sure they were not missing information, and were following up on the statements made by the girls.

On average, the interviews in Latin America were about one hour per segment. The girls and the interviewers were tired at that point, and they didn't want the girls to feel exhausted. One team member stated that she felt that all of the interviews should be the same length because, "...it gives the same opportunity to everybody and it tightens everything, so for me the ideal is one hour." The team member suggested that the first interview might be divided into two segments, 30-45 minutes one day, and 30-45 minutes the next day to reduce the intensity of recalling the past. She said, "You've got

to give it structure, so if you go longer, you maybe start to go into therapy.”

Interviewers stated that the third, future-oriented interview was often shorter than the first two because the girls had less of an idea about what they saw for themselves in the future, but that one should not go back to the past just because there is time to spare. They felt that all review from the prior interview should be done at the beginning of the current session.

Doing the interviews in three separate sessions was seen as positive, “Because very often we have only one-stage interview, and the person gets tired. You know, that us as adults, we can talk hours and hours, but that is not the case of girls, they do. Because they tend to disperse [get scattered] and in the end they respond anything that occurs to them. In the second interview we have created already confidence and trust. So it is natural. in the second interview, there is a level of confidence and trust built that allows you to for instance, the girl can interrupt you and say, ‘I would like to ask this or that,’ or ‘I would like to say this or that.’ Because there is already an environment in which she can say and express what she wants to say. In the third interview, you also have the chance to ask again questions you forgot in the previous and also you can share with the girl in a way that allows her to express what she has inside and put it out, and share it with you in a more conscious way. So she can really speak out whatever she wants to say in the third stage. With this methodology, the interview will not feel fatigued or tired at all.”

For one of the Latin American participants, the first interview was “...a kind of a guinea pig. Maybe you get like a little help here. For me the paper [interview guide] is important, very important to have the paper. Having the guide provided some security

and guidance in a situation that was new for the interviewers and the girl.” The first interview was seen as a chance to get clues that would lead to greater efficacy in the subsequent interviews.

Preparation prior to the first interview was cited as an important component in the success of all the interviews. Some of the team, upon completion of the interviews, felt that the first interview needed to be longer because the girls were so impacted by the circumstances of their early lives, that there was a real need to get to the causes of why they had joined the armed group to develop preventative measures for the future. Another cited the need to gain information about the past to help better prepare for the subsequent interviews, and also to glean information about what the girl might want in her future. A third, too, felt that the first interview was critical, but that the recalling of terrible events could create a barrier beyond which the girl would not want to pass. She cited an example of this: “I think of the case of a girl that suffered from epilepsy attacks, so whenever I asked her about the family, she gave short answers and became silent, and she kept saying that she got a headache. So this first part was particularly difficult for me.” The interviewer had a hard time helping the girl to move past these experiences; she stated that she was shocked by the painful experiences that so many of the girls had in their early lives, and that their reality was opposite what the conventional wisdom on the early lives of women was supposed to be.

Another interviewer felt a similar concern around the disclosure of difficult information. It was difficult for the team member to ask about personal issues because she was unsure how she would handle the emotions that it might bring up in both the girl and in herself. A suggestion was made on how to reduce these feelings by asking questions that are about the past but refer to the present, linking the past to the present,

not to “revive things like only speaking of your past, solely, like a psychoanalyst, but to link that to the present situation.” This would both alleviate some of the tension and help to integrate the past with the present and the future. It would also reduce the chance of the interviews becoming therapy sessions.

The second interview in Latin America seemed much easier for both the girls and for the interviewers; a team member stated that each of the girls was very much alike in the way they talked about their experiences, very matter-of-factly and normally. This was attributed to the trust that was built during the first interview, the fact that they were alone, that they could have a coffee, and “...the most important thing is that now they know they are important because the girl soldier issue is the important one at the national level.”

The third interview in Latin America presented problems for both the interviewers and the girls. Interviewers found that most of the time, the girls had little or no idea of what was possible for them in the future, or what they wanted to do. This led to roadblocks and shortened interviews. One interviewer suggested that in this segment, the interviewer offer options, or allow the girls to tell stories about what they see as possible futures.

“Their lives are so limited, it was very difficult for them to think of different ways to build their future, so it was difficult for me to know how to ask. Perhaps we should not make questions, but allow them to have an experience in which they are offered different views and different possibilities, so they can take the risk and the challenge of thinking of other proposals for their own life, so maybe create the ideas for them, maybe this is crazy but that’s what I’m thinking.”

This segment also moved the interviewers to think about what the possibilities

for the girls could be, and how programs could be developed to help the girls achieve their goals.

Three of the girls were interviewed at a pool/recreation complex. These interviews were conducted by two team members at the start, and then by one after the other had to leave due to a scheduling conflict. The interviewer who conducted the bulk of the interviews at the pool said,

“...you should require two people. Having three different spaces [interviews] allows you to check what the person has said, have a review in order to identify what was lacking in order to ask them again and resume in the next session.

Because I was on my own, I could not listen to each one of the interviews I had recorded to see if there were gaps to get more insight in the second section.”

This was important not only for the accuracy of the data, but for the safety of the girls and the mental health of the interviewers.

The interview guides in Latin America were changed somewhat based on the specific girl being interviewed. Interviewers changed questions in the moment, or added new questions to elicit more information on a particular subject. An example arose when a girl told the interviewer about her relationship with a group leader:

“...One of the girls said that she had been the lover to one of the commanders in the [guerrilla group] she was involved in and that later, he had abandoned her...that he had met another not so young girl, and he was going to change. And then she did not comment any more, so I asked questions like, ‘How did you feel? Did you feel bad?’ Then she said ‘Yes,’ then I continued asking questions, ‘Did you meet him?’ ‘Yes, I did, and it was very bad.’ But very soon she started another relationship with somebody also in post, so she didn’t

actually have a good relationship with a man. And this was something that was not in our interview guide.”

The team pulled follow-up questions from information they were given by the girls. They also tried to go into greater depth when they were getting information which would directly affect the outcome of the study, or when information was being revealed that might help the NGO advocate for the rights of the girls or to create programs.

One of the Latin American girls was very shy, and the team reported that the first interview was quite difficult; the girl would only answer in short sentences. They greatly expanded the interview guide for this girl, and at times did not use it. By the second interview, the girl was much more comfortable and they were better able to utilize the original guide.

Questions were asked factoring in information gleaned from other interviews, e.g., vocabulary words, specific subjects that elicited information. If the interviewer wanted to recheck the answer a girl had given, she dropped the subject until later on in the interview when it was asked again in another form, and only if it was appropriate. This technique was particularly used when open-ended questions were answered with “yes” or “no,” or very short answers were given.

When interviewing girls who have had profoundly traumatizing life events prior to their movement experience, the team felt that the role of the interviewer was different than with those who have had bad experiences. “[These women are] different from other girls and girls who have had difficult first years of their lives, but with their families, living there together, under other conditions than the girl soldiers. I’m recalling the experience with one of the girls who had a very traumatic experience. When we were speaking, I did not interrupt her by saying, ‘I understand you, I share with you.’” The

team did much more listening without reflecting back, supported the girl in her talking, but kept close to the interview guide. Team members reported that there was less data that came from the interviews with girls who were severely traumatized, and that the girl with the worst experiences did not allow the tape recorder to be used.

Interviewers asked questions in different ways depending not on chronological age, but because they "...appreciated the different psychological, development level, or intelligence levels. Some of them were more mature than others. Some seemed more childish, I would ask more simple questions, and when I talked to the girls who were more mature, I could maintain a very profound conversation. In that case, it was a better interview." Questions that elicited information were different for different girls, because girls held different things in priority. Interviewers tried to focus on the subjects that the girls were most interested in while still moving forward to collect the data:

"Basically what we did was try to get the information for that area which we knew was more important and more relevant for them. Talking about friends or games when they were children was very good, and also talking about the school was very, very good, very important, why they stopped going to school, why they didn't. Hearing about school was very important because it gives you an idea of the kinds of possibilities that they have... And the other thing is, about the friends as well, asking [about] a special friend, who was most important in their life, that is a very important question because it helps you to understand those kind of circles that they were around."

Other girls wanted to speak more about their families, some wanted to talk most about their involvement in the guerrilla group, there was no clear pattern of preference.

In general, the girls seemed to remember specific events better than

chronologies. This was particularly true in Africa. They did not have a sense of time when they were interviewed; it was sometimes difficult for them to put events in order. One team member found that even recall of events could be vague: "Sometimes you feel that they have memories about something that they can't remember or they don't talk about it." They found different ways to ask the questions so that the girls might better respond without feeling violated.

### *Interviews, the Literature and Theory*

Interestingly, the issue of authority as cited in the literature on children exposed to violence (Edwards and Forman, 1989; Horowitz, 1986; Power, 1989; Schetky, Boverman, 1985) never came up directly in the interviews. It was clear that the interviewers were seen as older, terms of respect and endearment like "Auntie" were used in at least two of the countries, but there was no sense of the girls being fearful of the interviewers after the first interview. The way the teams presented the study, the manner of dress, language, and small gifts all seemed to help the girls feel safe.

Knowing the context from which the girls came and gently uncovering materials about that context created the opportunity to move beyond initial mistrust and get to the stories of the lives of the girls. This was particularly needed in Asia II given that girls had been given alternate identities; the team knew this and structured the interview questions to be able to ascertain which life or identity the girl was reporting; reviewing case records was also helpful. Preliminary meetings or orientations to the project were held in three of the four countries, and were felt to have made a difference; these meetings provided transparency and some small gifts. The Latin American team was not able to hold preliminary meetings, and the interviews seemed to be as effective and successful there

as in the other three countries.

Each country held the interviews in different ways given the constraints of safety, time, and money. Asia I conducted the interviews in the exact manner that was prescribed, three one- to one-and-a-half-hour interviews with each girl from five to ten days apart. Asia II held some of the interviews in one sitting, some in two and some in three. The Latin American and African teams also utilized a mix of structures, but did most interviews in one sitting. All of the teams utilized the life prior to the armed group/life in the armed group to the present/the future sequence except the team in Africa; their experience was that unless they allowed the girls to talk about their time in the armed group, they would not come back. The African group of girls, according to the data, was by far the most abused, having been initially kidnapped and subsequently used as domestic and sexual slaves. The literature called for multiple interviews; in an ideal world, this would be possible and perhaps preferable; however, in these situations multiple interviews were not always possible, nor were they necessarily preferable. It might have been more traumatizing for some of the girls, given their histories of terminated or disjointed relationships, if they had established deeper relationships with the interviewers rather than a "one off." This would be an area for further study.

All of the teams felt that interviewing in pairs or threes was much more effective than interviewing alone. Catching things the girl said, asking follow-up questions, recording data, and having a break from the secondary traumatization were all cited as reasons for pair or triad work. There was some difference on the positives and negatives of who did the actual interviewing. On the plus side, one person interviewing helped to reduce interviewer bias by helping keep the interview on track, and the girls were able to establish good trusting relationships. On the minus side, it was difficult for other team

members to get in and ask questions.

The interview guides, mainly as originally developed, were used in all countries. Team members felt comfortable enough to move away from the guide when they sensed that the girl needed time after talking about a traumatic event, or elaborated the guide to help a girl who was having difficulty with the broader questions. The sequence was changed as needed, and potentially leading questions were introduced when the girl was having difficulty answering. Although the literature suggests that multiple interviews are the optimal process, in situations like these, the interviewer had to make decisions as to what was best for the girls and how they would get the information in a war situation. Multiple interviews were not always possible.

In terms of interviewer bias as cited in the literature on children exposed to violence (Ceci, Bruck, 2001), one interviewer talked of shying away from potentially emotion-provoking questions because she was concerned about her ability to cope with the information she might receive. Team members worked in the moment to suspend judgment when the girls said something that stretched their beliefs or cultural norms. One team was flexible enough to completely change the interview format to that of a TV show where the girl was “interviewed” by the host.

Age-appropriate methods were also cited in the literature (Edwards and Forman, 1989). The team in Asia II used drawing materials with some of the girls, but soon went back to the interview guide; they felt that visual art was neither the best use of time nor was most helpful to the girls. Perhaps drawing was not age-appropriate for these women; they may have been at an age where talking was the better route.

This section on the actual interviews, perhaps more than any other, reflects the need for adaptive and context-specific research methods, and points to the multiple

layers within research methodology. The review of the literature is mainly focused on the logistics of research, for example, the literature on power differentials between interviewer and participant is concerned with accuracy of data gathered; reflective theory is also concerned with accuracy and quality of data gathered, but is in addition deeply focused on the well-being of the participant and the relationship between the participant and the interviewer. This added dimension of care in the research relationship moves research from solely a way to gather knowledge to a relationship where both the researcher and the participant can be changed.

Interviewers in this study had context-specific knowledge. They knew the history of the conflict, the culture, the political situation, the language of the girls, and most had experience working with children in armed conflict. Their experience in the study was of adapting the method to the specific situation: not only the country situation, but to the situation of the individual girl. The African team switched the first and second interviews when they realized the proposed order would not work. The number and length of interviews was modified depending on the needs of both the girls and the teams, indicating not only adaptation but also inclusion of the girls' needs and wants. The teams experimented with closed- and open-ended questions to determine which worked best in a given situation. They learned how to help the girls move on when they were stuck through providing options for answering or to empathize and change questioning styles when they were telling of tragedy.

Despite their contextual awareness, the teams expressed surprise at some of the information they heard both at the level of traumatic early childhood experiences of the girls and/or when the girls' later life experiences were contrary to conventional wisdom.

Ultimately, as stated by the PI of the original study, the data gathered was

remarkably consistent across the four countries, even with all of the variation, adaptation, and differences in context; cross-country data comparisons were not only possible, they were evident and effortless. The qualitative research literature focused on interview guide development and use as a means to an end, a tool to gather data, not as an integral part of the process of knowledge creation. By working with the teams to build the guides, and the teams being inclusive, context-specific and adaptive with the method in relation to the circumstances and the needs of the girls, the method and guide become living components of the research instead of static, fixed vehicles for information gathering. A reflective method may not be the best method for all research; however, in this exploratory research situation of great uncertainty and lack of safety for all, it worked extraordinarily well.

### **Physical Setting of the Interviews**

The physical setting of the interview was seen, particularly in the literature on children exposed to violence, as being important. The preferred location for interviews was on the 'home turf' of the participants (Boushel, 1994; Protacio-Marcelino, de la Cruz, Camacho, Balanon, 1990). The literature on culture cited the appropriateness of a familiar person being in the interview with the participant to impart a feeling of security; however, this was seen as dependent on the population (Montero, 2001). Children might want a sibling present; someone else might want a friend.

The literature on interviewing children exposed to violence, as well as in reflective theory, also referred to the creation of a safe space; this was more of a psychological/emotional construct than a physical setting, but included clarity and transparency about roles, concepts, definitions, showing empathy, and being genuinely

curious and non-judgmental (Azmi, 1999; Ceci, Bruck, 2001; Segal, 2000). Some of these issues were mentioned regarding the physical space (Azmi, 1999; Sue, Zane, 1977); however, most were discussed at length in the section on building trust in the interview relationship.

### *Physical Setting and the Creation of a Safe Space*

The locales of the interviews varied significantly from one country to the next; however, most were in a controlled setting such as a center where demobilized girls lived. Some interviews were held in more unconventional settings such as at a pool/recreation complex, and others in the office of the NGO.

Interviews in Africa were held in two sites, [major city] and in one of the IDP camps in the province. All interviews were conducted in areas of the country controlled by the government due to lack of safety in opposition-controlled areas. In [major city], the orientation meeting and the first interviews were held at the NGO office. In the province, all interviews were held in the NGO office. In the province, all girls were provided with transportation to and from the interviews.

The decision to have the girls come to the office was two-fold; first, the office was deemed the safest, most confidential place to conduct the interviews. Second, going to the NGO office and being driven in a car are symbols of status within the community. One of the team said:

“The fact that we took them to the office, you know, they felt that they were in a place that was not normal, being in the office is something important for people in the community. And I think that also the way we treat them, we treat them with respect, if the communities were quite far from where they were living, we

agree with them with a place so that the car could pick up them, and after that the car went again to put them in that place that, you know I think that also we treat them with respect.”

The team believed this helped with the self-esteem of the girls, and to build trust between the girls and themselves.

In the province all the interviews were held in the NGO office:

“All the girls came to the office. I think it was a good option, because in the community [this way, going to the office] you could get privacy, in the community, you cannot isolate the people or the person we interviewed, and also at the time [in the community outside of the [NGO] office], people go out and go around, and disrupt the whole thing. I think that during this project, the office can be a reference to help the girls and also to provide a place for the girls to talk freely. And another aspect is to bring them to the office is like to value them.”

The girls got to the office by car; they were picked up in the community and returned. When asked if the team believed that this posed a problem for the girls in terms of stigma, team members stated that the NGO was so well respected in the community, that this was seen as status for the girl and for her family.

During the interviews in the provinces, the room at the NGO was set up so that the interviewers, the person accompanying the girl (if desired), and the girl sat at a round table; however, at the beginning of the interview, the girl was asked if she wanted a different set-up. In addition, the team leader provided a small ball for each of the girls to squeeze while talking; this provided an outlet for nervous energy during some of the more difficult parts of the interview. One of the other team members said, “...When they were talking, they would squeeze the ball, and squeeze and squeeze.” This is a

simple, inexpensive way of helping the girls through difficult periods and showed both that the interviewer had experience with this type of process prior to the interview, and that the interviewer cared enough about the girl to bring the ball.

In Asia II, all of the interviews were conducted in two provinces quite far from the capital (all team members lived in the capital). As was described previously, this was due to the limited access that the team discovered when working to obtain the sample.

All of the girls had scheduled appointments for interviews, made by the NGO and the government agency, and the girls at the NGO had to be escorted back to their places of residence by the NGO workers. At one point, one of the girls failed to show up for her interview, and the team became quite concerned due to the fighting going on in the area, and also because of the shortened period of time available for the interview. The girl arrived safely about two hours after the agreed time and the interview was held. She told the team she had fallen asleep.

The interview sessions were held in three different places, in the office of the government agency, in the office of an NGO, and at the home of the employer of one of the women. In the NGO setting, the team was able to use a conference room available to the NGO. In the government agency, there was very little space which necessitated using the agency head's office for the interviews; the agency head needed to use her desk at different times during the interview sessions. At the employer's home, the team and the woman sat outside the front door. When in the office of the government agency, the head of the agency was present for short periods at the beginning of some of the interview sessions. The biggest difficulty seemed to be when someone else was present in the interview, as described by the following two vignettes:

“But of course, this did not mean that this in some ways did not affect our

interviews because we also had this experience where we are made to interview the girls inside the office of the head, the department head, the head of the social workers, and she was there.”

“Yea. We even talked with the social worker who might convince the employer to give the girl a day off, but no, we did not succeed. So finally we ended up interviewing the girl at the employer’s house. And when we assess of course, the answers of the girls, this one who we interviewed in her employer’s house, were interviewed the shortest time. She have answers to questions like, ‘I cannot remember any more, I don’t know.’ Even if you kept on facilitating, asking her, probing more, she kept on answering, ‘I cannot recall any more, I don’t know.’”

It is clear that the team recognized the difficulties for the girls in these situations. Knowing this, they set the interviews up in such a way that “boring,” less information-producing questions were asked first so that the person (employer/agency head) became disinterested and left. The teams were clear that the data might not be as rich due to the observer’s presence; however, they felt they did the best they could given the circumstances.

All of the interviews took place in areas where there was active fighting, making the travel less secure. However, the interviews, other than the one at the employer’s house, were held in secure locales, the office of the government agency and the NGO. One team member commented that there was construction work being done outside one of the meeting rooms, and this led to difficulty hearing and some distraction during the interview.

The team in Asia II was careful about the arrangement of space during the sessions, feeling that this was very much a factor during the interviews both for the

comfort of the girl and for the team to function well as a whole. In one office, “We had a seating arrangement that was very useful, [team member] was in the angle where the interviewee cannot see her, and then [team member] facing the child, and then I was a little bit off the eye, she cannot see me [directly] when I’m taking down notes and recording her. That works for us.” In the office where the agency head needed to use her desk during the day, the team had the girl sit with her back to the desk:

“So all we did was that we rearranged the chairs so that the girl wouldn’t have to see the face of the director, and face us instead. And we put the one documenting on the computer because aside from the tape recorder we had the computer, so [team member] was working on the computer, I mean on the side of her view. I was the main interviewer most of the time...and [team member] would be in the view of the girl. But after she became so comfortable, it didn’t matter who else was in the room...”

Another team member noted the importance of the girl being able to make eye contact with each of the team members: “And then the three of us should see the girl. Of course if someone wants to ask some question or clarify some point, she would be there.”

At the house of the employer, one team member felt that the arrangement could have been different, leading to different results:

“Because the girl was seated in front of the house, and the employer, of course, is walking endlessly, and the girl sees the employer, and even A noticed that the employer is giving her some signals like that, or [made motions of ‘hurry up,’ ‘come on, faster’] The employer went so far as to determine the seating arrangement: ‘You can sit here on the cradle,’ because there is somewhat a

hammock in the trees, 'She can sit on the hammock and then she can have the child sit on her lap while you do the interviews,' those crazy ideas."

The center where the interviews took place in Asia I was about an hour outside of a main city, and the interviewers took cabs to get there. It was a locked facility; not a jail, but a center where the captured/surrendered girl fighters were held during their demobilization process. The setting was described by one team member in this way, "...The place was not comfortable...they had given us a small space to meet these people. Around 10 or 12 girls were there. It was dirty. It was an old building." There were lizards and snakes that crawled around outside the building, and they frightened at least one of the interviewers, not just for her own safety, but for the safety of the girls. "The girls, they're used to it. They used to kill that and eat it [snakes]. But one girl was changing there [where the snake was]. So I said, 'Come on, come inside,' but they said, 'No, we're used to it.' They're used to snake and all. Sometimes they used to eat snake meat. So they were good. But I was really, really scared." Although the team members were frightened and concerned by the locale's environment, they were more concerned for the welfare of the girls, and continued the interviews.

The center had only one "private" room where the interviews could take place. The room was small and close, and smelled bad. "After the first interview, they put up artificial flowers that they had made, and water was brought...The girls tried to make it as comfortable as possible, we kept the windows open." The girls swept the room each time the interviews were to take place to make it more pleasant; there seemed to be some real feeling from the girls that they wanted the space to be more hospitable for the team and for the interviews.

Unlike the other countries, in Latin America there was no institutional setting in

which the interviews took place; this made the actual interviews more difficult due to noise and interruptions, and the settings were significantly less secure. The girls in the study were interviewed in at least four separate locations, depending on where they were living at the time of the interviews; some in a dormitory setting where they were living, some outside in a field, some at the homes where they were staying, and the final group at a swimming pool. The girls were interviewed in locales based on their choice in consultation with the team members.

The girls interviewed in homes in which they were living were alone in the house so there were no interruptions; it was arranged that the families would be out while the girl was being interviewed. One day during an interview, some of the family members came home at lunchtime and everyone, including the interviewer, ate together. Team members felt that it was important for the interviewers to adapt to the environment of the person, that the interview process would be imposing something on them and they wanted the experience to be as much on the girls' terms as possible. In one instance, one of the girls took the interviewer into her bedroom to do the interview, it was very relaxed and the interviewer felt that the girl was very open with her; the girl began to ask advice of the interviewer regarding going to a doctor, a boyfriend, etc.

Another group of girls were interviewed outside, literally in a field. The interviewer reported:

"I think it was a good idea that not being in the home, or the same place all the time. It was more difficult because there was not like a space there. We were in the field, and it was a bit cold, it was a bit chilly. So we had some sweaters, and we passed out the sweaters and stuff like that. We were worried about the noise with the tape recorder but there was not a problem with that. There was not like

an institutional place where you feel secure, you might feel nervous about it, so that's something to take into account."

Taking the girls outside was seen as a positive thing, getting them out of the house and getting them away for the time of the interview.

Three of the girls took a weekend trip with the interviewers to a swimming pool; the interviewers and the girls got together and discussed safety issues, and decided that it was safe and appropriate to go. One of the girls was interviewed while the other two were in the pool, and it was reported that since it was mostly children at the pool, anyone who came by lost interest rapidly and there was no problem with confidentiality. The team member discussed the ethical issues of taking the girls away to do the interviews:

"There were people around where we were, but it was a place for leisure, it was a trip, so there was the noise of children playing at the swimming pool, so nobody was listening to what we were saying or talking about. I was quite concerned, because they gave me the girls and they asked me to give them back safely and on time. We are used to work under very difficult conditions... We have to take the occasions to be able to have the best situation."

There were no parents to give consent for the girls to go, and the team member, along with another team member and the girls, felt that this was the best possible setting given the circumstances. The team member reported that it was a bit noisy, and that at the end of the weekend, she was totally exhausted, having interviewed all three women in three days. Budgetary restrictions prevented longer time together.

### *Physical Setting of the Interviews, the Literature and Theory*

The literature on interviewing children and reflective theory suggested that the preferred

location for interviews was on the “home turf” of the participants (Boushel, 1994; Protacio-Marcelino, de la Cruz, Camacho, Balanon, 1990), and cited the appropriateness of a familiar person being in the interview with the participant to impart a feeling of security; however, this was seen as dependent on the population (Azmi, 1999; Ceci, Bruck, 2001; Montero, 2001; Segal, 2000). Children might want a sibling present, someone else might want a friend. The creation of an emotional/psychological safe space was described in the literature on culture, as was the need for clarity and transparency about roles, concepts, definitions, showing empathy, and being genuinely curious and non-judgmental (Azmi, 1999; Ceci, Bruck, 2001; Segal, 2000).

Most of the interviews were conducted in the places where the girls either lived or where they were in a program, however, this was not the case for all of the interview situations. In Africa, interviews were held in the local office of the NGO and although this was not “home,” it was seen as a safe place by all of the girls. The interviews in Latin America were held at the homes of the girls, in a field and at a pool. The interviewer took the girls away for the weekend to the recreation area; “plain sight” was deemed the safest way to conduct these interviews. In Asia II, girls were interviewed in the places in which they were living, and at the local NGO and government offices. In Asia I, all of the girls were interviewed in the center in which they were living. Physical safety took priority over all else; if the girls were not physically safe, they would not be emotionally or psychologically safe, either. In contrast to the literature, safety was not always measured by being in a familiar place, but by the physical safety of the girls and the interviewers.

In the situation in Asia II when another person was present, the team cleverly moved from more general questions so that the person lost interest, to more specific

questions relating to the study. This was not covered in the literature, but fits well within the adaptive component of reflective theory.

Only in Africa did the girls want someone else in the interview with them; in all other instances, both the interviewers and the women decided that confidentiality was paramount and that no one else should be present. In each setting, the teams allowed the girls to help in room set up so that they would be as comfortable as possible.

Interviewers were transparent and clear with the girls when explaining the study and their roles. They showed empathy and were genuinely curious and, for the most part, non-judgmental. These factors emerged in both the literature cited above, and the original study.

Situations that were not mentioned in the literature were the circumstances in which the interviews needed to take place, and the need for creativity during the interviews. The girls were often included in room set-up, letting the girls know that they had some power in the situation. The interviewers needed to adapt to the situations of the girls, bringing a new meaning to the idea of adaptability: conditions were often noisy with very little privacy, and in one instance, food offered may have been unsanitary and lizards crawled around the rooms. In the interest of the project and the girls, interviewers overcame their own trepidation and met the girls where they were. As in Asia I, the girls responded by providing some amenities as they were able, as in the paper flowers and sweeping the room.

Safety prompted the interviewers to pick up the girls in cars, or to take them away to spend a weekend. In the more developed world, this might be seen as unethical and dangerous; however, in situations of violent conflict, safety is seen through a different lens than in countries at peace; this does not mean that the standards should be

or are any different from in the North or West; however, it does mean that the interviewer has an even greater responsibility for people participating in a study.

### **Building Trust in the Interviewing Relationship**

It has been stated previously in this paper that researchers need to build credibility with gatekeepers and participants to gather the most accurate data possible (Taylor Gibbs, Bankhead-Greene, 1997); almost all of the literatures agreed that without gaining the trust of the participants, information provided may be useless as data.

The literature on qualitative research methods points out a number of ways that researchers may gain the credibility and subsequent trust of these groups. Gender (Montero, 2001; Watters, Biernacki, 1989), age and dress of the interviewers (Bolton, 1990; Liebow, 1967), and knowledge of the language and culture of the participant were cited as factors (Azmi, 1999; Caplan, Nelson, 1973; Ibrahim, Arrendondo, 1986). Researchers must, to the extent possible, create a safe space particularly if they are not part of the participant identity group; a “safe space” should be psychological as well as physical. Being clear and transparent about roles, concepts, definitions, showing empathy, and being genuinely curious and non-judgmental were seen as ways to create a safe space, as demonstrated in the previous section of this chapter (Azmi, 1999; Ceci, Bruck, 2001; Segal, 2000). The issue of self-disclosure arose; it was seen by at least one author as being permissible as long as it was not extensive and was within an ethnographic or qualitative study.

The role of the interviewer, including interviewer bias, the way questions were presented, use of authority, and separation of roles (interviewer, not crossing over the line to therapist) emerged as themes (Ceci, Bruck, 2001; Segal, 2000). The literature on

hidden populations suggested that a team approach, when a researcher is unfamiliar with the group to be researched, may be a way in which the researcher can gain access to the community and build relationships (Herdt, Boxer, 1991; Yoshioka, 1999). Team members who are of the same geographic region, speak the same language, or share the same culture have the opportunity to contribute at least some indigenous understanding to a qualitative or ethnographic study. A team approach was also seen to provide a second set of eyes and ears in the interview and data analysis process, and a source of backup in situations of uncertainty (Yoshioka, 1999).

Literature concerning research with children exposed to violence indicated that the researcher needs to consider and be interested in the entire life of the child, to see the child in a holistic sense and not just as a “case” from which to gain information (Schetky, Boverman, 1985). Ramifications of trust-building, such as the desire to provide something in exchange for the interviews and information may rise up (Power, 1980; Rainwater, Pittman, 1967; Watters, Biernacki, 1989).

All of these factors were included in discussions in the dialogues on methodology and were included in the interview guides; however, much more emerged during the interviews. All participants in this study agreed that trust in the interviewing relationship was the most important factor in information gathering and safety for the interviewers and the girls. Safety for the girls and interviewers will be discussed in the chapters on impacts of the interviews. This section on trust-building is divided into five sub-sections. These sub-section categorizations emerged during the data analysis through a natural grouping of themes.

*Historical, Cultural, Contact/Prior Association, Logistical, and Process Factors in Trust-Building*

Trust-building began from the time the team first made contact with gatekeepers and carried through to initial meetings with the girls, the informed consent process, and into the actual interviews. In Asia I, Asia II, and Latin America there was concern on the part of the girls, as well as the interviewers, that they might be seen as traitors to the movement:

“...Because the girls were then still worried, most of them said they did not want to be traitors to the movement, they did not want to feel that they were responsible for anybody getting arrested because of them. But at the same time, some of them already wanted to move on with their lives, so they wanted to distance themselves from that situation that they came from. So it was important for them to feel that they could trust us with the information.”

Trust-building continued throughout the interview process and into post-interview meetings between the team and the girls. In reviewing trust-building factors that participants considered important, a number of groupings emerged. Historical factors, including the experiences of the girls being interviewed having been in counseling prior to the interviews were cited. Cultural factors: age, gender, dress, language, including dialect and accent, knowledge of cultures within cultures, storytelling, and a team approach emerged. Contact/Prior Association Factors included utilizing known and trusted contacts, as well as building new relationships with social workers and center directors to gain access to the girls and to begin relationship-building. Logistical factors included the site of the interviews were held, how girls got to the interviews, and meeting basic needs for food and clothing. Process factors were those

phenomena that build trust through gentle connection and change in contrast to factors of context. Respect, transparency, and self-disclosure are process factors.

### *Historical factors*

In this study, historical factors are defined as events or occurrences in the girl's past that may have had an impact on her presentation of her story. Differences in Asia II were cited in the ease with which the girls were able to answer the questions posed in the interviews. The team felt it was because the girls had been able to talk about their experiences with the social workers in the program and others, not specifically about the armed struggle, but about their lives in general. These were not formal interviews, more within the context of daily conversation. They had been exposed to a number of different people in the center, and had had conversations with many of them. This seemed to have had the effect on the girls of allowing them to be more open and to engage more easily in conversation than girls who did not have the same experience.

One problem that the team had to deal with stemmed from the same starting point, that one group of girls was in a government-controlled facility (the same group as in the paragraph above). There was concern that the girls would think that because the team had been granted access to them by the government, that the interviews would be used for governmental purposes. "...We tried very hard to avoid falling into the trap that the kids probably thought would start from the point that 'We have to tell them what they want to hear, because the government allowed them to interview us, maybe they were on the side of the government.' So we tried to get past that." They tried to help the girls move past this concern through explaining the project as thoroughly as possible, through self-disclosure, and by not asking for certain specific information in the

interviews. The information they avoided pertained to the armed group, locales, names, units, plans, etc. The team felt that this led to relief on the part of the girls and trust grew from that.

### *Cultural Factors*

Cultural factors are defined as practices or norms that define a specific group.

In Africa, two factors were cited as important regarding trust-building and culture:

stigma and gender. Girls who participated in armed groups often faced stigma upon their escape from the group and return to either the community or an IDP camp. Interviewers worked diligently to establish trust with the girls so that the ongoing stigma they felt was reduced. Reduction of stigma was seen as a normal part of [NGO] interaction with the girls, interviewers did not see this as a change of their normal operating patterns when conducting interviews. It was apparent that the girl came first, then the interview.

A number of the girls who were interviewed had attempted to speak with friends or family members about their experience in the armed group, and were told not to speak about it: "The family ... they would say, 'I talked with the woman of the brother, the sister, and it was very stigmatizing,' and she refused to talk with others because of this bad experience." This was a barrier that needed careful attention and work before the girls were ready to speak with the interviewer.

Lack of appropriate clothing as well as continuing displacement also contributed to the girls' feeling apart from others in the camps:

"...In the camps, they felt a stigmatization, and they wanted integration. For example, the way you wear your clothes. You come from the bush, and you don't have the good clothes, and the good clothes means you [are OK] and the good

clothes means you can make friends. And we asked about the problems with stigmatization and the socialization with the other girls when they come back...with those clothes, they are seen like a slave. And some of them, they had to move three or four times.”

Girls found it difficult to form relationships in the camps, and when they did, those relationships were often disrupted by forced movement. Girls then went to another camp where they had to begin again, facing the same stigma.

Prizing virginity, virginity being the ticket to marriage and marriage often the only viable social and economic option for women, potentially led to girls not disclosing the extent of sexual abuse suffered while in the armed group. One of the interviewers said: “And another thing that surprised me, three of the girls, they didn’t sleep with the soldiers. They refused. The girls, when you ask, ‘did they mistreat you?’ Then you ask, ‘Did they ask to sleep with you?’ The girls said ‘No, no, no’ [much emphasis on the no]. We believe they did sleep with them, but they refused to say yes.”

Considering gender and trust, the interview team believed that it was necessary for the interviewers to be women. When asked about whether the girls would have talked with a male interviewer, one participant’s response was: “No. Even when we were interviewing the boys, and I took one man to go [do the interviews], he [the boy] doesn’t know if he is the [with a governmental authority], and he talked to me [instead of the man]. He didn’t want to talk to the man.” There are deep cultural-gender norms in Africa; girls would not speak with a male interviewer because of the sensitivity of issues of menstruation, sex, and children. Power differentials would also inhibit conversation; women are less threatening because they are of a similar power level to the girls.

In Asia II, being seen or treated as a family member and story telling were part of

the “psychology of the [people of the country].” These two components were integrated into the interview process. Interviewers were addressed in the familiar “Auntie,” and the team regularly took meals with the girls. Snacks that the girls liked were also provided throughout the interview. The team modeled the process of story-telling, and the interviews unfolded like stories. “I think that was our ace, that was our forte, making the interviewee feel like she was in a safe place. And then she can talk about almost everything. And the interview went like story-telling, it was very informal and yet substantial.”

The main cultural factors in Asia II cited by everyone on the team were dress, language, being from a region the girls knew, and the age of the interviewers. Both interviewers wore either traditional dress or a skirt and top; “...It was very simple clothes, so I always go like that. And these girls, a pair of trousers or jeans they never wear. So I didn’t go like that. If I did, I would be very different, and they might get scared to talk to me, ‘She’s a big city girl,’ they might think like that. So I dressed really simple.”

The women spoke the same language as the girls, and this was often stated as a reason for success in the interviews. One of the women was born in a village that was familiar to a number of the girls, and this helped build credibility with them.

The interviewers were of different ages, one younger and one older; culturally, this was significant in that,

“I think it was just a figure building type of thing, the older person was considered like the mother, and most of the people, if you go to the interviews you will find is a key attachment to the mother, most of them, who at that stage had a key attachment...so you have a mother substitute type of person, very

sensitive who speaks nicely who is a good person basically speaking to this girl, she satisfies, she interacts very well, that was very key, that sort of opened it. And then there is another person who is like an older sister to them, who is with the mother you see, if the older sister came alone, she would not have had an opening. Through the trust that you have through the older person, the older person was considered as a mother, the older sister was also thought of as somebody who could be trusted.”

The trust that the girls had in the older woman allowed them to be able to confide in the younger woman, to ask for advice, and to be able to tell the younger woman things they might not tell the older woman, like when they needed underwear.

In Latin America, making eye contact was deemed very important, especially at the start of the interviewing relationship. “First of all, the first glance meeting was very important. That it happens to you when you meet somebody for the first time and you feel that they are going to respect you.” The team felt the respect was mutual, interviewer to girl and girl to interviewer.

The way the interviewers were dressed had a lot to do with first impressions and putting the girls at ease. “[The girls] told me at the end that they were expecting to receive a woman that was from [major city] to interview them, very elegant, well-dressed woman, and I was dressed like I do in my city, which is very informal. They were so happy about this that they told me that I seemed like a little girl.” Dressing informally, like the girls who were interviewed dissolved barriers and helped lessen the class/rural-urban divides.

For one of the team, speaking with the same geographic accent was helpful in gaining trust. “...I come from the area, from the town there, so my accent in speaking

Latin American Spanish was the same, so there was no 'breakage,' they felt we were the same, speaking with their own language."

Team members cited knowledge of the rural areas and lifestyles to be very important in relationship-building. Most of the team had worked with rural populations prior to this project, so had experience in this area. Knowledge of the issues of indigenous peoples through prior work also helped. They talked about how knowing customs and gestures allows one to approach a person more directly, and how time needed for relationship- building is reduced when one is familiar with the context. "...I am not saying that it is impossible for other people with different backgrounds or that this is to fundamental to impede the persons approach as an interviewer, but the path that these people have to walk is longer than the one that I did." A different team member also talked about the importance of knowing about life in rural areas, but added that much more is needed, too. She said:

"Working with people from the rural areas is helpful. But there are new elements added to that, I wouldn't say new culture, but new circumstances because the rural people, they arrive to the city, they are out of the program, it's all these elements that you have to take into account. They're not just someone from the rural areas, not just girls or ex-guerrillas or ex-paramilitary, or displaced from rural areas to the city, they are a mix of everything. So it helps if you've worked with internally displaced people, it helps if you've know a bit more about rural areas, it helps if you know some of the places were they've been living, you have to be sensitive, even if you know this, you have to be flexible, you have to accept the person you have in front of you, plus that they're a girl."

The interviewer needed a multiplicity of experience to genuinely understand the

context of the girl's life, to see her as a whole, and to reflect that understanding in the form of respect which leads to trust.

One team member said: "I think it helped that I'd been in contact with the other children [who participated in armed groups], like I don't have to demystify the children in my own mind. Because I've done that before. And also in the past, a long time ago, I had a kind of contact with the guerrillas as well. So for me it's...more normal." This person had a context from which to work, and this came through to the girls in both informal and interview-related conversations.

### *Contact/Prior Association Factors*

Contact/prior association factors are defined as at least one person on the interview team having had a relationship with either a gatekeeper or the girls prior to the interviews. Being introduced to the girls by someone the girls trusted was cited as very important in trust-building. Having the endorsement of the programs in which the girls found themselves opened the door, at least a bit, for the teams.

In Asia II, the girls seemed to trust the program staff, whether they were from the NGO or the government agency. The team, then, was immediately transparent with the girls on their backgrounds, the purpose of the study, affiliations, etc.

In Africa, in every instance, girls were introduced to the study through workers for [NGO] that they knew and trusted. The NGO had a reputation of respect in each of the communities in which it worked. As one team member stated, "... You know, the first, the reason that we invited our colleagues from the province to work with us was because they knew them [the girls]. Because some of the girls were involved in the literacy, in the community where we were working, and [NGO] was known in the

community.” Without access into the communities, in Africa, a sample could not have been gathered and the project would not have gone forward.

Many of the girls in Asia I had had contact with the liaison of the team prior to the interview process:

“Yes, the women knew me, and also they knew that I was responsible for the improvements in that unit through [international organization]. First I got them a television, I got them beds, with mattresses, they were sleeping on the floor, and a few things. No one knew about this place so I told UNICEF that these are things needed to improve conditions, the living conditions of this place.”

Through their association with the liaison, the girls were able to be more trusting of the interviewers than if they had come in without a reference.

It was also said, by the team, that the woman in charge of the center was doing a very good job with the girls, that she was liked and trusted and had managed some very difficult power struggles between the girls. Because the team was associated with the woman, this also helped the girls to begin to trust the project.

In Latin America, almost all of the team was introduced to the girls by someone a team member and the girl already knew. This was also true for the gatekeepers, those responsible for the girls; the team leader was very well connected to the gatekeepers, and they trusted her implicitly. Team members did not know the gatekeepers, but since both parties knew the team leader, trust was easily established. One of the interviewers knew some of the girls in the sample due to her work at the center where they were housed. She was clear that her primary relationship with the girls was not as a friend, but as a person who came to work with and for them. This made access and trust significantly easier.

Contact with gatekeepers, including social workers, heads of centers, and NGO workers in communities, was, in each instance, crucial for trust-building and accurate data gathering.

### *Logistical factors*

Logistical factors included the site of the interviews, how girls got to the interviews and meeting basic needs for food and clothing.

Holding the interviews in the safety of the office of the NGO and providing transportation and food helped the girls in Africa feel that they were cared about, as did the opportunity to bring a trusted person to the interview if they felt the need. In one situation, an immediate need was addressed, building trust between the interviewer and the girl:

“...One of the situations that happened with one of the girls, the car went to pick up her, and she is not in the place. And the car went to the office after the driver was looking for her, but in the meantime, she arrived in the office, and it was raining, it was raining a lot, and she was completely soaked. And my colleague, G, the one I mentioned to you, and she said, Oh, we cannot talk to you [like this] and what we can do is, I have my daughter that is quite the same tall, so let’s go home and we will change your dress and you will have some clothes of my daughter. She went together to the house of my colleague and she dressed new clothes, and you know, I think that she felt very well. And she said also, ‘You can take these clothes to your house, because she has more,’ and she gave her the clothes and the shoes to wear.”

By addressing the presenting problem, the girl knew that the interviewer was

paying attention to her situation, cared enough to help her, and gave a gift. The girl's physical needs were met, and the interview went forward from there.

Food may be one of the greatest aids to conversation, helping to normalizing the otherwise abnormal situation of an interview. Team members in Africa describe the experience of having lunch with the girls: "...And also is sometimes it happened that the interview took the lunchtime, sometimes it started late and it happened during the lunchtime, they would have meals with us, they would have lunch with us, they were sitting with us at the table, you know, I think that we treat them as equals, not as separate. I think that was good also." and, "I don't know, you give them a lunch, and then they communicate and they talk with us." Girls would often reveal things over lunch that they had not talked about during the more formal interview process.

Providing food, meeting small needs of the girls, allowing the girls to have choice in the interview situation and room set-up were some of the logistical factors that helped in trust development in Asia II. Snacks were always available during the interviews; sometimes these were provided by the center, sometimes the team needed to bring them in. The team also provided small "gifts" to the girls, small cosmetics, etc. The flexible interview structure was such that the girls could say, "I don't want to talk about that," and after some sensitive probes, the subject could be dropped.

Food was also an important factor in Latin America in helping to bridge the gaps between the interviewer and the girl, and additionally between the interviewer and the staff of the facility or the family with which the girl was housed. Team members talked about bringing abundant amounts of food so there was plenty to go around, even to those in the house or facility not involved in the project.

The generosity of each of the teams indicated the level of concern for the girls

that team members held; by giving gifts, sharing food, providing clothes, the team demonstrated that caring and most of the girls responded by offering their stories.

### *Process factors*

Historical, cultural, logistical, and contact factors each deal with context. Process factors are defined here as those phenomena that build trust through gentle connection and change in contrast to factors of context. Respect, transparency, and self-disclosure are some of the ways the interviewers described aspects of the interview that led to a change in the research relationship and allowed the girls to say what was both in their minds as well as in their hearts.

Respect, equality, and humanity were words that emerged many times during the interviews in Africa. Respect for the girls is an extension of the respect with which all people with whom the NGO works are treated. Growing out of this respect is the process of normalizing the experiences of people who have had extra-ordinary experiences during the war.

Respect for the humanity of the girls and treating them as equals were part of the normal operations of the NGO:

“...It’s a practice [NGO], the way we treat people. [NGO] is known because of that also. ...not did only because they [the girls] were a specific group, but it is the way we treat normally people in [NGO], when they arrive in the office, we deal with them. So we are, this is something that is known by people in the communities where we are working.”

Normalization was also attained through really listening to the girl.

During interview sessions in Asia II, the team reported that it was observing and

listening at the same time, trying to understand the economic, social political, family life of the girl to develop a more fruitful exchange. The team knew a lot about the overall political, social, and economic situation, but was equally interested in the stories of the individual girls. Transparency was cited as an important process factor in trust-building:

“...I think we were able to get the trust of the girls by being very clear that we’re not from the government and we’re not from the insurgency. We really want to know what really happened and then slowly going deeper and deeper into, you know, and then also identifying what the child said about the situation, and the family. I guess the children also felt that we knew a lot about the movement...I think so, because then the girls would dispense with a lot of the surface stuff and most of them felt as though we were very sympathetic to their own stories as individuals.”

Trust-building through process factors in Asia I included informal chats, providing choice, being flexible, transparency in use of language, and self-disclosure. Each time the team visited for interviews, the interviewers had informal chats with the girls (individually) prior to the actual interview. The team really cared about the girls, the questions were not solely to gain trust; they had genuine concern:

“Every time I go in the morning, I have to sit and talk to them. And I used to see their work, their stitching, they used to have stitching classes. And cookery classes, and English classes, and all sorts of classes. So I used to sit with them and I used to talk with them and I used to ask them, ‘What did you do today, what did you do yesterday?’ and I’d start like that. And I used to ask them, ‘Did you get any letters from your parents?’ I used to share their problems, I used to talk their problems and listen to their problems. I think because of that they

became close to me, I think so.”

They chatted about the current status of the girls, things that concerned them, and were just present with them, sitting while the girls worked. One of the girls in particular was very guarded in her participation. “At the beginning she was very rude, she doesn’t want to talk to us, and she doesn’t want us to record her voice, also. She didn’t allow us...she got scared that we would publish it in the newspapers. She didn’t believe us, she didn’t trust us, so finally she came up with her problems, and she was close, and now she wants me to see her.” When this girl realized that the interviewer was not going to “go public” with her story, and after she experienced the caring of the interviewer regarding areas of her life other than her soldiering story, the girl opened up. The request for continued visits arose more than once, with more than one of the girls, and will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

A second process factor cited in Asia I was flexibility. “...flexibility really helped you know, because if you say, ‘Do it this way that way this way,’ this is not going to help. So that was very important.” Choice was given to the girls whenever possible during the interview process, whether they would participate, how they would sign the consent, how the room was decorated, whether the interviews would be taped. Allowing the girls as much control over the situation as possible helped build trust.

There were a number of times that the team members spoke in English, either to one another or to someone working at the demobilization center. This was discovered to be a detriment to trust-building with the girls. “Without knowing [being aware], we used to talk, I think it was just easier that way. So sometimes the girls, they used to wonder ‘What they are talking?’ We made that mistake. I think we made that mistake...they don’t know a word in English. So they used to look at us, like, ‘they are talking.’ It could have

made it uncomfortable to them.” At every visit, the interviewers also had to speak with the head of the center, and this was also in English. The team felt that the girls were wondering what they were talking about in a language that they could not understand.

Latin American team members felt that the best way to establish a relationship in the interviewing process was to be absolutely truthful about the work they were about to undertake, including: the reasons for the study; the role of the girl in the conflict situation; an acknowledgement of the interviewer’s understanding of the situation of ex-combatant children; the roles of the parties involved in the study; and the range of possible outcomes. Transparency led to trust.

Paying attention was another component to building trust, really listening to the girl and letting her know she has been heard by body posture and giving feedback. Chatting informally about subjects in which the girl is interested, having nothing to do with the study, was another way of showing the girl the interviewer cared about her as a person beyond the strictures of the interview.

The team was very conscious about the implicit power imbalance between the girls and themselves, including all factors surrounding the interviews. The question arose as to whether the girls felt they had to participate because of their living situation, having left the armed group or been captured by government forces; the answer was unknown, perhaps even to the girls themselves. To balance the scales a bit, the team members worked with the girls on mutual decision-making. They allowed the girls to set the location of the interviews in the house or the setting if that was possible. When it became clear that three of the girls could not be interviewed in the place they were staying, two of the team members and the girls decided together where to go for the interviews; they chose the swimming pool. Although time-consuming, requiring greater

preparation, and perhaps costing more, this balancing helped to create trust and allowed the girls to have some fun in conjunction with the work being done.

Making observations about the interests of the girls allowed the girls to feel that the interviewer was interested in them (which she was) in a very concrete way; this was demonstrated by the interviewer asking questions about things that seemed to be important to the girl. It also provided clues to the way the team members asked questions: Was the girl shy? Perhaps more time would need to be taken on the “getting to know you” part of the process. Did she want to study after she left the center? Conversation about education and a respect for her studiousness might be interwoven into the interview guide. Humor was seen as a way to lower defenses. Informal conversation, whether about Britney Spears or the human genome, let the girls know that the interviewers saw them as more than a former combatant or a research informant.

The girls who were interviewed were all participants in armed groups; however, they were very different from one another. Some of the girls were shy, some liked makeup and others were not interested, some wanted to go to school, they had different likes in popular music. One team member said that you have to pay attention “to all details, the shoes, the hair, the way they talk, the way they move, everything you have to pay attention. You have to, you have to go back there. Because you are inviting to them, you have to model who you are.” This project was not the idea of the girls; it was the idea of a team in the US/Switzerland. The interviewers were not invited in by the girls—team members invited the girls to participate, so it was very important to the team that they present themselves as they were: genuinely concerned about the welfare of the girls.

### *Self-disclosure as a Process Factor*

Three of the four teams discussed self-disclosure. When an interviewer in Africa was asked, "...and how did the girl know that you were hearing her?" one of the participants responded:

"...Sometimes you'd give some feedback. One way to help them, that's another thing that's different in the methodology, in the training, you told us not to interfere, just to say, 'Yes,' or 'Can you tell me more about this thing?' But for the girls, the experience, it was so difficult for the girls to express themselves. And if you tell them some stories, 'Yea, it happened the same with me,' If you share the same thing, or the same experience, it is a way for other people to open it, to start to talk about the experience...the girls they would say, 'Ah, it happened the same with me!' And so it was good for them, to talk more about the incident, not to be ashamed by it."

Reciprocity, in the form of self-disclosure, seemed to help the girl get through some of her initial feelings of apprehension, to feel more comfortable, and to be more able to share her experiences, "...If in the interview you don't share something, 'Oh, my uncle, my mother, my brother' or something, I think it's a way to bring openness. It's a way to break the ice, if you share something. They say 'Ah!' when you share something, not when you say, 'Ah, oh, um.'" The experience of the interviewers was that traditional western ways of interviewing, "I statements," "active listening," absence of self-disclosure, created barriers between the interviewer and the girl because it was out of the ordinary, not the normal means of interaction.

Self-disclosure by the team members in the interviews was seen as a way to build trust and to engage in reciprocity with the girls. Revealing some personal information

was viewed as normal in Africa, without it the girl interviewed would feel ill at ease.

One of the extraordinary experiences for the team and one of the girls was the disclosure of one of the workers in the province that she, too, had been with one of the armed groups. It was lunchtime, and they had invited the girl who was being interviewed to eat with them. All were talking, and the colleague from the province office said, "It's always the same way that we are kidnapped." The team member said, "We?!" and the colleague responded, "Yes, because I was also kidnapped." This was a shock for the team member. During another meeting with workers in the province, another colleague stated that her daughter had been kidnapped. The team member said:

"...so during this process, I learned a lot about the life of my colleagues, too...it's quite amazing because the majority of my colleagues, the majority of them, at least at the provincial level, they passed through such difficult situations, that I'm always surprised with their resilience, and their capacity to deal with the situation, and the capacity for solidarity, and their sensitization to people. In spite of all the situations they passed through, they maintain a high level of solidarity and responsibility for people."

A second team member responded to a question about the ability of the colleague to reveal this information and the reaction of the girl to the disclosure. She felt that they really wanted to share something, to be reciprocal with the young girl, to let them know, "You are not alone, you are not unique being in the army." She said the young girl was at first very surprised, but that the interview became easier after this, particularly the next day. Throughout the interview process, the interviewers gave advice and feedback to the girls when asked. Reciprocity, or giving something back to the girls, comes up repeatedly in each of the interviews and is seen as a normal part of life in

Africa.

The team in Asia II was divided on the issue of self-disclosure, citing positive and negative consequences of telling the girls that they, too, had been part of the revolutionary movement. Two of the team members felt that sharing their personal histories was helpful in building trust and letting the girl know she was among friends, like-minded people:

“I think that the biggest thing is that when we introduced ourselves, we right away told them that we were part of the revolutionary movement. And they knew it by how we spoke, and that we shared our experiences also. We were a part of it, because we knew what they were saying and when they asked us, we sort of get connected. I think that’s the key factor. We were speaking the same language. And they trusted us because they knew that we’re not there anymore [a positive of not being part of the local scene], that we’re doing a different kind of job, and that we’re doing work with children, so at some point they also feel safe that we’re not there. We both share the same goals. We have been there. And we don’t regret being there, that’s a common denominator that we share. I think that’s the magic thing.”

Clearly, this was not a dilemma for this team member. She felt that it would be obvious to the girl that the interviewer knew a great deal about the movement, knew the specific language used within the movement, knew the songs and the processes, and was clear about the ideology. Rather than hide her involvement, she felt that being transparent would enhance the relationship, therefore enhancing the data collected.

Another team member was not as sure about the link between self-disclosure and trust-building. She expressed her concerns:

“...We are introducing ourselves to them, who are we, what is our work, who are we working with, what our experiences are, [team member] almost go to the extent of sharing her own experience. [Was that helpful?] In some ways yes, but sometimes when [team member] and I talked about this, they are also assessing us, if that is a good thing to say. Actually I remembered one time when we were trying to connect with one girl who according to our source is very much into the underground and then [team member] almost related to the girl her experiences of the movement, and suddenly [team member] stopped her. ‘Why are you sharing you autobiography with her?’ I don’t know if this was it, it was to gain the trust of the girl, but actually that does not do much, because in the end the girl refused to do the interview after all. So it’s not really a guarantee after all, if you tell them, ‘I also experienced what you experienced,’ that is not a guarantee that the children or the girl will open up easily.”

Experientially, the team discovered that self-disclosure was not a guarantee that girls would participate. Overall, however, it seemed that in this country, self-disclosure and transparency were helpful in gaining trust and gathering data.

The Latin American team reported that the girls were intensely curious about the interviewers. They asked many questions about their personal lives, whether they were married, if they had children. They wanted contact information for the interviewers, wanted to come and visit them; the team did not disclose phone numbers or addresses, although they were honest about marital status and children. One of the interviewers resolved the difficulties in the following manner:

“Sometimes it was uncomfortable. And they started asking our address and phone number. At that time, we didn’t know what to tell them. I don’t know

how to create an address also...so I slowly told them, 'In this interview we are not supposed to tell our personal address. If you want to contact, I gave [liaison's] office address and phone number, you can contact there, and we will get messages.' So I think they always contacted him."

Having mutually agreed-upon responses for all team members in advance for these types of requests would be important in subsequent studies.

### *Building Trust in the Interviewing Relationship, the Literature and Theory*

Factors in trust-building, in the literatures, included credibility with gatekeepers and participants, gender, age, and dress of the interviewers, knowledge of the language and culture, creation of physical and psychological safe space, clarity and transparency about roles, concepts and definitions, empathy, curiosity, being non-judgmental, self-disclosure, interview skills, use of authority, separation of roles, a team approach, and an interest in the whole life of the child. These factors, presented randomly in the literature, coalesced into categories in the data analysis; each was touched on by at least one interviewer.

Historical, Cultural, Contact/Prior Association, Logistical, and Process factors emerged as groupings; it would be interesting to utilize these categories as a model for trust-building in future qualitative studies to determine their effectiveness. Self-disclosure was also discussed, and as in the literature, there was mixed feelings about its use; most of the participants felt it was helpful, others stated that they felt it did not contribute to building trust. Humor was cited by the interviewers as a way to build trust; this was not discussed in the literature and was used judiciously and never at the expense of the girls being interviewed.

Team members wanted to obtain the data for the study, and by the end, to help

the girls they interviewed. Teams worked to help the girls feel less stigmatized by normalizing an “abnormal” situation, particularly in the African context; however, all of the teams displayed great empathy for the girls they were interviewing. Teams were very aware of the power imbalances between themselves and the girls, and built in mechanisms, such as providing as much choice and control as possible, into the interviews. This was both physical, in locales and room set-up, and in allowing girls to sign the consent forms with pseudonyms and to decide whether to be tape recorded or not. This adaptable, inclusive, and context-specific approach provided the opportunity for the girls to trust the interviewers and tell their life stories in a safe, caring, empathic environment.

For some of the girls, particularly the ones in the African context, this was the first time they had been able to reveal their stories and the accompanying hurt, anger, grief, and stigma. No one else would listen prior to the interviewers. What does this mean for the girls? Was this, as it seems, significantly different from other experiences with adults in their lives? For some of the girls, the interview experience made a difference in how they see themselves and how they see their futures; changes in the girls will be covered in the following chapter.

## **Data Preparation**

The literature on data preparation focused on issues of reliability of the data, transcription and translation, the need for bilingual transcribers/translators (Boushel, 1994), and the need for the inclusion of cultural context around the data (USAID, 2001). To promote reliability, suggestions were made to have two people to translate to establish inter-rater reliability (Miles, Haberman 1994). It was suggested that the people

doing the translation/ transcription, as well as the interviewers, write comments on the cultural issues surrounding statements made by interviewees (USAID, 2001). The issue of flattening of data arose around changing personal characteristics or amalgamating data from a number of girls (Hannigan Millstein, et al, 1994). Safe data storage was also cited as an important issue (Hannigan Millstein, et al, 1994; Power, 1980).

In Africa, interviews were conducted in either the national or a local language. When the girl spoke a local language, interviews were recorded in the local language, transcribed from the local language into the national language by one team member, and then from the national language into English for data analysis by the PI of the original study. Care was taken to make sure the meaning of the girls came through:

“The translator did this. From the local language to [national language] was quite easy because I understand very well. I do not speak very well, but I understand very well, and [team members] speaks very well, so I know how to translate well from the local language to [national language]...it was easier for us to do the translation from the local language to [national language], then from [national language] to English. And [organization director] was good in the sense that she lived in [Africa] during so long time, she knew very well, and she speaks very well English, she knows very well how to translate to give the real meaning of words. And we worked together, when she has some doubts, we worked together because sometimes you have to know how to use which words.”

When there were four sets of notes in addition to the tape recording, each of the sets were incorporated into the final transcript. All interview data was collected by one person on the team. She “...took all the responsibility to organize all the interviews and also to transcribe them.” This person also forwarded via emails all of the interviews to

the PI of the original study for analysis.

Approximately half-way through the project in Africa, the organization director had to return to her country of origin for personal reasons; this left a gap in the ability of the team to translate the interviews from the national language to English. A person from the United Kingdom who was living and working in Africa at the time filled this gap. Security and confidentiality issues around this person were not discussed during the interviews.

The team in Asia II utilized notes taken in the session directly onto the computer, notes from their post-interview discussions, and the tapes from the interviews during the transcription sessions. Because there was so much data, and the team needed to move on to other projects that had emerged for them, they hired four additional part-time staff to do the transcription/translation. The team struggled a great deal with this, because of the issues of safety and confidentiality. "Of course before we did this there is pretty much deliberations from the three of us, is it alright for us to get the assistance of these girls to transcribe the tapes. And finally after so much discussion and consideration, we finally settled for getting their assistance for transcribing the tapes." Another person said, "We had to make a criteria how to get the translate because this is very sensitive and we had to work side by side with her, when she was translating, and she was working with us, it was like a group work."

One of the people hired to do transcription and translation was a girl; the following vignette illustrates the care with which the team brought people into the process:

"We had a dilemma with N. N is a young college graduate, and we were worried because her father and her brother had been killed the year before, two or three

years earlier because they were involved in the revolutionary movement. So we were worried that she would do this, but she needed a job as well, she was from X, so she knew the language, so she would really be the...and we could trust her. So we felt that she would be good to take her to do this. But on the other hand, we talked at length among the three of us, 'How would it affect her, to listen to what these kids told us?' And then we discussed it and then opened it up to her, and she said, 'no, don't worry, I won't be affected, just let me do it, if I do get affected, I'll tell you.' So she did it."

The team spent a great deal of time on the transcription and translation; this was made difficult by problems with the tape recorder, problems with the computer, and difficulty with the languages. Because not every team member spoke every language, much group work was needed. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in the native language, with much discussion between team members, particularly given the problems with the tape recorder and the computer:

"So early on when we realized that, we thought, OK, we'll do it another way, we cross check. Because each of us had to go through all the transcriptions one by one just to make sure if there's something that didn't get recorded, it was too faint, that we would try to remember and double check with others, 'Did you remember that part, did we get it correctly?' So this was a very painstaking process, making sure that we had everything, so that was a bit of a problem."

They worked to fill in the gaps, to reconstruct missing pieces. One person said that she would work all night to get it right.

After the initial transcription, the Asia II team then went back to work to do the translation, a process very much like the initial transcription:

“And then we decided after translating it into English, we had to review it again, did we miss something? So we had to listen to the tapes, and then go back again, did we miss something? And we did go back in. and then what else...so after that, we had to collate, if this data was misplaced, supposed to be in the first part, we had to transfer it. We did not play with anything, we took it as it is [did not interpret, did it verbatim] except just a little of how the girl looked like, just that kind of thing.”

The meticulousness and level of teamwork between members of the team is summed up by the following comment:

“I did the first, or the last editing, and then I went through it again and then at times I would ask N because I’m not an native X speaker so there were some terms that I would ask her, ‘Does it mean this, or this?’ And then she would say, ‘If it’s in that context, it probably means this.’ And that’s what we would put in the English transcription. We had to make sure the way we translated it was within the context of what we felt that the girl meant. So that’s how we did it. So the three of us generally made the decisions together, we’d discuss it and then come up with a decision.”

This process was also followed when the team regrouped after they had done other work for a period of two to three months; they worked as a team and cross-checked the information from the interviews with the information from the secondary sources and each other before they sent it on to the PI of the initial study.

Data preparation was divided up between the interviewers in Asia I. One did all the typing and the other did the translation. Although the roles were clearly delineated, the interviewers talked over each interview in depth to make sure they captured the

words of the girl exactly:

“... [Interviewer] used to do the translation, and after that I used to read and see. I used to read. And if [interviewer] leaves out certain things, I used to tell her. And we used to discuss their stories. Daily, we come back, and we discuss about that girl's story. Daily we discuss about it. And after it's done we discuss the translation and if she leaves out certain things, I used to make sure to tell her, at the end, 'You've left out these things.' And she would give me the pages, and I would type them.”

All of the documents and the tapes were given to the liaison and were stored by that person.

Transcribing the tapes in Latin America took between two and three months and was done by a trusted colleague of the team leader. Translation was done by a man living in Latin America for six years who was originally from an English-speaking country. This person had worked with the team leader in the past, and was trusted. His experience living in Latin America provided him with an excellent facility for Latin American Spanish, as well as a context for the situation of the girls. Before the transcribed interviews were sent to him, all names and places were changed according to the informed consent. It was a long process, again due to the volume of material. After he finished each interview, he brought the document to the NGO and discussed with the team leader any terminology or concepts that were not clear to him. All completed data sets were sent via email, as agreed, to the PI of the original study. All tapes were stored with consent forms and receipts for funds in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the NGO.

### *Data Preparation, the Literature and Theory*

Although the qualitative research literature mentions an inter-rater scheme involving two translators (Miles, Haberman 1994), this was not an approach adopted by this study.

Each of the four teams pooled their efforts and collective knowledge around the transcription and translation of the interviews. A great deal of time and discussion went into transcribing and translating each interview, including cultural nuances in both language and physical presentation. Other than in Africa, bilingual team members did the transcription.

A major difference between what is described in the qualitative data preparation literature and the data preparation in this study is that in this study, there was a great concern around the physical safety of the data to prevent abuses/deaths of the girls and of the team members. Informed consent forms were signed with X's or with pseudonyms. No demographic data was gathered. Many identifying statements were omitted or changed slightly to protect the identity of the girls. The final country reports were sent back to the liaison for a final review before printing to make sure that the girls were not identifiable. To some extent, this may have flattened the data; however, in a research situation of this gravity, it would seem that a loss of some richness was a worthwhile tradeoff compared to the safety of the girls. There was little mention of safety in any form relating to data preparation in the existing literature. Secure data storage was seen as important in the literature, and each team made provisions for storage of tapes, computers, and transcriptions in locked cabinets.

Data transcription and translation work was adaptive in that as the teams needed support, they carefully brought in new staff. Those doing the translation added contextual statements when necessary to explicate the statement of a girl.

## Technology

Concerns around the use of technology including tape recorders, computers, etc. were cited in the literature on children exposed to violence (Herzberger, 1990; Taylor Gibbs, Bankhead-Greene, 1997). Researchers' experience demonstrated that tape recorders were potentially distracting during an interview, and could lead to participants either withdrawing or embellishing a story (Horowitz, 1986).

Teams in the original study were provided with a tape recorder, a laptop computer, and voice recognition software to help with transcription. In the current study, teams described more technical problems with the equipment than difficulties in conducting the interviews.

The greatest number of difficulties with technology occurred in Asia II. Utilizing more than one method of data recording seems to be the lesson learned from this country. In addition, the voice recognition software did not function well enough to be helpful; all of the interviews were transcribed by hand and not by voice. The tape recorder, when set on voice activated mode, often made it difficult to catch the complete statement of the girl. There were times when the team was so caught up in the interview process, the batteries ran out and the tape stopped. There were also times when the voices were so soft that the words could not be heard on the tape. The laptop computer began to malfunction when the team returned home, and deleted a number of the files the team had created during the interviews. This caused a great deal of consternation, and all the remaining files had to be transferred to another machine. One team member indicated that she would much rather have worked from the notes she made in the field than to have relied on the tape recorder; she felt that the team was fortunate that the

notes were so complete due to the tape failure.

The team in Asia I used two tape recorders during the interviews, except for interviews with one girl who did not want to be recorded. The girl was adamant that she would not participate in the project if the tape recorder was used, she did not want any “evidence” of her giving information. The laptop worked well and was used for all transcription and translation work. The voice recognition software, however, was not effective for transcription or translation. All equipment was signed out prior to the project and returned to the liaison after its end. None of the equipment was returned to the U.S./Swiss team; the funding source from which the equipment was purchased had no stipulations that the equipment be returned. This was a way for the team on the ground to have a “bonus” for participating in the study.

Of the three main pieces of technology provided for the project in Africa, only the laptop functioned without problems. The tape recorder had a lot of “...’Brrr—blahs’, we couldn’t understand it, what they were saying.” Notes were being taken simultaneously and this was a great assist, one of the team stating, “...At the end of the interview, we went through all the process and it was quite easy for us to have everything written.” The voice recognition software was cumbersome, and the team found it easier to type the interviews than speak them.

The team in Latin America did not use the computer to take notes in the interview sessions; notes were taken by hand on tablets. The tape recorder was used in all but one interview, it was placed in an inconspicuous place and the team said that the girls did not feel odd about it at all. The voice recognition software, purchased in Latin America in Spanish, did not work. Team members stated that it was more time efficient to transcribe the tapes by typing the data into the computer.

### *Technology, the Literature and Theory*

The teams had mixed experiences with the tape recorders. There were only two instances in which the girls did not want to have their interviews recorded, due to concerns that the information would be used against them; this was similar to reports in the literature when the suggestion was to ask people who might feel compromised if their statements were recorded.

In one out of the four countries, the laptop ceased to function and the team had to reconstruct data. None of the teams reported success using the voice recognition software. Providing a number of data collection devices, and taking notes by hand, seemed to enable the teams to record the data in the way that best suited them, and gave options when one way did not work. There was nothing on failure of equipment presented in the literature. There was little reported concern about embellishment due to the use of the tape recorder, in contrast to at least one account in the literature. It is clear that the teams learned to work around technical glitches. They were able to adapt to technological failures with aplomb and compensate with pen and paper and computers.

### **Implementation Elements of the Study: Conclusions**

Although the qualitative research literature clearly cites the general topical areas for implementation of research, it offers little in the way of detailed description of decision-making on, and ways of undertaking that implementation.

The implementation factors gleaned from the literature and emerging from this study are:

- Conceptual frameworks

- Definitions
- Sampling and access
- Dialogue on methodology
- Guide development
- Structures of the interviews
- Physical setting of the interviews
- Building Trust in the Interviewing Relationship
- Data preparation
- Technology

For this study, as has been shown, there were a multitude of factors that needed to be reflected upon and adapted prior to and during the original study to make sure the study was successful. Success in this case included access to the girls, collection and accuracy of data, building relationships and sharing knowledge, and that both girls and researchers were safe both physically and psychologically throughout.

Successful implementation took a great deal of time, and was costly. There was much thought and consultation about the project prior to the first interview being conducted, and that thought and consultation continued throughout the project. In a condensed form, the implementation experience of this study generated the following recommendation:

#### *Conceptual frameworks*

- To ensure the best study outcome possible, there was a need to uncover and determine how conceptual frameworks of the in-country and U.S./Swiss teams in the study either fit or did not fit with this specific study.

- Decisions then were made about whether the study design needed modification, or whether a researcher was not the best person for the study.

### *Definitions*

- There was a need to decide on definitions as a team.
- There was an openness and flexibility on the part of all teams to the idea that definitions may change over the course of the study.

### *Sampling and Access*

- The teams were clear about the criteria for the sample.
- Team members displayed flexibility in the research process to include others in the sample to preserve relationships, and to utilize the data collected from those outside of the sample as corroborative pieces.
- Teams had good relationships with gatekeepers and/or the community.

### *Dialogue on Methodology*

- Teams and the facilitator acknowledged and welcomed the experience and knowledge of all participants in the dialogue.
- Teams and the facilitator worked to uncover differences of experience, opinion, cultural norms, etc for discussion and as a way to strengthen the methodology and process of the study.
- The facilitator was transparent about power differentials and worked to create as many opportunities to build knowledge as an overall team.
- Provision of materials in advance of the dialogue was seen as helpful.

- As much as possible, research tools were constructed by the group.
- The facilitator needed to expect situations and reactions that could not be planned for.

### *Guide Development*

- To the extent possible, interview guides were created in a team situation and did not lose the central focus of the study.

### *Structures of the Interviews*

- Flexibility of number and timing of interviews, without loss of the central focus of the study, was critical in a situation where safety is lacking and girls are talking about traumatic life events.
- Interview guides can be much more than a means to an end. By working with the teams to build the guides, and the teams being inclusive, context-specific and adaptive with the method in relation to the circumstances and the needs of the girls, the method and guide become living components of the research instead of static, fixed vehicles for information gathering.
- When possible, preliminary meetings helped the girls feel at ease and understand the study before the first interviews.
- Interviewing in teams was seen as more effective than interviewing alone.

### *Physical Setting of the Interviews*

- All interviews needed to take place in locales where both the girls and the interviewers felt safe.

- Girls and interviewers together decided on whether a friend or other person should be in the interview for support to the girl.
- Forethought was given to situations where someone else might be present in the interview.
- Interviewers made judgments on their personal safety regarding reptiles in the interview room, and food consumption.

### *Building Trust in the Interviewing Relationship*

- Interviewers were transparent and clear with the girls when explaining the study and their roles.
- Power imbalances were acknowledged and as much control and decision-making as possible were given to the girl, e.g. room set-up, signing the consent form, whether to be tape recorded.
- The informed consent form was seen as a tool for building trust.
- Factors to consider in trust-building include historical, cultural, contact/prior association, logistical and process factors.
- Self-disclosure was carefully considered by all teams prior to the interviews. Different decisions were made, sometimes on the spot, depending on the situation.
- Humor and empathy were seen as ways to build trust.

### *Data Preparation*

- Safety was the key concern; no identifying information was included in any of the data sets.

- Transcription and translation were team efforts to ensure accuracy and cultural nuance.
- Analyzed data (from the PI of the original study) was sent back to the teams to ensure that no individual girl would be recognized from the data.

### *Technology*

- Computers, tape recorders, etc. are subject to failure. Teams had alternate ways of taking notes, recording data, etc.

Because this comparative study was conducted utilizing a very small number of sites (N=4), our findings themselves may not be generalizable; however, the principles they suggest may be applicable to other studies with children in situations of violence are being developed and implemented. Those studies, if reviewed, will uncover additional thoughts, ideas and questions that can then be added to this list. Hopefully, this can be the beginning of an ongoing dialogue of implementation factors in research with children in situations of violence so that children can benefit from research, and the most helpful data can be obtained.

## CHAPTER 7: IMPACT OF THE STUDY IMPLEMENTATION ON THE GIRLS

This chapter discusses the impact of implementing the research on the girls who participated in the original study. During the data analysis, it became clear that conducting a study with a hidden population whose stories were often quite horrific, in a relatively unsafe environment had consequences for the girls being interviewed. These impacts were sometimes helpful, sometimes quite difficult and involved discoveries that neither the girls nor the interviewers could have anticipated.

As in the previous chapter, the data gathered was interpreted with regard to categories arising in the literature on qualitative research methodologies, including safety (American Anthropological Assn., 2001; American Sociological Assn., 1996; Edwards, Forman, 1989; Jacobson, 1994; NASW, 2001), retraumatization (Herdt, Boxer, 1991), confidentiality (Hannigan Millstein, et al, 1994), and reciprocity (Hannigan Millstein, et al, 1994; Power, Watters, Biernacki, 1989; Rainwater, Pittman, 1967). However, there were subjects that arose for the young women (through the reports of team members interviewed for this study) that were not addressed in the literature; these categories are more related to reflective theory: expectations, gifts, and unanticipated outcomes; the impacts arose out of the questions and relationship between the interviewer and the girl.

## Physical Safety

Perhaps the most telling statement on safety from the interviews was the following: "My question is how to ask for security if nobody in this country has security." This question is at the heart of the impact of implementation of all four of the countries in the original study.

Physical, emotional, and psychological safety for the participants (American Anthropological Assn., 2001; American Sociological Assn., 1996; Edwards, Forman, 1989; Jacobson, 1994; NASW, 2001) was the first, and most important, impact of implementation concern in the original study. Concerns about physical safety should begin in the conceptualization of a study and continue throughout data analysis and dissemination phases (Herdt, Boxer, 1991). Risk to the participants through involvement in a study, including being identified as a criminal, familial and community stigma, and physical harm (Hannigan Millstein, et al, 1994; Morgan, 1996; Rainwater, Pittman, 1967) were identified and discussed in the advisory committee meeting and in the dialogues on methodology.

There were differing opinions about safety in the African context; some team members felt that there were no safety issues for the young women and others disagreed. One part of the team stated that there were no physical safety risks posed to the girls through participation, and that there would be no retribution by the family or community. These team members stated that this had to do with the site of the interviews being in government-controlled areas, and in the NGO office.

One of the team members was clearly concerned about the safety of the girls. She felt that since the information was coming out after a peace agreement had been

signed, that the risk was slightly less than it would have been if the conflict were still underway. There were no reports from the team as to whether the girls felt safe or not.

Team members in Asia II felt that the girls were safe, both during the interviews and when the data was published. Regarding safety and data publication, one team member said:

“I think they [the girls] have commonalities. From the interviews we have, the commonalities are very clear. In terms of strengths, in terms of also the possibilities. I think focusing more on how they were resilient, how they were able to survive, what if we focused more on their strengths, how they participated in changing the world, I think from the [Asia II] experience, that would be very positive. We do not hurt anybody, government, the armed group, or even the child. Because this is something positive. This is a major contribution to society, actually. But at the same time, not justifying using children as soldiers. I think if we struck the balance, by itself, we remove the security risk.”

Providing information in a balanced manner, relying on the voices of the girls and framing the interviews within a strengths perspective was believed to be a way to lessen the risk to the girls.

In Asia I, the idea of safety took on many meanings; the safety of the girls from the armed group, from the government, and from each other. The girls were originally concerned that the interviewers would tell the government their stories, go to the press, or tell other girls in the center their stories. This would seriously compromise their safety, and did not happen. The interviewers reported that the girls did not talk with one another about their roles with the armed group. The team was concerned that the girls might return to the armed group, or to the villages they were from, and the armed group

might find them. In either case, the group may kill the girl, but most certainly in the second case; this weighed heavily on the entire team. The girls were also concerned about this, more so of being discovered alive by the armed group than participating in the interviews. They also worried about the government and the army finding out about the extent of their involvement; one of the girls was horribly tortured and, again, this weighed heavily on the minds of the girls and the team.

There were no reports from the Latin America team that the girls were concerned with their own safety or the interview process.

The interviewers in all four countries had varying degrees of concern about the safety of the girls, from deeply concerned to not concerned at all; Asia II and Africa teams were not concerned about safety at the time of the interviews, this changed for the African team when the data was to be released. The girls and the team in Asia I were very concerned throughout the course of the study due to the connection of the women with the armed group and the ruthlessness of the group. Specific examples of the creation of safe spaces to promote physical and emotional safety were cited by all teams, and have been explicated in a previous section on creating a safe space.

It was clear that everyone on every team was deeply concerned about the holistic well-being of the girls they were interviewing and thought through the logistics and ways of interacting so that the girls would be exposed to the least risk possible. The teams knew where to interview and where not to. They were very careful about movement to centers and back. They knew the situation in-country and could make informed choices about risks. It was clear that those living in a situation of violent conflict have a better understanding of the safety concerns than a person coming in from the outside.

## Retraumatization

Retraumatization for the participants in a study was cited as a major concern in the literature on children exposed to violence and domestic violence; conducting interviews in ways that did not exacerbate past trauma were cited as very important (Herdt, Boxer, 1991).

For many of the young African girls, it was the first time they had told their stories. They talked about the difficulties of being a woman in the armed group, of rape, and the constant threat of death from both sides, of being kidnapped, of losing their identity. Most were deeply sad and distressed by their experience, and often could not make eye contact with the interviewers. Even with the retraumatization experienced by the girls, most team members felt that the interviews were helpful to the girls. A team member stated that this had been the first time the girls talked about their experiences with strangers, that the questions helped the girls to have some temporal sense of events in their lives, clarification in their own minds around the chronology of their lives that they did not have before the interviews. A number of the girls expressed appreciation for the chance to talk and to tell their stories.

The team in Asia II felt that the girls experienced a negligible amount of retraumatization, and were very glad to have the opportunity to talk about their experiences. The questions in the interviews in which the girls experienced the greatest retraumatization were when the team asked about their families and they told about problems in their family life. "Actually, the girls were not so traumatized about their experience; it was more about their problems with their families, where they really were crying, or when they were very agitated." The team was prepared for this, and after a time of deep empathizing with the young woman, they would redirect the questions;

“...After they would tell us something very sad about their families, we would also help them go back and ask them, ‘Do you remember other times that you were happy in the family?’ And they would sort of recall those moments. And that would sort of temper, balance it out.” They were not glossing over the difficulties the girls faced; they were dealing with the feelings and then redirecting the line of questioning.

The girls in Asia II appeared most angry, but not traumatized in the retelling, about traitors within their movement, not at the government forces or their own capture:

“They have sort of distanced themselves away from the situation inside the armed group. So I don’t think it was really that traumatic for them. Actually, most of the time they were laughing at how they got caught... ‘This was so silly, why did I do it?’ Even the girl who had been wounded, and even the girl who had seen her comrades die, it was more with regret that they had died. But not so much the trauma of being arrested, I haven’t seen these girls being so upset, not with the military but with the informer who picked her out. ‘That guy, that guy should really be punished, you know! This guy was not only the reason I got arrested, but was also the reason that these comrades got killed, it was because of him. And he stole from the movement...’ She was mad at the informer, not at the military. And the other thing was that most of them had been briefed that if you are arrested, you’re going to be raped or killed, so they were all expecting the worst. So when they were arrested, the four that were arrested, they were not tortured afterwards, they were not subjected to sexual indignities. These four were...so that was for them a big question mark, ‘Why are we being treated in a good way? Is what the comrades telling us false, that we would be raped or killed, or are you trying to just get some good points, to look good, that’s why you’re

treating us in a good way?' So I think that at one point they were really thinking that they were, that that was the real policy of the government for example."

This lengthy quote is included to emphasize the complexity of possible retraumatization experiences and the range of emotions felt by the girls when talking about their histories.

Perhaps the most telling statements on lack of retraumatization and gratitude of the girls in Asia II for the ability to share their experiences is summed up in this statement by one of the team:

"All of them said this [interview] is a very good thing that you did to us because there is no opportunity, we were not given an opportunity to tell our stories, because it is difficult to trust, especially in government, and for them, they are very happy that this [interview] happened, because it's a good thing that this happened, because we are able to tell you what we have been wanting to tell other people. No trauma, no trauma, after the interviews they are very happy, and they tell us that, even during the interviews they already tell us that, 'This is the first time that I'm going to say this, that I'm going to share this.' They cry, they laugh, we laugh, we had fun, we also had some moments when they tell sad stories, but generally it's more of them telling us that this is something good, this is not only gathering information, this is psychosocial help. Short of saying that, because they are able to open up."

The team clearly felt that the retelling of their stories was a way for the girls to heal because of the reaction of the girls.

It was clear from the responses of the team in Asia I that the girls were retraumatized by the interview process; however, it was also clear that for many of the

girls, the retraumatization was part of a larger healing process that accompanied the interviews.

The team from Asia I was also the most interested in Western methods of psychological/psychiatric help and was the only group that did not propose traditional, indigenous methods of healing. The reason for their preference is unclear, however.

Girls in Asia I who were in the movement for a longer time, who became part of it at a younger age seemed to have a greater incidence of retraumatization during the interviews than girls who had been in the movement a shorter time:

“For instance, during the interview process, the children who had been involved from the younger age tended to cry more, were more sensitive to issues, sometimes were more angry, and things like that. While others, who had been involved for six months, maybe one year, were more involved in just a few operations, it was not so bad.”

Girls who were involved for a longer time tended to be “graduated” to the fighting cadres, and experienced much more brutality; there were instances when the girls reported horrific events without any indication of feeling at all; it was difficult for the interviewers to predict when girls would emote and when they would not. In girls who were in the movement for shorter times, there was less opportunity to have been part of the fighting forces, hence there was less emotional upset, and less need for follow-up counseling by the professional counselor and less need to process the experience with the interviewers.

In the original Asia I dialogue on methodology, there was a psychiatrist and a clergyperson for emotional/psychological support. When the need arose for them to intervene, they were both in an inaccessible part of the country and could not help. The

team enlisted the assistance of a psychologist; however, the interviewers felt that this was not an effective intervention. The psychologist was unknown to the girls, and dressed in a very Western way. She did not speak their language, and one of the interviewers did the translation. There was little trust given to her by the girls, and the team's experience was that the girls talked much more openly to them than to the psychologist.

The segment of the interviews on looking toward the future in Asia I was seen as a healing process. It was viewed as a way for the girls to move from an "everything is lost" mindset to the idea that they could face the future, that there were at least some options for them now that they were out of the armed group. "It was not a full stop after we spoke to them, but it was the beginning of a process." The emphasis on the interviews in Asia I was that this was a process that is still ongoing.

Both the interviewers and the girls in Latin America have shared something that has deeply affected their lives: the conflict. Fear and uncertainty mix with the regular stuff of lives until it is difficult if not impossible to tease the two apart. Both girls and interviewers bring this experience to the interview situation.

Girls in Latin America who have participated in armed groups have often had deeply traumatic experiences in their childhoods, prior to participation. Histories of physical and sexual abuse, parental death or divorce, and abandonment, are common themes throughout the interviews in the original study. This is not to say that girls did not experience traumatic events in the armed group, indeed, many did; however, the interviewers talked about the levels of traumatic experience in Latin America being greater in their pre-armed group participation life experience. Consequently, the girls have had layer upon layer of traumatic life events. This continues to the present day, where rural girls are placed in urban settings where they feel very much out of place.

“...Now they feel a kind of comparison of being in an inferior position to the city girls who are of the same age, who are cosmopolitan, of ways relating to people, rock music and things like this that they don't know,” while at the same time they are much older experientially than the girls they see in the city. Some have already experimented with alcohol, have had sexual partners, and have had to be responsible to others when they wanted to, and when they did not. In fact, team members noted symptoms of depression in the girls, but felt that there was limited retraumatization to the girls during the interviews.

The girls had very different experiences of retraumatization during the course of the interviews. Those most deeply traumatized by the participation in the armed group seemed to be the girls from Africa and from Asia I; these two groups of women were, according to the data, the most abused. The girls in Latin America expressed more emotion when telling of their family situations, and those in Asia II when talking about traitors to the movement. It was also clear that in Asia I, where there was formal psychological help available, the girls preferred to speak with the interviewers. The interviewers stated that the manner of dress, the lack of language skills, and relationship with the girls were factors in the girls not looking to the psychologist for help. Although retraumatization was mentioned in the literature, the possible extent of retraumatization and ways of helping the girls through these difficult periods during and after the interviews was not explicated.

### **Confidentiality and Informed Consent**

Confidentiality, in relation to people who are participants in a research study, was considered extensively in the review of the literature. Protection of the identities of

hidden populations is critical in situations where those being interviewed may be involved in illegal activities (Rainwater, Pittman, 1967), children in situations of violence (Boushel, 1994; Herzberger, 1990), and in research around domestic violence where a woman could face her abuser in an uncontrolled setting (O'Donohue, 1996).

In all of the four countries, identifying information was not collected. Alternative names or X's were used in place of signatures on the informed consent forms. The teams made a game of it, working with the girls to choose names. The consent form was, in fact, invalid in cases where the girls were under 18 at the time of signing, although for girls that were housed in centers, the girls' legal guardians in the centers gave permission. The consent forms were designed directly to make sure the girl understood the purpose and parameters of the study and that she could withdraw at any time without consequence. The teams reported that the girls enjoyed choosing alternative names and that the consent form helped them to understand and feel more comfortable about participating in the project. It was also reported that the discussion and explanation of the informed consent was a place where relationship-building began.

The situation in Asia I was quite difficult in terms of confidentiality, as the girls were housed together and the space for interviews was small. Everyone essentially knew who was being interviewed and at what time; however, all of the girls agreed that they would not speak about the interviews with one another. This seemed the right choice to the interviewers, given that some of the girls were rumored to have maintained connection with the armed group and information could easily have been passed to the leaders of the armed group. There was another "control" mechanism in Asia I although it was completely in opposition to the idea that girls would maintain contact; none of the girls were supposed to be taken alive, they were to commit suicide prior to capture. If a

person goes back to the armed group after capture, the conventional wisdom and practice is that they will be killed by the group. This appeared to be a deterrent to sharing information even by those closest to the armed group in the past.

It was unclear whether the girls in Latin America would speak to one another about the project, particularly the girls in the center, because they lived together. "...Sometimes they are in the programs, that is one of the main security issues. Because we didn't know if they were going to pass information or what was going to happen or if doing these interviews is going to affect them or not." The team was clear; however, that if the girls spoke together, this was up to them; the team had no control over their behavior. This is the unknowable place where living arrangements, confidentiality, and safety overlap.

Confidentiality took two primary forms in this study, of girls between themselves, and of safeguarding the identities of the girls during and after the study. The teams were particularly concerned about girls sharing information among themselves during the interview process due to the fact that information sent back to the armed group might jeopardize the girls' safety. In both settings where this arose, the teams suggested that the girls not talk among themselves, but were clear that it was up to the girls to make that decision. The girls were included in the decision-making around this, again indicating the inclusive nature of the method.

The use of the informed consent form, although not a legal document, served as a way to explain the study, to provide the girls with a feeling of security, and to begin the relationship-building process. It was also an agreement that their identities would not be divulged either during or after the study.

A concern on the part of the teams and the U.S./Swiss team was that of the legal

ramifications for the young women. Given that all were under 18 at the time of participation, they could not be treated as adult combatants; consequently this did not pose as much of a potential legal problem as would have interviews with girls who were over 18 and participated in fighting. The heads of the centers were very sensitive to this, and none of the data, to our knowledge, was used to incriminate anyone.

Although only discussed by three teams, the issue of confidentiality raised a number of serious concerns: how does one provide protection for children in research situations when there may be no authority to which a violation could be directed? When a country has been ravaged by war for so long that professions have no code of ethics? How does a researcher obtain a signed informed consent when the person is not legally old enough to give consent and there are no parents or guardians around? These questions were not explicitly answered in the project, but should be posed for further consideration in future research.

### **Impact of Implementation Concerns for Girls not Cited in the Literature**

A number of unanticipated consequences of implementation arose that were not directly mentioned in the literature. They either emerged at length in the interviews or were specific to the situation of the team or country. These are described in detail because of the potential they have to enrich the results of the current study, and for use in future study planning. Relations of the following impact of implementation concerns to reflective theory are included in each thematic section.

#### *Expectation of Girls*

There was nothing in the qualitative research literature that referred to the expectations

of potential respondents for participation in a study; however, this was an issue that arose with most of the interviewers in each of the four countries.

In Africa, many people live in dire poverty. Constant displacement has led to the impossibility of subsistence farming and people have very little, being forced to leave or give their land, livestock, food, and possessions to the fighting forces or criminals. People living in IDP camps are often fed and clothed through donations from humanitarian agencies; hence there is an expectation of help that is based on survival needs. One of the team members talked about how just her presence in the IDP camp created expectation in the people living there:

“In the IDP camp, people are living in very difficult conditions, and many people expect you to give them food and clothes. But I can’t talk about money, because money doesn’t have an expression there. But essentially, food, clothes. In the camp, I went around the camp, and something that happens in [Africa] is that white people are related to the donors, and when they see me, they think that I am a white people, and that I have things for them.”

Another said:

“...This is not just people who live in Africa who think this way, it is human, human beings, you know, think this way...When you have nothing, of course you expect when you meet people what have power, and they know that we belong to an organization, we have power, they have the means to help me, I believe that at the end of the day, they expect something.”

All of the participants from Africa stated that they believed the girls expected something in return for their participation.

The team in Asia II felt that, other than the last two girls, the girls had no

expectations of remuneration at the end of the interviews. Care was exercised by the team not to reveal the “gift” that was to be given at the end of the interview. This worked in all cases except the last two interviews where the girls knew to expect a gift. The team felt that the social workers told the girls and this is how they found out.

It was explained to the girls in Asia II, beginning with the informed consent, that their involvement was to provide information that would help build programs for other girls who would come after them. This was cast by the team as continued loyalty to the Movement, that they have direct experience of great value:

“...This is your major contribution, continuing your work, your commitment to the Movement. Through doing this, you are helping other children, because we are telling them that the information that you’re going to give us will be used to prepare programs for children like you who are exiting. And in order to make a good program, they have to know your experience, what you need, to input that. So you are the voice of these many children. When you say this to them, they really feel it, and they are sometimes honored that we have consulted them. For them it is an honor to be consulted and to be picked out from among the many children. So they don’t expect anything in return. So actually, what they would say is, ‘did I give enough?’ Actually, that was their question, ‘Was I able to help you?’”

This desire to help may be a product of the culture, commitment to the Movement, or a humanistic response to help others. Whatever the reason, it is a touching statement about the willingness of the girls to provide help for others based on their own traumatic experiences.

There was some concern that the interviews of the two girls who knew about the

gift would be different from those of the women who did not know. According to the team, they felt that the level of sincerity was the same as the other women and that the information was well within the parameters of the experiences reported by the other young women.

At the beginning of the original research project, the expectations of the girls in Asia I were small: pencils, pens, powder, underwear. As the interviews progressed, the girls started asking for bigger things. They wanted passports and jobs in other countries and, in one instance, the liaison attempted to find one of the girls employment in another country; however, this was not within the budget of the project.

Expectations of the girls in Latin America fell into three groups: those who expected something for participating; those who accepted that there would be no compensation for participation but participated anyway; and a third group which did not expect anything at all. The team explained to the girls that if they wanted to participate, that it was up to them; however, there was no compensation for participating.

In working with the group of girls that had expectations, the interviewer said knowing this made the interviewing more difficult; she told the girls that they could not expect anything from her, but she also knew that there were funds to help the girls at the completion of the project. She said, "...It's hard to know where to make the bounds."

The group of girls that accepted that there would be no compensation for participation was not happy, but participated anyway. The interviewer felt that the girls would have liked "...To hear proposals for them to carry out a project, for instance, to have more training." In the end, the girls participated and the interviews went well.

In the final set of interviews, two girls had not been interviewed previously, and the third had. The two without prior experience did not expect compensation or even

for the work to be published, but the third did:

“... [The one] who had been interviewed by the local newspaper had a lot of expectations because when she was interviewed, they made a show in which she presented her case. This time again, she wanted a show to be done. Even the other two girls commented to me that I should not trust what that girl was saying because she wants to appear things bigger than they actually were. I did not pay too much attention really in the interviews, but when reading them back, I noticed that there was a line, a connecting line through the whole interview that was the intention of her to present a discourse, a very organized discourse to the public. Because all the time she was mentioning and referring to the armed group in terms of bad and good, where the others were just giving their opinions, commenting on what happened.”

The interviewer stated that this girl was very demanding, asking for things throughout the interviews. This was also a situation where the data may have been skewed due to the girl's need for attention and the potential that she believed that a better story would get her something at the end.

Different girls had very different expectations of the study process. The interviewers, also, had differing experiences based on whether the young woman knew of or wanted a gift, or whether the interviewer was the one to discuss the gift with the young woman. One person seemed to be embellishing her story to get a better gift.

There seems to be no clear-cut answer to the issue of expectations; however, it is clear that the more things that are given during research studies, the more people may expect for their participation. This is a hard line to walk when those involved in a study are desperately in need of basics like food, shelter, livelihood, or clothing.

There were great differences in the expectations of the girls before, during and after the study. Perhaps the giving of token gifts at the beginning, and in some cases through the study, blurred the line between participant and recipient, although as one of the African team said, people expect something from outsiders because they have nothing and the pattern is that outsiders provide for needs. The girls were told that their participation would help others like them; they were not told about the gift up front. A deep ethical dilemma is presented when one goes to those who have nothing, no permanent housing, a lack of water, food and security, and one wants something else from them, expects participation from them. This is an issue that must be considered in the near future as more and more organizations go to conflict-torn regions to gather information.

### *Gifts*

As with expectations, gifts were not discussed in the literature but are included in the data analysis because of the implementation impacts for the girls around the giving of gifts.

In Africa, gifts at the end of the interviews were decided upon between the interviewers and the girls. Most of the girls wanted to start an informal business, selling meat or other goods in the market. Money was provided in the form of a micro-credit project through the NGO. One of the girls stated that she wanted to start a business, but she did not want to take foreign money or money from another person.

Gifts in Asia II were given in the form of money; however, a system was developed between the center in which the girls were living, and the young women:

“We also wanted the agency to be responsible again, to be accountable again for

the child, to keep on the monitoring, and we thought this would be a good thing...The agency decided to put it into an account together with the social worker, so the child could access the money together with the social worker. So it was a partnership, it was voluntary. The agency wouldn't want us to give the money to the child for fear of the child using it to go back to the mountains, or the movement accessing the money. I think that was a fear, a very good thing to do. The right to participation...was in action all throughout. Because the girl child soldiers participated all throughout the interview...it really was a participatory process."

One team member explained the gift to the girls in the following way:

"...It's just a gift, and they should not see it as payment for what they have told us. It's not a bribery, it's just a gift because we are pretty much appreciate that what they have shared with us is their life, is part of their life. And what we're giving them on behalf of the Quakers are gifts."

With the exception of one young woman, all of the girls had clear plans for their futures, and the gift was substantial enough to provide each one with the necessary funding to achieve their goal. "So we were very happy at some point to hear how systematically they thought, how resilient they were, and how motivated they were to move on. Everybody, all of them. Either they were studying, working, or in a livelihood project. So the honoraria played a very, very major role." Most wanted to go back to school, and one used the money to start a livestock business. Social workers at the center helped the women with money management. It was clear from the interviews that the team members derived a great deal of satisfaction from the plans and successes of the girls.

As stated previously, the team in Asia I decided that sewing machines would be the best investment for the young women; all agreed. The implications of this for the team will be discussed in the next chapter.

The team in Latin America asked the people in charge of the centers where the girls were living about what the girls would want, focusing particularly on the opportunity to continue with school. The girls told the house person that they were happy with the free school provided by the program they were in, although the school consisted mainly of downloading materials from the internet. Gifts were given to the girls in the form of cash. One group of girls was given funds directly, and for the other group funds were given to the person in charge of the house in which the girls were living. In that group, the girls and the house person decided that the money was for the girls to spend as they wanted, however, one thought was that each would design or adopt a project for themselves to do in the future.

All of the girls were very happy with this situation, although there was some anxiety on the part of some girls,

“First they received the payment which created a kind of anxiety, they were saying that finally we have money to buy clothes and things, but they also were satisfied, they said, this is a long interview, so in a way they felt it will help, not in a very fast communication, but with a very in-depth interview. I think they liked that. They also liked the way they could also say what they were feeling, and they were very open.”

Although the girls received a tangible gift for their participation and work, they also got something else from the process. The team remarked that the girls felt heard and understood by the team and were able to discuss things that they might not have

been able to talk about with anyone else up to the time of the interviews. The team believed that the interviews themselves were helpful to the girls in making sense of their situations, and releasing some of the deep feelings of grief they experienced in their lives.

The giving of gifts was not mentioned in the research literature; however, gifts were given at the end of the original study and much thought went into the gifts. The process of decision-making around gifts varied by country and individual girl; for the most part it was inclusive, adaptive and context-specific. Sometimes decisions were made by the team alone, sometimes in conjunction with the girls or with the girls' social workers. The U.S./Swiss team could not have made decisions that would have been as appropriate for the girls as the teams were able to, in conjunction with the young women.

A difficulty with the giving of gifts was that they often set the girls apart from the community; one team suggested that in the future, gifts be given that benefit the entire community in which a girl lives so that there are less hard feelings and the girl has a better chance of reintegration.

Gifts and expectations present an ethical dilemma. What do people expect when they have given you their time? Does one ever enter into a research relationship without expecting something in return? Should researchers give something? If so, what or how much, particularly in circumstances where people have very little? What does the giving of gifts mean for future researchers in an area? These are questions that will need further study in the future, as more and more research is conducted in situations of conflict where needs are great.

## Unanticipated Personal Outcomes for the Girls

Unanticipated or unexpected outcomes are not mentioned in the qualitative research method literature, but are a predictable component of reflective research. Maintaining a willingness to be surprised, being flexible and working to create meaning within a research setting is fertile ground for new ideas that may be outside of predicted outcomes, or beyond the study completely, as seen in the descriptions of personal change that follow in this section.

A number of the girls who were interviewed stated that they felt honored to be asked to participate in the study to help other girls in their demobilization and reintegration. They also told the team that being able to tell their stories helped them to integrate life experiences, particularly the soldiering experience, into their lives as a whole.

The most poignant stories came from the African girls. Because of the age at which they were taken, because of the dehumanizing treatment they received (they were told to forget their name, their parents, and their village and were used as sexual and domestic slaves), they were not able to think about their lives in a temporal sequence. They remembered events, but could not place them chronologically. At the end of the interviews, a number of the girls stated that they were finally able to put their lives in temporal order, and for this they were very grateful.

Deep, personal change was described by the members of the team in Asia I, both change in themselves and changes they saw in and heard about from the young women. The team felt that the value of the interviews to the girls outweighed the negatives. They

felt that the girls were helped by their participation in the process:

“And in a way, it was healing in some ways, [the liaison] continued seeing and contacting the girls even after the interviews. And also here and there I stepped in and helped after, like getting the transcripts to [the liaison] for one girls enrollment to school...[this process was] More of a sharing of life...It was like creating, learning together on this difficult situation. We all kind of went together as a team. It was not getting [just getting information], it was sharing. It was very comfortable for them, some had their tears and difficulties.”

Another said, “I think they would have been very happy that we have helped them.” The girls were seen to have opened up during the process, emotionally and in their willingness to accept work in-country. They also saw themselves as less ‘separate’ from the rest of the population by the time the interviews were finished.

Other girls expressed their gratitude at having participated because they felt that they finally had a chance to tell their stories. Many had never divulged the history of their lives to another person and they stated that they felt relieved and genuinely heard: feeling heard helped them feel better.

The teams did not expect this response from the girls; they were concerned about their mental health, were worried that they might feel more victimized. The idea of healing was not a goal of the original study, but took place for a number of the young women.

One of the interviewers in Asia I described the heart of reflective research when she said:

“... [This process was] More of a sharing of life...It was like creating, learning together on this difficult situation. We all kind of went together as a

team. It was not getting [just getting information], it was sharing.”

The team members and the girls were creating meaning between themselves, as partners in the research experience. This is reminiscent of Martin Buber’s statement that “all real living is meeting,” that life and change happens in the spaces between people when they are genuinely attentive to one another (1958).

If interviewing is a relationship, and relationship implies an exchange, there is the potential for something spontaneous to occur; during the interviews for the current study, spontaneously, team members began to talk about how they felt their lives had changed in the course of the study, and recounted ways in which the girls indicated that they had changed over the course of the interviews.

## **Conclusions**

The girls in the original study did experience personal consequences as a result of their involvement in the study; these fell both within and outside of the current literature.

There were also unexpected or unanticipated outcomes for the girls that emerged during the interview process.

The interviewers needed to be very careful throughout the process for the sake of the girls. The girls needed time to tell their stories, and empathy from the interviewers to help them cope with the emotions raised through the telling. Girls and team members had to make decisions around confidentiality. The potential impacts of implementation for the girls are listed below. They should be taken into account in future research.

## **Physical Safety**

- Girls’ concern for their safety ranged from not concerned to extremely

concerned.

- Girls that were the most concerned were tied to groups that demanded suicide before capture.
- Interview situations were set up to allow the maximum safety possible for the girls; this was different in every country and sometimes differed within a country.
- Those living in a situation of violent conflict have a better understanding of the physical safety concerns than a person coming in from the outside.

### **Girls and Retraumatization**

- Retraumatization varied from country to country and girl to girl.
- The girls who were most retraumatized seemed to be the most abused during their time of participation in the armed group, and had never spoken about their experiences to anyone prior to the interviews.
- Retraumatization occurred for some of the girls when they talked about their families.
- Western psychological methods were not the most effective in helping the girls; relationships with the interviewers seemed to be more helpful in helping the girls to cope with their feelings and incorporate the experiences into their psyches.

### **Confidentiality**

- Teams and the girls together made decisions about confidentiality both between the girls in a center (if that was the living situation) and safeguarding the identities of the girls during and after the original study.
- There was concern that if the girls talked between themselves (if they were living

in group housing) that information would get back to the armed group and jeopardize the girls' safety.

- The informed consent form was a way to explain the study, to provide the girls with a feeling of security, and to begin the relationship-building process.
- Both the teams and the U.S./Swiss team together sorted out the legal ramifications of the original study for the girls prior to the study's implementation.

*Questions that arose around confidentiality:*

- How does one provide protection for children in research situations when there may be no authority to which a violation could be directed?
- What are the legal standards for ethical research in countries in which professions have either no code of ethics or no mechanisms to enforce existing codes?
- How does a researcher obtain a signed informed consent when the person is not legally old enough to give consent and there are no parents or guardians around?
- These questions should be posed as areas for further consideration and research.

## **Expectations**

- Different girls had very different expectations of the study process, some were satisfied with providing information to help other young women like themselves, and others expected some compensation for their participation.
- Some of the girls expected something tangible because of their need and their ongoing experience of outsiders as donors.

- Expectations for some of the girls changed over the course of the study.

### Gifts

- Decision-making on gifts was made either by the teams alone or in dialogue between the teams and the girls.
- The U.S./Swiss team could not have known what the girls wanted or needed, and would not have been helpful partners in decision-making around gifts.
- Gifts could have set the girls apart from the community.
- Gifts could have been used to benefit the community as a whole to provide a better chance of reintegration for the girl.
- The giving of token gifts at the beginning, and in some cases through the study, blurred the line between “study participant” and “aid recipient.”
- Many of the girls benefited from talking about their lives in addition to receiving the gift.

### *Questions that Arose Concerning Gifts*

- What do people expect when they have given you their time?
- Does one ever enter into a research relationship without expecting something in return? Should researchers give something? If so, what or how much, particularly in circumstances where people have very little?
- What does the giving of gifts mean for future researchers in an area?
- These are questions that will need further study in the future, as more and more research is conducted in situations of conflict where needs are great.

## Unanticipated Personal Outcomes for the Girls

- Some of the girls stated they were honored to be asked to participate in the study.
- Girls who had no temporal sense of their lives were able to put the events they had experienced in time order.
- Many of the girls saw themselves as less separate from the rest of their communities after the interviews.
- Emotional healing took place for a number of the girls during the course of telling their stories to a willing, empathetic listener.

Perhaps the most important generalization to arise out of this chapter is the idea that each girl in each country has different needs, thoughts and ideas around the categories above. Some of the uncovering of those needs, thoughts and ideas can be done prior to or at the start of the interview process; however, other areas, such as retraumatization, will only emerge during the interview process. Acknowledging that there will be differences, and that collective or individual situations will arise that will call for problem-solving is mandatory in providing psychological and emotional safety for the girls, for relationship- and trust-building between the girls and the interviewers, and consequently for the ultimate success of the study.

The questions that arose around confidentiality and gifts will need to be considered in the future as both specific questions for research and in the implementation of studies with children in situations of violence are conducted.

## **CHAPTER 8: IMPACT OF THE STUDY IMPLEMENTATION ON THE RESEARCH TEAMS**

In this final data analysis chapter, the impact of the implementation of the study on the research teams is described. From the beginning of the study, the teams had to relate to the U.S./Swiss team, the methodology, and the girls; they had the most difficult jobs of all of the people involved in the study. They had to be responsive and adaptive to numerous stakeholders, and had to adapt the methodology to their cultural context without losing the central purpose of the study.

There is scant mention the literature on qualitative research methods concerning the impact of study implementation on the researchers themselves. What does appear tends to be in discussions on research on hidden populations and in the field of journalism (Feldman, 1974; IFJ, 2001; Olorunyomi, 1999; Polsky, 1967; Powers 2001); these limited citations involve the role of the interviewer and the effect of information gathering on the interviewer. On the other hand, there was nothing in the research literature review that described, comprehensively, the multiple roles that the teams would have to play or the adjustments they would have to make. This cumulative experience can best be described by reflective theory, and will be explicated throughout the chapter.

Not surprisingly, a number of the sub-headings of this chapter will be the same as the sub headings in the chapter on the impact of implementation on the girls, however, here they will be described from the team members' point of view, and will

include the changes and adjustments the teams had to make in each situation.

Impact of study implementation that arose in the literature outside of safety issues included the need for data analysis not to reinforce stereotypes (Allen, 1978; Rainwater, Pittman, 1967; Taylor-Gibbs, Bankhead-Green, 1997), to be seated in a cultural context, and not to be out to grab headlines through sound bites (Powers, 2001; Rainwater, Pittman, 1967). Uncontrolled use of the data by the media was also discussed (Jacobson, 1994).

### **Safety for the Interviewers**

Physical, emotional and psychological safety for the interviewers (Feldman, 1974; Herdt, Boxer, 1991; IFJ, 2001; Olorunyomi, 1999; Polsky, 1967; Powers 2001) were concerns cited in the literature, and included all stages of the study. Whether it is journalists reporting on a story or researchers gathering data, the perception of being on one side or another can put one in harm's way, particularly during data gathering and story/results dissemination (Adie, 1993; Gjelten, 1999; Gutman, 1999). Journalists are in particular jeopardy where this is concerned; if they are seen as taking sides, they can be expelled from a country, or at worst killed by the side that feels slighted. Organizational back-up was seen to be a way to preserve safety (Adie, 1993). The participants in a study can be in jeopardy when study results are disseminated if their identities are discovered by hostile parties (Gjelten, 1999).

There were differing opinions about safety in the African context; some team members felt that there were no safety issues, for either them or the young women. On the other hand one of the team members was clearly concerned about the safety of team members, although she felt that since the information was coming out after a peace

agreement had been signed, that the risk was slightly less than it would have been if the conflict were still underway.

To a person, the team members in Asia II felt that they were not at risk at any time during the process. The team felt safe because they conducted almost all of the interviews in the [government agency] center or at the place where the girls were living. One person said, "...we have nothing to fear because we have all the legal papers, so we needed that letter from [PI of this study], that was the thing that made us, so everything was legal...we had all the legal papers and the legal identity, so we felt that nobody will watch us." Offering a letter from the team in the north would be an appropriate addition to the dialogue on methodology. Another told of their prior knowledge of the area and feelings of safety because of family living locally:

"I was the one familiar with these areas, would feel comfortable in the sense that I knew people that could back me up, for example, I was familiar with the area and there were people around I could call on for assistance if there was a problem. So for example, X was the starting point because that was the province that we came from, my father could help introduce me to people, give me people to contact aside from my own contacts in the NGO world. So we used relatives to link us...and then in X, it was not a big problem as well...because my [family member] is there, so he could help us around, like when we had to do the interview in the house of the employer, we decided we should have an extension cord ready just in case the power of the computer runs out, so we have that as well ready, we borrowed it from my [family member]."

Having family members know about the work the team was undertaking could be a potential security risk as well as a boon, it would be easy for a family member to

divulge information to another person in the course of normal conversation. However, the team is much more aware of the balance of risk and safety than people outside of the situation so that this, for the most part, must be left to them to weigh and decide.

Alternatively, the interviewers in Asia I were quite concerned about their safety, “So one girl told us, ‘You are coming here daily, but already the [armed group] must have gotten this message that you all are coming here and interviewing us.’ That they got this message that we were interviewing them; she told us like that.” This was of great concern to the interviewers because of the ruthlessness of the armed group; in this country, the girls wore cyanide capsules around their necks and were told to bite the capsule and commit suicide rather than be captured. The interviewers took different cabs and different modes of transport, and used different routes from the city to the center where the girls were living. If the girls asked whom they were working with, they told them “the Quakers.” The team was also concerned that the girls, if they decided to re-join the armed group, would tell the group about the interview experience and the people who conducted the interviews.

When asked if she wanted to stop the process, one interviewer said, “No. I did not want to stop. I was more confident, I don’t know.” The other interviewer was less eager to continue, she wanted to stop after the comment about the armed group being aware of their presence and their work due to her regular travel to areas of conflict in the country. The interviews ended shortly after this, and the second interviewer did not return to the center.

Another safety issue for the interviewers in Asia I was that of hygiene, in the form of food preparation and joining the girls for meals and tea. “...We were scared that we might get infected. That area was not so clean, and we were worried about that the

cooking, I don't know the way of cooking, how they cook, whether they were washing their vegetables and everything, or not. We were worried about it." They reported that the center was very dirty, and that they felt a good deal of pressure to drink and eat with the girls. Nonetheless, they decided to eat and take tea, and, fortunately there were no health problems.

In the Latin America context, the safety of the team was of less concern than the safety of the girls; the interviewers were deeply concerned for the safety of the girls, and set up systems to protect them. One of the interviewers in Latin America said: "There were no safety issues for me [doing these interviews]...I've done other things that were really dangerous." People in countries in conflict have a somewhat different view of safety than people who live in situations of peace. Team members were very conscious of the safety of the girls, as well as the workers and people in the foster homes associated with the girls. The interviewers took precautions when traveling to and from the residences, "We took measures like going to the areas without being followed, people not knowing, even the people here in the office didn't know the address at that point. And that was very good." Another said, "No one could know where they were [living]. We had the responsibility of making sure that we protected their safety, and that's a huge responsibility. I felt the safety issues more taking care of the girls." Some team members felt that for safety, interviews should be conducted in the home of the girl, others felt that a neutral locale was better; however, use of the NGO office was not discussed as a possible site for the interviews due to the potential that the office was under surveillance.

If a young woman in Latin America was living in a house, there was concern because there was no extra protection for the girls as there would be in a center. However, if the girl was housed in an area where there was little guerrilla activity, safety

concerns were lessened. Also with the girls housed with families in areas of guerrilla or paramilitary activity, the team was very careful with the tape recorder and tapes lest they were confiscated by the army.

Three other major concerns in Latin America around the safety of the girls were house searches, the giving of gifts and the final reports. Soon after two of the team completed the first interviews in homes where girls were living, there were a series of house searches by the army in the area. The army was looking for guerrilla supporters and fighters:

“It was very risky, because these girls were with the guerrillas. It was a very important experience, because the person was responsible for the program, in the house, and to the armed forces officials, that these girls were part of the presidential program, and if something happens to them because of the house searches, they were going to be held responsible. It was very good that nothing has happened so far, the cities are under very strict tension now, and we know that by the second meeting we know that we have to take measures to ensure that they are not facing any particular problems. We need to create a safe environment for them, despite of the fact that the city is getting worse and worse because the armed forces are trying to dismantle the militias. And they might think that former combatants are still linked with the militias are linked to that area. So this is very sensitive, we have to be very careful...”

There seemed to be no link between conducting the interviews and the timing of the searches, but it was clear that the team was very concerned both for the girls and for their foster families.

These interviewers expressed little concern for their own safety, particularly after

the woman with connections to the paramilitaries left the team. Since only girls from the guerrilla group were interviewed, safety concerns diminished greatly; the perception is that working with people from the paramilitaries is far more dangerous than working with people from the guerrillas. In the areas of the IDP camps, meeting at a neutral place was very important. People are housed very closely together, and one does not necessarily know one's neighbors; a stranger coming in arouses suspicion in people on all sides of the conflict and can make difficulties for the people being visited.

Gifts could be seen as a contribution to the young women's lives; the teams saw them as possible "red flags" that something out of the ordinary had happened to them. Each of the teams, as identified in the literature on journalism, had the backing of an institution.

With respect to the perception of "siding" that was described in the journalism literature, both the team in Latin America Asia II, earlier in this chapter, spoke about the potential of being seen as traitors by the movement; however, they were clear that they were still deeply committed to the philosophy of the armed groups, but not to the use of children as soldiers. They did not feel as though they were 'siding' in a politically partisan way as indicated in the literature, they strongly felt that they were on the side of the young women.

Interviewers thought a great deal about their safety, particularly in Asia I, and in every country, the safety of the girls. Team members knew their local situations very well. Context-specific knowledge coupled with being flexible or adapting to a current situation, allowed the teams to operate in ways that did not draw undue attention to themselves or the girls. They set up interview situations so that risk was minimized to all through knowledge of the local language, dress, safe locales, and cultural norms.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality and informed consent were cited to help study participants with anxiety around participation due to the safeguarding of identities. The literature suggested encoding identifying information; however, flattening of the data may be a result of this practice (Hannigan Millstein, et al, 1994).

The teams were deeply concerned with the confidentiality of information so that the girls would be as safe as possible. The informed consent forms were signed in alternate names or with an X to ensure anonymity, and all identifying information (names of villages, family members, links to specific battle situations, etc.) was removed prior to publication of the final reports.

Confidentiality was a particularly sensitive issue in Africa for the interviewers.

One of the participants said it succinctly:

“...But I must tell you that this, working in this project, this was a very sensitive issue. Since we were at the time of war, if this information came out we could be a target for the rebels because of what we knew...the people responsible for the situation, [these] people react very badly to these things. Nobody likes to be pointed as the bad roles that they did...talking about this issue could be a problem.”

Team members worked diligently to protect the identities of the girls through the location in which the interviews were conducted, keeping the knowledge of the study within the NGO, never using the names or current situations of the girls. As a group, after reviewing the summary report, they decided to have their names published as the interview team in Africa. It was a courageous commitment to make, the team felt that

this was a part of their work and they were taking a stand.

The team in Asia II talked with the girls about confidentiality, inquiring whether the girls wanted to talk to one another or whether they wanted to keep the interviews confidential, and all agreed that they wanted to keep them confidential. Particularly in light of the honorarium, which might indicate to others that something special had happened to them, they wanted to keep the content of the interviews to themselves.

Because of the connections with gatekeepers where girls were housed in Latin America, there was little concern by the team about confidentiality during the study; they knew the staff and trusted them to keep their presence and any conversations confidential. In the one situation where girls were housed in a center, only the director of the center knew about the project, workers did not. The interview team decided that they wanted their names printed in the summary document, as well as the country report.

Confidentiality for the team members was mainly concerned with finding out if the girls wanted to keep their stories to themselves if they were housed together, whether information would be shared with the gatekeepers, and whether to have their names printed in the final document. Other than in one country, all of the interviewers decided to have their names printed in the final document. This was a profound act of courage on the part of the team members due to the potential for retribution from either or both sides of the country conflict. For the U.S./Swiss team, this was an unexpected, but very welcome, outcome.

### **Retraumatization of the Girls**

In contrast to the fairly narrow Northern/Western view of response to traumatic events and potential retraumatization in the interviews, three of the four teams looked to a

strengths perspective and collective experience for guidance during the interview process. This is not to say that the interviewers denied symptoms, however, they viewed them in a manner that did not isolate the young woman but attempted to help her put her experience in a collective context. This sub-section describes ways in which the interviewers worked to lessen the potential for re-traumatization with the girls.

Both team members and girls in Africa experienced the effects of traumatic incidents, by living in a country at war, and the interviewers by hearing the stories of the girls. Team members in Africa were clear that although they recognized that symptoms of traumatic experiences exist, they do not focus on the symptoms but on the person in environment. The feeling of the team was that the way the west/north looks at the symptoms of trauma is through the lens of a culture of individualism; in Africa, the lens is not the individual but the collective, be it the group, the community, the region or the country.

One of the team members stated:

“I think that we had some experience on that in [NGO], and that’s why we take the project, because we know how to do the interviews and also how to reach the girls, how to understand the details. So, this was a traumatic experience, it was very shocking, very hard, the interviews were difficult and painful for the girls...I think that it was hard for us and also for them, for the girls, because they talk about something that was very hard. Although those of us in [NGO] are used to that, to face with that, to work with the trauma, but it’s very difficult to deal with the girl who talks about the traumatization experience.”

The team in Africa talked about the re-experiencing of a “collective trauma,” something that affected many people in the country and that the sadness and

retraumatization was viewed as individual in its symptoms but collective in its origin.

There was no mention of collective trauma in the literature.

The team in Asia II felt that they were providing psychosocial support for the girls through the interview process. They saw it as part of helping the girls process their experiences for a more successful reintegration from the armed group back into non-military life.

The interviewers in Asia I used different interview techniques at different times to help the girls when they seemed particularly vulnerable. They found that going back to the interview guide provided boundaries when the girls were emotionally distraught or when the interviewers felt that they could not deal effectively with the level of emotion coming from the girls. The interviewers also counseled the girls, although this was not part of the study method:

“They told their stories, they told all their sad, sad stories. And finally we end up counseling them. And healing them. We end up healing them. It was very helpful, it was helpful to them. They told us personally. ‘We are really happy that you are here, and that you have spoke to us.’ They told us frankly. But they were not so satisfied with the psychologist cause she doesn’t know the language. The language problem was there. And she was a new person. And the way of dressing and all, it was quite different. They were shocked looking at her. So they were not comfortable with her. But they were comfortable with [us]. We were counseling, actually we reached out counseling to the girls. We were interviewing them we listened to their stories. And we were finished, we used to wind up everything, we used to off the tape and everything, and after that we started talking to them personally. That’s why we took lots of time. Sometimes, the

whole day goes. We go in the morning, some days we go back in the evening.”

The teams employed a number of methods of working with the girls when they were experiencing bad feelings or strong emotions. They listened, they redirected questions back to the interview guide, they expressed empathy, and they asked the girls to think about times when they were happy. The statements indicated how deeply the interviewers felt for the young women, and how much the women trusted them.

This is an impact of the implementation of the study that is deeply connected to reflective theory. Perhaps because the interviewers were inclusive, flexible, knew the context and were deeply attentive to the young women, they were very aware of the traumatic results of the experiences of the girls, and were very sensitive to them, allowing space, time and empathy when needed.

During the interviews the girls indicated to the teams that even though the interviews were often difficult, there was a great deal of healing that took place for them. Only half of the team members had conducted interviews prior to this study, and although almost all had worked with children in the past, this was the first time delving into such personal and difficult materials with children. During the dialogue on methodology, the teams were told that the interviews were information-gathering sessions, not therapy. As much as the teams wanted to abide by that principal, it was clear that in many cases it was not possible. They had to help guide the young women through the painful narratives of their lives, and this called for more than just interview skills; it called for skillful direction of questions and deep caring. Team members had to be flexible and creative to help the girls when they were experiencing painful memories.

The Asia II team felt that they were not just doing interviewing, that they were providing psychosocial support for the young women. In Asia I, the team stated that

they clearly did counseling as well as interviewing; the psychiatrist that was brought in did not help the girls as much as the talks with the team members did: she was too western. All of the teams except Asia I approached the girls through the lens of a strengths perspective, this was not part of the original study method, but became an important component during the dialogues on methodology. In Asia I, although there was not an explicit leaning towards a strengths perspective, it was clear that the interviewers were deeply committed to the well-being of the girls. These two orientations, seeing the strength in a girl and deep caring, may have had an impact on the healing that took place.

## **Secondary Traumatization**

The qualitative research methods literatures made no mention of the potential for secondary traumatization to researchers, nor were suggestions made for coping with this when it arose. The literature on journalism alluded to it, but did not provide any coping methods (Adie, 1993). It was, however, discussed at length in the interviews for this study.

Secondary traumatization was experienced quite profoundly by three of the four teams, and to a lesser degree by the fourth. Reactions differed in severity among team members in the three countries where secondary traumatization was reported.

In Africa, one of the interviewers experienced depression during the interviews, one experienced deep surprise and upset, and a third expressed deep fatigue. Some wanted to do more interviews. Others felt that they could not do another interview at the time they were interviewed for the current study. One team member had bad dreams. Another told of getting headaches. One person said, "...There was a limit for me. I only

had to do two or three interviews, but if somebody told me I had to do more than two or three, I would refuse.” Another said, “Myself, I know that this is a good project, a good study, but I am not interested to continue, I don’t know yet, and also I’m not psychologically available for more.”

During one of the interviews in the original study, one of the girls described to two team members how she participated directly in the fighting (extremely unusual for Africa), and how she liked it, liked killing people. She stated that even at home, she liked “...killing the chickens for dinner...” She was very enthusiastic and “...lost control for a moment remembering some of the situations she passed through...” One of the interviewers expressed her reaction:

“...I myself said, ‘Oh, my goodness, this is something I should take control.’ Sometimes even if you want to avoid, but there are things that are so new for you, and you react, you also lose control...I began to say, ‘Oh my goodness,’ I react, I tried to change, but I’m quite sure that she understood that I was, that I criticized her, and I tried to manage and to talk in a way that she felt that this is something that couldn’t be accepted with me.”

Her shock stemmed from the vehemence with which the girl talked about killing, and the age of the young woman: it deeply frightened her. She attempted to regain her composure, but she stated it was clear that the girl saw her startled reaction. She talked about being better prepared in the future for incidents like this.

One of the participants told of an added layer of secondary traumatization caused by frustration, the denial of the problem in the major city and the exclusion of girls from the peace process by the government. She said:

“...Because here in [major city], you were talking about the main things, several

things, that nobody knows about the problem, it's not a problem for the people here in [major city]; even in [another major city] they don't care about these things. Even now, the girl soldiers were excluded from the peace process. The government doesn't care. Cause they talk about the soldiers, the men are in the peace process, and the demobilization; when they give some tools for some training, it's all for the men. It's only for the ones who carried the guns, not for the girls...they are invisible.”

I asked, given the evident difficulties for the interviewers and the girls, whether the team considered stopping the study at any time. (The possibility of stopping was discussed during the dialogue on methodology; I stated that at all times the safety of the girls and the team were primary, and that if the team felt that safety (physical or emotional) was too compromised, they should not continue.) Team members stated that they did not think of it, and that “...this is a [NGO] project, and I don't know who will be in charge of this project.” Even when asked for greater clarity, the responses were the same.

During the dialogue on methodology, the need for debriefing sessions was stressed; however, team members had different reactions when the subject of debriefing came up during these interviews. Some stated that there was no debriefing, no time or effort put into debriefing, and that they did not have the right or the capacity to call for debriefing sessions. The team member who had the least experience with interviewing, and who did the initial unsuccessful interviews in the major city made the strongest statements about the lack of opportunity. “...After the interview, I started to dream with the war, because a long time ago, I didn't dream. But we don't do anything, we just share the information, ‘How was the interview, how was the process?’ but we didn't create any

space for (emotional) debriefing.” Others felt that there was debriefing, and were very specific about the sessions, they talked about holding meetings upon return from the province to share the experience, the methodology, the content of the interview, struggles, etc. It was felt that working as a team was very important due to the ability of members to express and share feelings with one another.

Humor was cited as a way to relieve stress and cope with the experience. “...I think that is the best way...because if you spend time and you start thinking about all these things, it’s so painful, and in the end, you know that you can’t solve the problem, it’s not in your hands, and we should be realistic.” Learning and taking some control through advocacy were cited as other ways to deal with the trauma,

“...Another thing that helps is the fact that we are, that it was very useful for us to participate in this study because we could do advocacy, we could talk about this, we could do more sensitization about the problems. I think that it was very good for us. At least we could do advocacy, and at least we could address the problems was good for us.”

The stories told by the girls had deep impacts on the interviewers in Asia I. The girls told of being victims and being victimizers, of killing others and facing mandatory suicide. One of the girls was tortured horribly, including being gang-raped by the government army; in response, one interviewer said:

“She spoke to us. They kept her naked in the cell, they have done so many things. You know the problem is that I’m really sad about it, even now she has that effect. One interview I couldn’t listen to in the night. It felt so bad. I used to go back after two days. I had to sit down and still myself. When you listen for their stories in the night to transcribe and translate. I had to just shut down. I felt

that I should not have recorded it, I should have written, the recording was too powerful.”

This person decided that she would only transcribe and translate in the daytime, not at night when she felt most vulnerable. She said: “...Once you type the thing, it was not difficult. Listening to the voice is different. And then you have other things coming into your mind. When you’re listening via tape, you think am I dreaming? But it is useful...”

They also felt guilt around their role in the girl bringing up painful memories, and suggested that knowing professional help was available lessened that feeling of guilt. “We did not delve into stuff, we had our own stipulated way of doing this. That was good for us [having the psychologist], because our guilt was less. You start it off [the interviews] and then leave it [interviews and the girls] and you feel guilty. With the psychologist, that was less.”

To cope with the feelings that arose during the interviews, the team used the same technique they used to help the girls when they were upset, going back to the interview guide. This was not done abruptly; the interviewers really listened to the girls and gently moved back to the guides. To take care of themselves, they went on holiday, spent time with family, listened to music, and talked with one another.

The interviewers from Latin America were confronted by a sequence of challenges throughout the project. First, they had the experience of living in a country at war and all of the lack of safety and security issues that this brings. Second, they listened to the life stories of the girls, and third were faced with the lack of services and minimal future possibilities for the young women. This evoked a sense of responsibility in the interviewers, most of who felt that they needed and wanted to do something for the girls

after the project was over. Hearing the stories proved very difficult for most of the interviewers, but particularly for those who had little prior experience in working in the field of human rights or in an area relating to children and the conflict. One of the team members said:

“I have to say that since I was so close to these people I felt in certain moments that the things they were saying were so hard to me that I felt inside my heart that this was also affecting me. You start wondering when listening to these women what am I doing here, what's my role here? What should I do? What is my contribution? Because to me the interview was not the end, I now think that we have to do more. It gave me more insights of something that I had not analyzed in-depth of my country and of the conflict.”

One of the interviewers reported her shock at the emotionless statement of one of the girls, “OK, there was one girl, the girl was very straight, and she said, ‘I was raped at this age, and then my stepfather tried to do the same thing.’ She was very clear, like an instruction manual.” This emotionally flat presentation was very difficult for the interviewer to hear and to take in.

Team members reported on their reactions and on the reactions of others on the team. They were deeply affected by what they heard. Some cried, some were very tired after interviews, some felt symptoms of stress, one just shut down emotionally; she said, “Also another reaction of mine is that I feel angry and I feel powerless in this situation, but I also feel that we have to do something, something has to be done, beyond searching to know the issue.” The feeling of the hopelessness of the lives of the girls and the team’s powerlessness to help seemed to be the greatest sources of distress for the interviewers.

The Latin America team dealt with their feelings in varying ways during and after the interviews; some of the interviewers were more successful in finding strategies than others. "After I finished the interviews, I felt very tired. I quit totally, and it's only now that we regroup to talk about this project, that I retake the issue." During her interview, this person worried that she had become desensitized to the girls and their plight because she chose not to think about the information she took in during her interviews with the girls. During the interview for this study she was processing her feelings, and said:

"I'm not forgetting about it, I'm just putting it aside and I only raise the issue on a political level, to discuss it on a political level, not on a personal basis, in that area, I just keep it there to see whether it is necessary for me to access some kind of support because the main thing that made me think with anguish was that the majority of the girls did not, the motives for them to go to the armed struggle did not have to do with political reasons, but only because of the problems they had had with their families. And this made me [feel] very bad."

This person was dealing with the information on a political level, not on an emotional one; shutting down emotionally and only working politically was the method this person used to cope with the stories she heard from the girls as well as the grueling pace of the interview process.

Having sessions with a supervisor was cited as a positive way to work with the feelings that arose during the project. The team debriefed fairly regularly, and this helped also. Finding positive areas in the girls' lives also alleviated some of the negative feelings, and discovering that for the girls, friendship helped with resilience; this was bright spot in an often-dark life.

The team from Asia II evinced little in the way of secondary traumatization; perhaps the success of the work with the girls was one reason. A second reason might be their clarity in role. "There was no conscious effort on our part to become psychologists during the interview. So we had no, we knew that sometimes we were very tempted to give counseling or to give advice but we had to check each other." The follow-up the team did with a number of the women in the areas of referrals to organizations for livelihood projects, to groups that work with former child combatants, and in specific in helping one to obtain a needed surgery for a battle wound, might have helped in reducing the secondary traumatization. This was not part of the original project. This is not to say that the team did not experience overtiredness and stress during the process, but there seemed to be far less of the type of secondary traumatization experienced by two of the other teams.

As stated earlier, there was no mention of secondary traumatization in the qualitative research methods literature. Nonetheless, the experience of secondary traumatization was very different between the teams; however, the majority of the interviewers experienced some form of secondary traumatization in psychological and somatic forms. This was from the often horrific events in the lives of the girls, from the guilt that arose in the interviewers in causing the girls to experience retraumatization, the breaking of cultural norms, the interviewers' surprise at the information delivered or the manner in which it was delivered, or from frustration with the larger post-conflict demobilization system. The pace at which the interviews took place may also have been a contributing factor in some of the situations. These feelings were an unexpected outcome for most team members. Team members with more experience with children in the conflict situation seemed to experience less secondary traumatization than those with

more experience. Debriefing, humor, and engaging in favorite distraction were seen to be ways of coping; however, more debriefing, either with one another or with people outside of the research setting, was needed by at least two of the teams.

The members of the Asia II team stated that they felt little in the way of secondary traumatization; one of the major differences between Asia II team members and members of the other teams was that all of the Asia II team had been members of the armed group in their youth. Perhaps this participation immunized them to a certain extent, the information would not, potentially, have been as much of a surprise to them, they may have know what to expect prior to and during the interviews.

Because of the lack of information on secondary traumatization and tools to lessen it in the research literature and in reflective theory, this subject will need much more attention in the planning of subsequent studies of this type. Research will need to be carried out to understand the mechanisms that cause secondary traumatization and successful methods for coping when it does arise.

### **Use of Information/Who Benefits from the Research?**

Three main points arose in the literature on use of information:, determining the client of the research, e.g., who benefits from the research (Carey, 71; Hannigan Millstein, et al, 94), the idea that once a population is “emerged” through research, the gaze of power can more readily find and control them, and the actual use of the final data (Fitzgerald, 96). Clarity of purpose for any study was reinforced and emphasized with children, women who have been abused and hidden populations. Authors stressed the need for data to improve service provision for groups represented by research participants (Hindmarch, 1990; Kane, 1990; Morgan, 1996; Rainwater, Pittman, 1967).

All of the teams agreed that after the data sets were completed and disseminated, how the data was ultimately used was out of their hands; this was not an abdication of responsibility, but an awareness that they would most likely not see publications or media clips of the study, and therefore would not be able to intervene.

In Africa, the information gleaned from the original study was meant to be used locally, by NGOs on the ground, as well as nationally and internationally to raise awareness of the situation of the girls and in policy formation. Team members were particularly interested in making sure the information would be used in the creation of policy, and to bring the plight of the girls to light internationally. This larger plan, however, did not come to fruition. The team in Africa, after having gotten pressure from the government, asked the U.S./Swiss team to withhold the individual country study and not to release it with the other three country studies. The U.S./Swiss team complied; the only place where the information on Africa is available is in the combined comparative document.

The Africa team was able to use the information gathered for their own work, and subsequently, and well after the peace agreement had been signed, the Africa team conducted another study of girls utilizing the same methodology. They were able to utilize the new data for their work, also and without the same risk as before.

The future for the girls interviewed in Latin America in the original study is bleak. The entire team in Latin America was concerned about what would happen to the girls. Although team members were unambiguous about their inability to help with girls' future plans, there was a deep desire to help. The question arose, "Who benefits from this research?" Team members asked, "Is it the girls? The team in-country to have information for program creation? The Latin American government in policy

development? Or the research team in the north that gets credit for the report and the work?” They felt the team from the north was taking the data to do the final steps and then taking credit for the work. They asked, “Who is producing this knowledge?” Action research was cited as a better model for this situation; get to know the girls, their problems and needs, have the in-country team do the interviews and the data analysis and disseminate the results, and build in enough funding to develop, implement, and evaluate programs designed to meet those needs. The Latin America team felt this would have been a better model and better use of the information.

A concern of the Latin America team was the disclosure by the girls of information that involved an act or plans for an act that went against the rules of the center they were in or the mandates the government had made for them. One interviewer was concerned that the topics that were brought up by the interview guides planted ideas in the minds of the girls; two of the girls escaped from the center one week after the interviews. In the first and second interviews with one of the girls, the team reported that she was cordial and engaged; in the third, she was “very aggressive, it was hard.” The two interviewers knew something was going on with her, but were not sure what it was. In hindsight, they felt that the third interview was about the future, and because she was thinking about running away, she became angry in order to push the interviewers away so that they did not pry too much. When she tried to explain the young woman’s leaving, the interviewer said:

“...It’s not that we helped her to go, but with the interview at least she found the space to express some anger that she had. And basically that was that. She said in the interview that sometimes she wants to go more out and have more friends, she’s a kind of leader, and there’s lots of leaders here. On the other hand, it’s

how we identify topics like suicidal, escaping of the place, or hurting her friends, hurting herself, how we can pass on this to the centers or to the families. Because we didn't explore that and the idea for us was not to get involved. We talked about the referrals, but we cannot always do the referrals. But maybe it would be interesting to know, because on the other hand you have to be private about what you get in the interview. That's very important, but on the other hand, it's difficult not to say something if you're really concerned to the people."

These two interviewers faced a dilemma of having critical information, and not being sure what to do with it. Another interviewer said:

"According to the law, the government is not allowed to get information from children in these programs, or all programs would be closed down. I tell you this because in all these interviews, something like this can happen, this is an ethical issue, and you have to have someone with a lot of experience, or you end up interviewing someone with a lot of secret information, so you need to be very careful. Or sometimes, not in the middle of the interview, you finish the interview, and you're done, and then they start to spill, and this is not my job, to pass on information. That's not going to help. You're always going to find something new because the conflict will always change."

In the end, given the information gleaned from the dialogue on methodology, the confidential nature of the interviews and the lack of referral sources, the interviewers decided to keep the disclosed information within the confines of the interview. This may be one of the most difficult components of the interview process, and needs more attention at the beginning of the study, perhaps in the way suggested by the team member who called for papers on specific issues prior to the start of interviews. Being

clear about laws, regulations, and having an agreed-upon protocol on implicating information would be very important in future work.

The literature on use of information raised up three primary points: determining the client of the research, i.e., who the research is for; the idea that once a population is “emerged” through research, the gaze of power can more readily find and control them; and the actual use of the final data.

The situation in both Africa and Latin America perhaps best illustrates the first point, “Who does the research serve?” In the multi-layer method the study utilized, there were a number of individuals and groups who felt a stake in the project. Given the complexity, “who” the research served was difficult to determine.

The U.S./Swiss team as well as the advisory group wanted the study to be useful on the ground in the formation of demobilization and reintegration programs, and to gather information for advocacy to effect national and international policy change. The girls interviewed, as reported by the interview teams, wanted the information to be useful to other girls. The teams wanted the research to serve the girls, and to effect national and international policy change and, at least the team in Latin America, wanted the research to change the existing dynamic of knowledge creation by having the teams conduct the data analysis. The team in Africa wanted the information to serve the girls and for policy change; however, given the circumstances they could only contribute a small part of policy change, but could utilize the data in their local work.

This illustrates the complex nature and interplay of qualitative method and reflective theory. Even though the advisory team and the U.S./Swiss team were clear about who would benefit from the research (although the “who” might have been too broad), multiple factors came into play in the implementation of the project. Each of the

constituencies involved (U.S./Swiss team, advisory group, country teams, gatekeepers, girls) had an overall understanding of the nature of the project, but there were additional agendas and context-specific factors that shaped the method and the outcomes.

The issue of the need for information superseding the rights of the individuals in a population, as described by Carey (1971), was not originally a factor in this study, but a form of this did emerge in the U.S./Swiss team's desire for information may have superseded the rights of the teams to credit for their work and the girls to programs they may have needed. On the other hand, security was such that the rights and needs of the girls and the teams superseded the "rights" of the funder or the U.S./Swiss team. The U.S./Swiss team, as well as the advisory board, was clear that this was the right approach to take, and the teams were told during the dialogues on methodology that if the security situation grew too dangerous for the teams or the girls, that they should stop, the funders would be told, and the funds would be returned. When the Africa team stated that they felt the risk was too great to publish a separate study, the U.S./Swiss team complied, and the document was not published.

The teams were not concerned about the girls being "outed" by the government due to the information collected as was illustrated in the literature; however, being outed to the group with whom they participated or were forced to participate was another matter. The women were already in government centers under governmental watch, and were told at the beginning of the interviews not to talk about things that could put themselves or others in jeopardy from the government. The teams and the girls were much more concerned about being outed to their communities or to the armed group. This was the reason for the overarching concern around safety and confidentiality as demonstrated in previous sections in this chapter, and was motivation for the inclusive

and adaptive nature of the dialogues on methodology and the model in general.

Team members stated that when the data was released, the use of it was out of their hands; use of words or language to stereotype or demean the young women, as indicated in the literature (Taylor-Gibbs, Bankhead Green 1997), might or might not happen. They clearly expected that the U.S./Swiss team would do its best to capture the meanings of the young women's statements, but more than that, they believed they could not control the destiny of the study. It was incumbent upon the U.S./Swiss team to review the final data analysis with the teams for accuracy and confidentiality. It was also incumbent upon the U.S./Swiss team to, as much as possible, monitor the media for any use of the information and to push for accuracy.

Two additional issues arose that were not discussed in the literature on qualitative methods; overhearing of problematical information from the girls and ownership of information from the study.

One of the most disconcerting implementation dilemmas that arose for the teams was when the interviewers overheard or were told of something that might happen either in the center, e.g., a girl planning to escape, or a movement made by the armed group. It was clear from the data from this study that the interviewers were often baffled about what to do with this information; they did not want to "tell" on the girls due to their commitment to confidentiality; however, they were very concerned about the safety of the girls, other children in the armed groups, and the government center. This did not fall under "duty to inform" criteria, the girls were not going to hurt themselves or another, they were going to escape. It was context-specific from country to country. Preparation for this type of dilemma will need to be incorporated into future studies.

Difficult questions arose about ownership of information as well. As mentioned earlier, the Latin American team voiced concerns about the methodology of the study, indicating that they would have preferred an action research model to get as much information for on-the-ground demobilization and reintegration programs with a program component built into the funding proposal. They were quite concerned that they were the ones to gather the information, and then it was sent to the United States where it was analyzed and the credit for the study was taken by a northerner. There was a feeling that if the team was competent enough to do the interviews, it was competent enough to do the data analysis, and to get primary credit for the work. They felt that this was a pattern within north-south relations, northerners come in and get information, bring it back to the north, get credit for it, and the southerners are taken from over and over without being seen as equal partners and equally competent. A more inclusive decision-making process would have been preferable, providing the choice to the teams as to whether they had time and resources to do the data analysis, whether they wanted the team in the north/west to do it, or whether there could be some combination of authorship.

## **Reciprocity**

The issue of reciprocity for researchers and journalists was cited in the literature (Adie, 1993; Power, 1989), and came up in the interviews. Building a relationship by definition implies some form of exchange. How does that relationship affect the researcher and the participant? Will the researcher, out of guilt or compassion, make promises or provide a service or money to the participant? Reciprocity for participation in a study was an ethical issue (Power, Watters, Biernacki, 1989): what and how much do you give to those

participating in the study? Clarity and follow-through in commitments to participants is ultimately important; promises made must be fulfilled or trust is broken (Hannigan Millstein, et al, 1994; Rainwater, Pittman, 1967).

Relationships can be formed in the process of a study between the interviewers and respondents. A suggestion was made in the literature that the more the potential situations that may result from attachment can be thought through prior to the implementation of the study, the easier it will be for the researcher to be consistent with all participants (Feldman, 1994).

As has been shown, the interviewers developed great fondness for many of the young women, and this prompted them to want to do something for or give something to them, both during and after the study. This section looks at reciprocity, and also at the personal change in the researchers that accompanied the relationships built between the girls and the researchers over the course of the original study.

As might be imagined from the care with which the teams approached and conducted the interviews, each was deeply concerned with the girls getting something more positive from the experience than just the gift. This sentiment was exemplified by a statement from an interviewer in Asia II:

“...We also felt that we wanted to make sure it was an even deal, we got information from them, and we wanted them to feel also that they get something out of it, not just the money, but capacity to look through the whole experience...how we felt about what they went through, that it was an experience, not that they would treasure it, but that they went through, and they have to see it as part of what happened in their lives.”

The team in Asia II was clear about their desire to be helpful to the girls, their

orientation to the issue of child soldiers and to the purpose of the research. In addition, they were non-judgmental in their approach; if anything, they were supportive of the girls in their choice to join the armed movement. It seems that this clarity contributed a great deal to their ability to empathize with the girls and to conduct the interviews in ways that created a safe relationship which ensured both the emotional and physical safety of the girls.

In Asia II, one of the girls needed surgery to repair a bullet wound in her arm. The team researched and found a surgeon to do the surgery, raised some funds in Asia II, and asked the PI of the original and current studies if they would be willing to contribute; both did.

In Africa, as mentioned previously, one of the interviewers brought a young woman to her home and provided her with dry clothes and shoes; this was a normal part of any caring relationship and carried over to the research relationship. Participants were given rides to the center where the interviews took place. Food was provided in all countries.

In Asia I, girls were given baskets of small items and underwear. One of the interviewers provided second-hand baby clothes for one of the girls that had a baby. In Latin America, girls were taken on a holiday at a pool so that interviews could be conducted.

In the original methodology, the plan was for the teams to show the transcriptions and the final document to the girls prior to publication. This did not happen because of the time between interviews, transcription, and data analysis, and the movement of the girls from the center. It was thought that the social workers would be able to trace the girls; however, this, too was not workable because the social workers

would then see the transcribed interviews and the materials in them might differ from what the girls told them. In addition, it was impractical as the team would not know for sure if the girls ever saw the documents. Trust was cited as the casualty, "...Because I think for the girls, also, that if we promised to do that, we do it. Because if we're wanting to help them build trust again with others, it's necessary that we do that."

The literature, particularly in hidden populations and journalism, described mainly the pitfalls of reciprocity in the interviewing relationship (Adie, 1993; Power, 1989), giving a ride, providing a "jump in the line" for treatment. In the journalistic situation, reciprocity or helping resulted in the journalists being threatened by people from the conflict. Reciprocity was key in the orientation of the research teams towards the girls, in the way that they thought about them and in how they approached them. It seems to have been a cornerstone of the relationship-building process.

Reciprocity, in this section is similar to and involves the giving of small gifts as will be described in the section below on "Gifts"; however, reciprocity implies a great deal more than just gifting. In this study, it really means the building of a relationship between the interviewers and the girls; gifts were a physical representation of the attention that the teams paid to the young women; seeing and meeting needs that they had. For some of the young women, this may have been one of the few times in their lives that someone genuinely paid attention to them, both through the interviews (emotional release/ acceptance) and the meeting of physical needs. This was specific to and varied from girl to girl, mandating that the teams be flexible and able to adapt to the needs of each girl and her situation. The trust that was built allowed for an interaction that supported the girls and provided a safe channel for their life stories.

Each of these individual events can be seen as reciprocal for the information

given by the girls, and had to be decided upon by the research teams, they could not have been prescribed prior to the study or in the dialogues on methodology. The interviewers, as well as the girls, were taking physical and emotional risks just through their participation in the work. Perhaps this mutual risk process contributed to the honesty and clarity with which the girls shared their stories.

### **The Impact of Expectations on Team Members**

Expectations of both the research teams and the girls was an issue that was not covered in the qualitative research literature; however, having people conducting interviews who knew the cultural context of the needs and potential expectations was exceptionally helpful but made it no less difficult for the interviewers. In Africa in particular, it was clear that there were expectations from the girls, and this put pressure on the interviewers.

There was great concern voiced by two of the teams about conducting research in situations where needs are great and expectations are part of the culture; many of these concerns were described in the previous chapter. The teams needed to talk about the expectations of the girls prior to the project's beginning, and determine how they would deal with them. However, in some cases, as in the situation of the girl who was soaking wet, a decision needed to be made on the spot; the girl did not expect new clothing, but that is what she received.

### **Gifts**

There was no mention of the giving of gifts in the research literature. For the teams, the amount of time involved in decision-making involved in deciding on gifts and then

carrying out the program or purchasing and distributing of gifts was substantial. Funds for gifts for each of the girls were built into the original funding proposal, and it was up to the teams to decide how the funds would be used. The process of decision-making around gifts was different in each of the countries.

In Africa, the team decided on a revolving loan program for the girls that would subsequently be used by other girls that the organization worked with. At the time of the interviews for the current study, alternate suggestions for exchange with the girls were made by the teams due to potential problems within the community. In prior work with child soldiers, the Africa group found that the community became resentful when former child soldiers were singled out and helped. Why help them and not others who did not kill? Why not help those who were still within cultural norms and living lives of poverty in the community? The feeling was that if work with girls was to continue, a different approach was needed. A suggestion for the future was to use the funds that would have been directed to the individual girls to develop an overall community intervention plan for children. The plan would bring together all girls, whether they had participated in armed groups or not, to involve everyone in a program, then encourage girls who were not kidnapped to help rehabilitate the girls who were. This could take the form of education or small business development. This inclusive plan echoes earlier data on Africa as a culture of the whole, not of the individual, and for the need for post-research program development.

The team in Asia I decided that the interviewers would not be the ones to talk with the girls about the gifts; it would be the liaison that worked with them. This division of labor made interviewing easier, the girls could focus on the interview and not on discussing what would come later, and a more trusting relationship could be built.

One young woman wanted to go back to school; the team liaison opened a bank account for her and helped her take the exams necessary. It was felt that having the money in a bank account would foster money management skills. Other women wanted cash, and it was felt by the team that this would not be safe or practical; "...If I give money to that person, there will be 101 people hovering around that person to get that cash...and they think that they are under obligation to these people who have looked after them, who have fed them." The liaison negotiated with the rest of the girls, and they decided together that each would want a sewing machine. This was seen to be a way for the girls to start a small business; they were excellent seamstresses and had a good deal of practice in the center. One of the girls gave the machine to her sister.

Another girl wanted to leave the center with her sister to go back to her village to see her mother. The population of the village had been displaced due to the fighting making it difficult to find them, and it was considered extremely dangerous to the safety of the girl. Through NGO connections, the liaison was able to track the mother to a refugee camp, and paid for a car to bring the mother to see the girl, and to take her back. "...And in fact what happened when the mother came in there was a sort of reunion, lots of tears and laughing and crying and all that sort of thing." The mother left, and the girl left shortly after her, to return to her home area.

Expectations of the girls in Latin America fell into three groups, those who expected something for participating, those who accepted that there would be no compensation for participation but participated anyway, and a third group who did not expect anything at all. The team explained to the girls that if they wanted to participate, that it was up to them, however, there was no compensation for participating.

In working with the group of girls that had expectations, the interviewer said

knowing this made the interviewing more difficult; she told the girls that they could not expect anything from her, but she also knew that there were funds to help the girls at the completion of the project. She said: "...It's hard to know where to make the bounds."

The interviewers seemed happy to be able to give the girls something at the end of the process, "The girls were really pleased, it wasn't like they were giving interviews for money because they didn't know that there would be money there at the beginning. And when we give the money, they were so grateful that it was not just ... come, do the interview ... and that's it. So in that case it was fine, and this is what they deserve."

The issue of the giving of gifts in Latin America arose as a potential safety problem; a girl who had nothing suddenly had money or a new piece of electronic equipment, or new makeup; however, in the interviews, the team stated that they felt the gifts overall did not compromise the safety of the girls. They were, however, somewhat concerned about the possibility of following up with the girls to give them copies of the study report. The team was concerned that if someone discovered the report in the possession of the girl, they might know that the girl had been in the group and could construe any of the information divulged in the report to any given person. Since follow-up was difficult due to movement of the young women, and that the reports took a very long time to produce, this was not an issue; the girls did not receive the reports.

In the instance in Latin America where two girls were to be interviewed and three showed up, all good friends, decision-making was done by the team. The dilemma was that there was only enough funding for gifts for two of the girls; to maintain the integrity of the girls' relationship, the team decided to interview all three and divide the funds three ways instead of two.

Overall, the giving of gifts was an important mark of closure in the study. Both

the girls and the interviewers felt good in the giving and receiving. Dilemmas of safety, usefulness, sustainability and the wishes of the girls were taken into account by the teams. Each team had to decide on what the gifts would be and how they would be distributed, this varied from country to country and in some cases, from girl to girl. Again, this was not something that could have been prescribed prior to the implementation of the study and needed to be left to the creativity and knowledge of the teams in relation to the girls and the situation in each country.

Deciding on and giving gifts took a great deal of time due to the factors of safety, etc. involved, and even though it was left to the teams to decide on the gift, the format provided by the U.S./Swiss team was that of individual gifts for the girls. This did not allow for the collective approach described in the Africa context.

The giving of gifts is a dilemma in research, and is questioned by international workers and journalists alike. Currently there are more and more international NGO workers from more developed countries conducting research in countries at war where people are living in dire situations, lack of safety, food, water, sanitation and shelter. There is a growing feeling among NGO workers that it is unfair to ask people in these situations for information without giving something in return. On the other hand, there is also the sentiment that if one gives something each time there is an interaction with people in situations of conflict, expectations will grow and information will become distorted in order to obtain the 'gift'. In addition, when potential participants are impoverished, gift-giving as a reward for participation may be viewed as coercive. In the original study, both the Principal Investigator and the advisory committee agreed that gifts would be an acceptable component of the project; however, much more attention needs to be given to this topic prior to future studies.

### *Follow-up*

As part of the original study design, there was a follow up or fact-checking component; the girls would be allowed to read their interview to make sure that all of the information was correct, and then they would be given copies of the final reports.

The ability of the teams to follow up with the girls was, at best, time-consuming and difficult, and at worst impossible; however, different teams had different opportunities for follow-up due to the situation of the young women. Team members had a limited mandate with the girls (to conduct the interviews, to provide a gift, and to review the interviews with each after transcribing). They were often doing this work in addition to their regular jobs. The women might or might not be in the same place at the time that the interviews were ready for review. The teams were clear that there should not have been promises made to the girls to review the interviews with them without a guarantee that it would take place. Given the circumstances of both the girls and the team, it was deemed unrealistic and an unfortunate lapse in the relationship.

Even though this was the only follow-up prescribed by the study, it is clear from the preceding sub-sections of this chapter that three of the four teams followed up with the girls in other ways.

All of the team members in Africa were deeply concerned about the lack of follow-up with the young women:

“All these interviews were a shock to us. We opened the pain, and then we left. So we didn’t have the possibility to following up this process. It seems to me that we were take something, and after, leave it. And I think that was not fair of our side to do this, and that there must be other ways to do this... For me, it was a big problem to open the wounds with no follow-up.”

One interviewer suggested the use of action research methods, including the creation of solidarity networks between the girls who have participated in armed groups, and women in the communities who have not. Two of the team members felt that this would be a way to help with reintegration through consideration of how the problem is seen in the community, and what could be done to help with reintegration. Their suggestion also included joint work activities between girls who have participated in armed groups and girls who have not, so that joint problem-solving and learning can take place; it was felt that this would provide opportunity for the community and reduce stigma for the girls.

Some of the girls in Asia II were monitored indirectly by the team after the interviews. They kept in touch with the social workers at the center that let them know what the girls were doing. One of them, it seemed, returned to the armed group. It was asked whether the team member who reported this felt that the interview process had a role in precipitating this decision and the person, fairly emphatically, stated that they did not think the interview had contributed to her leaving. The entire team felt that she was already at high risk for returning to the armed group because of the content of her interview.

Follow-up was cited as an ethical issue around one study participant in particular. This girl needed an operation due to a battle injury, and the team was divided on whether to intervene; one person felt that the operation could compromise her soldiering anonymity, saying:

“...The idea if it was OK to the girl, for the group to look for possible people to help her with her operation. And at that time, I thought that I’m not sure if it is right or wrong to do that because on my part, it’s just like giving promises to the

girl about possible help that she can get from us. At first, of course, I didn't like the idea of giving promises...and then the next thing is that I am actually, I have this idea, that whatever happens, we have to protect the identity of the women. Doing that may expose her true identity, that's another thing."

Another felt that it was most important that she have the surgery, and advocated for it. In the end, the girl opted to have the surgery. The team in the United States was contacted, and donations were made to help defray her medical costs.

More than a year into the project in Asia I, the team was still visiting the girls. "After we finish, we don't just run out. We have been paying visits. The work is still going on." The liaison in Asia I worked with demobilized children as a major part of his job heading the government department of child welfare. His access and ongoing work with the center in which the girls were housed may be why there was greater follow-up in this country than in others. Some of the girls were not able to leave the center due to safety. The team worked to help them find jobs in the local area so they did not have to return to their home areas. Some of the girls send letters to the liaison. One of the girls in the center was pregnant, and one interviewer brought her baby clothes, powder, things she needed for the baby. The liaison worked to get another girl a passport so that she would be able to work abroad; however, it was very difficult for the girl to accept the terms under which she could obtain employment.

Follow-up in Latin America, as has been evident throughout this chapter, was an area that generated some of the greatest concern for the interviewers. Team members wanted to do something to help the young women, to help them make their lives better, but were not able to follow-up with the girls.

As in other countries, girls might be in a center one day and leave the next. Or

they might be in IDP camps and move, making follow-up as promised at the beginning of the interview process impossible; the girls in Latin America were no exception. In addition, due to the factors mentioned earlier in this chapter, the study took longer than anticipated to complete, and the teams lost touch with the girls. A suggestion was made to tell the girls at the beginning that “our experience is that in a conflict situation, it’s not going to be possible to pass on the interview [to you]. Because the follow-up, you may be in another place, it’s not that we don’t care about you. I think that we should say that.”

In Latin America, the team was not able to reestablish contact with the girls after the final interviews, making it impossible to pass on the summary document or to check the data with them. The primary feeling among team members about this was that it was better that the women did not have the documents for their personal security. If they were stopped by the police or government troops or paramilitaries, having a copy of the document would raise suspicion about them being part of the guerrilla movement, and cause difficulty for them. However, as stated previously, there were also concerned about the breach of trust in not showing the girls the final report.

If this project were to be done again, it was thought that the girls in Latin America might like to participate in a monthly networking meeting, with informal conversation and cooking or handicrafts-making. Team members could also participate, but the agenda would be developed and carried out in a process of mutual decision-making, with each bringing their expertise and knowledge for the benefit of the girls; this might include job skills and/or educational opportunities.

The team leader had proposed to the team that if they can find the funding, they hold

“A one- or two-day meeting or trip, very informal in a center, to exchange ideas of how are they doing, what are the problems right now. Why? Because we feel that they want it, they liked us a lot when we had interviews. If we have a vacation again, we can learn more, to educate ourselves, to have input, our ideas about the programs, not to criticize the government, but to learn what is missing, what happened, and to identify the key issues that are missing even after one year of the interviews, we thought it was good to do that in June or July when we had vacation. So we have to think, it’s only an idea.”

Although there was little discussion regarding post-study follow-up in the qualitative research literature, the teams clearly were clearly affected by their limited ability to follow up with the young women. Still, many continued to be in contact with those they interviewed. This was not part of the original study plan; however, this was the choice of the team/team members. The U.S./Swiss team was moved to assist one of the participants, and she was also given a job by the organization that interviewed her. Again, the call for action research was indicative of the desire of the teams to further help these girls more profoundly than the original research design made possible.

Despite their shared desires, the teams experienced major differences in their abilities to follow-up with the young women. The reasons were context-specific. The team in Africa was able to follow-up due to the revolving loan program. The team in Asia II followed up with the girls from a distance but directly assisted one of them. They were still involved with the girls at the time of the interviews for the present study. The Latin American team felt that more thinking needed to be done prior to the initial contact, taking into account the possibility that the girls might not be around for follow-up due to the nature of the government program. Other than Asia I, all of the teams

expressed regret that they were not able to do more, help more. This indicates the need for greater inclusion of the research teams to create an adaptable method when the cultural/geographic/logistical context varies either between research sites or between the originator of the study's site and the site where the research will take place.

### **Challenges to Confidentiality**

One of the most difficult implementation situations in which team members found themselves was the Asia II, when a [government official], who was helping the team with access, asked to be given the interview transcripts. All of the team members knew the [government official] very well, and all thought she was doing an excellent job with demobilization and reintegration programs in the country. This caused not only difficulty between the [government official] and the team, but between team members themselves. One felt that they should give the information to the [government official] because she had helped them and that would preserve the relationship, and the other two felt that it was a breach of the informed consent and of the contract between themselves and the Quaker UN Office. At the time of the interviews, the team had not given the Undersecretary the transcripts, they were delaying her. One said: "...I was on the one hand thinking, 'But is that within our agreement with the girls?' Isn't she still a government person, and we promised that we wouldn't give it to the government groups."

They offered to send her the final report as soon as it became available. As a possible interim solution, it was suggested that they tell the [government official] that the data was the property of the Quaker United Nations Office, and that if she wanted more information she should speak with staff there. This would provide the opportunity for

the team to save face with the Undersecretary and for the team in New York to be the “heavy” in the situation. The office in New York, to this date, has not received a call, and there is no indication that the team provided the [government official] with the transcripts.

This was an incredible difficult situation for the team, particularly the member who was closest to the government official. The manner in which it was handled seemed to preserve the relationship while at the same time preserving the anonymity of the girls in the study and living up to the informed consent form. It called for quick thinking around a topic that was not anticipated, and was successful in its outcome.

I met the government official at a conference during the writing of this report, and she asked whether I would be interested in working with the Asia II team and her on a follow-up study of the same girls interviewed to determine how they were doing three years later. If there were a rift between the team and the government official, she probably would not have been so eager to work with them.

### **Unanticipated Personal Outcomes for the Interviewers**

One of the ironic components of reflective theory is the anticipation of unexpected personal outcomes due to the creative nature of relationships between people. All of the team members interviewed for this study stated that they felt changed by the experience.

The participants in Africa felt changed by their participation in this project. One said: “I wish to change the world so that girl soldiers, because of the Africa experience, the majority of the girls were not soldiers. They were kidnapped and they didn’t participate directly in fighting.”

Another stated that she had become more sensitive to the problems of women during

war:

“It was like, OK, they suffer, but I’m now thinking that always when I talk with someone that mentions to me, I understand better what it means, and I’m more sensitive to these women because it is too painful what they passed through. They feel so humiliated, and all these bad things, I think that in this sense it was something that had changed.”

A third said: “I think that we feel quite proud also to have the possibility to participate in such a study. Because it gives us more insight, it gives us a new experience, but it has helped us as a group in terms of our self-confidence and self-esteem.” All were deeply impressed with the resilience of the girls, how they came through such horrific situations, and the way they wanted to move ahead into the future.

The interviewers in Asia II were also clear about ways in which they were changed by the research experience, and all reflected on their experience in the armed group. All were still very committed to the Movement; however, their ideas about child participation had changed. One team member was clearly against the use of children as soldiers, but felt strongly that the girls, as she had, gained strength and self-esteem from their participation. She was glad that the Movement had not used force to recruit the girls, but had deep misgivings about the Movement accepting girls because of the loss of childhood for the girls.

Another interviewer said:

“The eyes cannot see when the mind is upset... For a long time now, I’ve been working with children in armed conflict, and even with girl child soldiers, child soldiers. But I never saw the implications of being a child soldier; it was not as striking [as] now that this should be stopped. So because of this project, it

cleared my mind and made me see how important this is, to stop using children as soldiers. So that is the greatest thing that I've ever gotten from this project.

And that is coming from my heart, that was spontaneous, I did not even have to think about it. So... I think I cannot say more."

After a break, she continued:

"...because at some point, I could have even motivated my own children to be part of it. And I could have accepted them as being a child soldier. So before, during, and after this, I hit my head on the wall. Because I couldn't say that I've changed my principals in committing myself to helping humanity or mankind or my principals, no, it's not lost, it's just that sometimes you really get lost, but now the knowledge makes you aware, we started reading materials on child soldiers, on the development of children. Because one of the preparatory activities that we did was to read, and to attend a symposium on child soldiers, that we had where they talk about the Protocol [UN], child soldiers, we attended it. That was part of the preparation that we did for this project. And from the beginning to the end, it all contributed...and it really puzzles me why some of the people who join me the seminars are still in that state where they still cannot decide if they espouse or advocate elimination [of child soldiers]. I was thinking, saying 'Why?' Then I was looking at them, and I was looking at myself before...and some of my friends are saying, 'We're still not convinced, we're still not comfortable with your stand down on child soldiers,' [and I'm not on the same side]... this is our dividing line. I stand on this. Maybe later they will realize. And at every opportunity, I talk about girl soldiers. Now I am very aware that they have to be included! Girl soldiers. So now when I talk about child soldiers in the community education

campaign, there they are. When I talk about the situation of children, war is always there. When you experience it, it becomes a part of you, and you don't have to think about it. It's always there. That's the best part."

The entire team from Asia I reported that they were changed due to their participation in the study:

"I didn't take this as a job. I really didn't take this interview as a job. It's my...I don't know how to say it...I took it as part of my life, daily going there, talking to them, helping them, listening to their stories. And giving them something, it made me really happy when they were feeling really happy. We used to give soap, powder, toothpaste, and also other things. They were really happy. So while looking at them, I really felt happy, I don't know. I was really changed...I, first of all, I was really shocked listening to their stories. And the second thing, by helping them, I had a peace of mind. Like I am doing something, doing something for them. It is a small thing, but I am doing it, I am helping them. So in one way they will be happy in their lives, in this trauma, they will be happy. I felt like that. All these girls, they were suffering. From the beginning of their lives, they were suffering. They were from poor families. Sometimes they wouldn't have food to eat, also. They were so...I think they would have been very happy that we have helped them."

The interview process was seen as a journey in which the interviewers accompanied the girls. The interviewers were deeply grateful to the girls, and thanked them: "I feel grateful for them sharing and grateful to you [the United States team] for giving us a chance to do something useful...I have a great urge to work for them. Things are slowly opening."

The team leader in Latin America gathered the team members in [major city] together the day before the interviews for the current study were to take place, for a briefing. One team member said, "...When we met yesterday to discuss about the interviews, I felt that we all have changed because we all have very different views about the girl soldiers, and now we want to do something in favor of these girls and for the country too." Another, involved in education, added: "Something has happened. This experience allowed me to learn how to relate to girls like them. It allowed me to think of new things around new technologies around our educational system that ties new technologies and new sources and new perspectives together to provide them with other views."

The consultant brought in for debriefing was less optimistic, but still cited change and a greater commitment to finding a solution to the conflict. She said:

"...I had to process my feelings of anger toward the exploitation going on against these girls. It's not that I didn't know it happened, but being faced with the real experience is something else. I was angry at the deception, at the lies told to them to get them in and how they are taken advantage of, being so close to the experience had an impact on me. And another consequence of that is that I was a little more sympathetic to the armed group before, but after that I was less sympathetic; lots has happened that I'm less sympathetic, but that really started it. Not only that, but less hopeful. The situation of this country is so complex, and no one knows what to do. I guess this made me less hopeful, but more aware that we need to do more work. I hope I can continue to be engaged in whatever way...I want to do whatever I can, it's a matter of keeping the work going."

All of the teams became emotionally attached to the girls they were interviewing. This seemed to be part of the impetus for action research on the part of the Latin American team; they truly saw the plight of the girls and wanted to help, as did the team in Africa. All of the teams came away wanting to help the young women, to do something for them, to work for their rehabilitation and for the end of recruitment of children. It would be very interesting to return to re-interview the teams in the four countries to see whether the internal changes reported were maintained, or produced changes in program work.

## **Conclusion**

Impacts of study implementation were the most-discussed themes of the interviews. All of the interviewers were deeply concerned about the safety and well-being of the girls. The advisory committee held its longest discussion around the potential retraumatization of the girls and suggested options for intervention. The human rights and desire for privacy of the girls were respected during the interviews. The APA Code of Ethics, a document embedded in western culture was utilized in the interviews, to show the girls the parameters of what the interviewers were allowed to do and what they were not allowed to do. Interviewers tried, as much as possible, to remain neutral to the things they were hearing, not to be uncaring, but not to react negatively to things the girls had done; they tried to separate the girl from the behavior.

The impacts of implementation for the interviewers were:

## **Safety**

- Teams, other than one, were not deeply concerned for their own safety.
- Teams determined it was safer for them to work with girls from the guerrilla

groups than from paramilitaries due to their close connection with the government and the killings of people deemed as anti-government in any way.

- Meeting girls in a place considered neutral was very important to avoid suspicion.
- The teams saw gifts as possible 'red flags' that indicated something out of the ordinary had happened to the girls.
- Each of the teams had the backing of an institution.
- Teams saw themselves not taking one side or another, but being on the side of the girls.
- Context-specific knowledge coupled with being flexible or adapting to a current situation, allowed the teams to operate in ways that did not draw undue attention to themselves or the girls.

### **Confidentiality**

- Team members had to work with the girls and the U.S./Swiss team to determine levels of confidentiality that worked for everyone involved in the project.
- Team members had to decide whether to have their names printed in the final document.

### **Retraumatization of the Girls**

- The teams employed a number of methods of working with the girls when they were experiencing bad feelings or strong emotions. They listened, they redirected questions back to the interview guide, they expressed empathy, and they asked the girls to think about times when they were happy.
- Although the team members' role was to collect data and not to provide

“therapy,” in some cases that was not possible, the needs of the girls and the empathy of the interviewers met in such a way that some counseling or psychosocial work took place.

- Team members had to be flexible and creative to help the girls when they were experiencing painful memories.
- Team members in three countries approached the girls through the lens of a strengths perspective. Seeing the strength in a girl may have had an impact on the healing that took place.

### **Secondary Traumatization**

- Different teams, and different team members had very different experiences of secondary traumatization; however, the majority of team members experienced some form of secondary traumatization.
- Team members with more experience with children in the conflict situation seemed to experience less secondary traumatization than those with more experience.
- Secondary traumatization was attributed to the often horrific events in the lives of the girls, from the guilt that arose in the interviewers in causing the girls to experience retraumatization, the breaking of cultural norms, the interviewers' surprise at the information delivered or the manner in which it was delivered, or from frustration with the larger post-conflict demobilization system. The pace at which the interviews took place may also have been a contributing factor in some of the situations.
- Debriefing, humor, and engaging in favorite pastimes were seen to be ways of

coping; however, more debriefing, either with one another or with people outside of the research setting, was needed by at least two of the teams.

### **Use of Information/Who Benefits from Research**

- Because of the desire on the part of the U.S./Swiss team for the research to be useful to those on the ground through the policy level, there was some lack of clarity in who the research served.
- Three of the teams felt that they should have been included in the decision-making as to whether they wanted to do the entire project on their own, publishing under their own names.
- Safety was seen as the primary concern, when one team asked that the data not be published in a separate document, the U.S./Swiss team complied.
- All of the teams stated that when the information was disseminated, how it was used was out of their hands. There was an expectation that the U.S./Swiss team would need to take on the role of monitoring use of the information.
- Team members sometimes overheard information that could have led to consequences for the girls or the armed movements, and did not know what to do with the information. Preparation for this type of dilemma will need to be incorporated into future studies.

### **Reciprocity**

- Reciprocity, in this study, was defined by listening intently and paying attention to the girl being interviewed, determining needs and filling some of those needs. This took the form of small items or expressions of empathy.

- The forms that reciprocity took varied from girl to girl and country to country, mandating that the teams be flexible and able to adapt to the needs of each girl and her situation.
- Reciprocity between the girls and the teams was seen as a cornerstone of the relationship-building process.

## Expectations

- Some team members felt the pressure of the expectations of the girls prior to and during the interview process.
- The teams needed to talk more about the expectations of the girls prior to the project's beginning, and determine how they would deal with them; however, in some cases, a decision needed to be made on the spot. This called for flexibility on the part of the team.

## Gifts

- Team members needed to be flexible in giving gifts, particularly when they needed more gifts than they originally thought.
- The giving of gifts was an important mark of closure in the study for the interviewers.
- Deciding on and giving gifts took a great deal of time due to the factors of safety, etc. involved, and needed to be left to the creativity and knowledge of the teams in relation to the girls and the situation in each country.
- Even though it was left to the teams to decide on the gift, the format provided by the U.S./Swiss team was that of individual gifts for the girls. This did not

allow space for the teams to make decisions outside of that format when that may have been a better solution for the girls.

### **Follow-up**

- The teams experienced differences and difficulties in their abilities to follow up with the young women, and the reasons were context-specific.
- The teams were deeply concerned about the lack of ability to follow up with the young women.
- Many team members continued to be in contact with those they interviewed.
- All of the teams expressed regret that they were not able to do more, help more. This indicates the need for greater inclusion of the research teams to create an adaptable method when the cultural/geographic/logistical context varies either between research sites or between the originator of the study's site and the site where the research will take place.
- In the original methodology, the plan was for the teams to show the transcriptions and the final document to the girls prior to publication. Trust between the girls and the interviewers was cited as the casualty.

### **Dilemmas of Confidentiality**

- One team faced the difficulty of being asked for raw data by a government official. These situations will need consideration prior to the beginning of the interview process.

### **Unanticipated Personal Outcomes for the Interviewers**

- Almost all of the team members stated that they felt changed through their

participation in the study.

- All of the team members became attached to the girls they were interviewing.
- All of the team members wanted to help the girls they were interviewing and to work to end the recruitment of children in armed groups.

Members of the interview teams had to be responsive to more constituencies and stakeholders than any other group within the study. They had to maintain relationships with the U.S./Swiss team, the girls, government officials, heads of demobilization centers, members of their own NGOs and each other. They had to do all this in a situation of uncertainty and potential physical danger. They had to travel to the girls, to adjust their schedules to those of the girls they were interviewing and the centers in which the girls were housed. They had to manage their own feelings and help the girls process theirs. Gifts needed to be decided upon and purchased, and interviews had to be transcribed and translated. In all but one country, team members were working other full-time jobs while doing the original study.

To do all of this, the team members needed to be inclusive of all stakeholders, adaptive to changing situations, context-specific in relation to each girl, and to anticipate that there would be unexpected outcomes. Throughout the data analysis in the previous three chapters, it is evident that the team members could not have implemented or completed their part of the study without these qualities, all of which are primary components of reflective theory. Indeed, a reflective model was not only a product of the study, it appears to have been mandatory for this type of research.

Team members had to respond to all of the stakeholders and to the changing situations. They had to be creative in where they interviewed the girls and in the approaches they took. Perhaps because the interviewers were inclusive, flexible, knew

the context and were deeply attentive to the young women, they were very aware of the traumatic results of the experiences of the girls, and were very sensitive to them, allowing space, time and empathy when needed. Most of the teams continually processed the interviews and looked for ways they could make them better, for what could be modified to gather the most salient data without causing undue harm to the girls. Perhaps the mutual physical and psychological risk-taking process participated in by both the girls and the interviewers contributed to the honesty and clarity with which the girls gave their stories.

In addition to the need for reflective theory as a basis for this type of study, there were other conclusions to be drawn from this chapter. Because of the lack of information on secondary traumatization and tools to lessen it in the research literature and in reflective theory, this subject will need much more attention in the planning of subsequent studies of this type. Research will need to be carried out to understand the mechanisms that cause secondary traumatization and successful methods for coping when it does arise.

The giving of gifts for participation is a real dilemma in research, and is questioned by international workers and journalists alike. Currently there are more and more international NGO workers from more developed countries conducting research in countries at war where people are living in dire situations, lack of safety, food, water, sanitation and shelter. There is a growing feeling among NGO workers that it is unfair to ask people in these situations for information without giving something in return. On the other hand, there is also the sentiment that if one gives something each time there is an interaction with people in situations of conflict, expectations will grow and information will become distorted in order to obtain the 'gift'. In the original study, both

the PI and the advisory committee agreed that gifts would be an acceptable component of the project; however, much more attention needs to be given to this topic prior to future studies.

Since so many of the team members stated that they felt changed by this project, and that they wanted to work with girls who had participated in armed groups and against the use of children in armed groups, it would be very interesting to return to re-interview the teams in the four countries to see whether the internal changes reported were maintained, or produced changes in program work.

## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Overview

This study sought to describe the research methodology employed in the study entitled “The Voices of Girl Child Soldiers”; to contrast it with the qualitative research literature in social work and to consider it in the light of reflective theory. In this context, it is a study of a study. Utilizing a comparative case study approach it drew on experiences in the four countries from the original study (N=4). Consequently, the sample for the current study was small, being limited to research participants, that is, research teams and research subjects in the original study. In total, 15 interviews were conducted with team members in all four countries and one with the PI of the original study. Interview guides for the current study were developed from a review of the literature on research methodologies and from notes and experiences derived from the original study. Fourteen of the interviews took place in person and in country, two were phone interviews. Notes on the process of the dialogues on methodology, recorded personal reflections during and after the dialogues, materials for the dialogues, and the final reports of the original study were reviewed for the current study.

The intention for this study arose from my experience in the dialogues on methodology during the original study; I was challenged in each country to re-shape the dialogue and my thinking to adapt the method to the unique cultural context of each

situation. Team members in three of the four countries told stories of researchers who had come into the country and, because of a lack of understanding of language or culture, made blunders during their research that either damaged study participants or skewed data so much so that any results derived would have questionable validity.

Research team members also expressed concerns about ownership and use of information in prior studies on which they had worked and about themselves being treated as second class citizens, not having access to the funds that would enable them to carry out their own studies, and not being able to publish in journals as could their counterparts in more developed countries. From this experience, it seemed that a space needed to be made to hear the voices of researchers from less developed countries, and to include their invaluable experience, orientation to research, cultural understanding, and creativity in the literature on social science research methods. An exploration of social work and social science literature did not offer a way to implement a flexible and culturally nuanced qualitative method for research with children in situations of violent conflict.

Since there was no specific body of literature on research with children in situations of violent conflict, a composite of several bodies of literature was used. To determine the gaps in the qualitative methodologies utilized in the research literature pertaining to girls in situations of violent conflict, the specifics of the methodology of the girl soldier study were compared to the methodologies of the existing literature.

The planned process of three interviews conducted over the course of three weeks used in the original study was a good starting point; however, many alterations were necessary depending on the specific conflict situation; these changes were made and still the original study data were gathered and it was possible to compare across the

four countries. The interview method seems to have worked very well, although there were changes in the sequencing of the interviews from Irving Seidman's original method to what was possible and appropriate in each country setting. The original method, incorporating these changes, was then contrasted with the qualitative research literature and through the lens of reflective theory.

The categories presented in the literature review articles on qualitative research methods (e.g., conceptual framework, definitions, sampling and access, data preparation) were excellent starting points for discussion and contained many of the ideas and important points of information for conducting a study like the original study, but they did not present a plan, the specifics of what would be needed to undertake and successfully carry out a qualitative study with children in a war zone. Individual articles considered in the literature review were not able to capture the richness or the flexibility of the method of the original study, nor were they able, individually or collectively, to provide the specifics, the methodological and cultural nuances that emerged in the data of the current study. Only through a detailed study of the original study could the specifics emerge.

The literature on qualitative research methods provided some context for understanding the impacts of implementation on both interview participants and researchers (e.g., safety, confidentiality, beneficiaries of the research), but again, a number of subject areas, such as unanticipated outcomes, secondary traumatization, and gift giving, were not mentioned at all. The limitations of the literature were in large part due to the absence of accounts of studies conducted with children in countries at war; the methodological literature review applied to the current study therefore was put together from many disparate sources in an attempt to best illustrate past research and

inform future research in this relatively under-researched area.

As was stated at the beginning of the findings chapters, there was an intersection between the categories of implementation of the method of research and the impacts of the implementation on both the research team members and the girls they interviewed. The places where implementation and impact intersect is where the specifics emerge, the nuances of methodology, that demonstrate the need for a reflective component in this type of research. In the chapter on implementation, a number of unanticipated outcomes are reported; they include a significant shift in the definition of the study target population from “girl soldier” to “girl who has participated in an armed group.” Another was that even though the interview guides were created individually by the teams in each of the four countries, they turned out to be remarkably similar in content. Implications of both sets of unanticipated outcomes were discussed.

It seems remarkable, as well, that with all of the difficulties faced by the teams in interviewing children in war zones and with the flexibility of the research design based in reflective theory, the findings were so consistent in categories across each of the four countries, and as a result that so many conclusions and recommendations were able to be drawn. This is a testament to the integrity, intelligence, and flexibility of the team members and the U.S./Swiss team, the potential use of reflective theory in future studies of this type, and the painful commonality of the girls’ experiences in each of the countries studied.

Reflective theory provided a context in which work of this type could fruitfully take place. Situations of violent conflict are unpredictable, ever-changing, potentially dangerous, and they present obstacles that research in situations of peace or in controlled settings do not. Nonetheless, the adaptive and context-specific nature of

reflective theory provides a framework that can bend without distorting the original research question or method. The inclusive nature of reflective theory has the potential to even the uneven playing field and lift up the voices of people who are disempowered. Alliances can be built that benefit all parties in the research process, particularly those being researched; this may not be primary goal of a study, but is certainly an unexpected and welcome outcome. There are many unexpected events in situations of violent conflict. Reflective theory provides a context in which a researcher can be comfortable in “expecting the unexpected” when it arises, and including it as part of the study process and/or data analysis.

Reflective research provided for an understanding of the changes that occurred in the original study, both methodological and personal. The categories from the review of qualitative methods literature, information that emerged from the original study, and information that emerged from the current study had an impact on one another and have coalesced into a flexible method of thinking about qualitative research with children in zones of conflict; this method is explicated in the following figure:

Figure 1. Matrix to Assess the Impact of Implementation in Studies with Children in Situations of Violent Conflict

	Conceptual frameworks	Definitions	Sampling and Access	Dialogue on Methodology	Guide Development	Structures of the Interviews	Physical Setting of the Interviews	Building Trust in the Interviewing Relationship	Data Preparation	Technology
Physical Safety										
Girls and Retraumatization										
Secondary Traumatization										
Expectations										
Gifts										
Reciprocity										
Follow-up										
Dilemmas of Confidentiality including informed consent										
Use of Information/Who Benefits from Research										
Unexpected Personal Outcomes for the Girls										
Unexpected Personal Outcomes for the Interviewers										

In the figure, the X axis of the matrix presents the implementation components of the original study. The Y axis lists the potential impacts of implementation of the original study. The intersections of these axes represent points where implementation and impact dynamically connect; this is the point at which a future researcher can ask questions and consider the possible range of impacts of implementation on children and researchers in war or other dangerous situations.

At the end of each of the data analysis chapters, categories used for the matrix headings were listed, with conclusions and/or questions arising from the data analysis. These conclusions and/or questions can be, but should not be the only factors, used when considering the intersection between implementation and impact.

For example, the conclusions under “Gifts,” at the end of Chapter 8 could be considered throughout the implementation process, from the conceptualization and preliminary ideas about the study through sampling and access, physical setting of the interviews, and building trust. The conclusions from “Gifts” can be used as intellectual prompts in thinking about this point of intersection between implementation and impact. The following questions concerning gift-giving are generated by the matrix.

## **Gifts**

### *Conceptual Frameworks*

What do people expect when they have given you their time?

Does one ever enter into a research relationship without expecting something in return?

Should researchers give something? If so, what or how much, particularly in circumstances where people have very little?

Gifts could have been used to benefit the community as a whole to provide a better

chance of reintegration for the girl. (What is the cultural context for gift giving?)

### *Dialogue on Methodology*

The U.S./Swiss team could not have known what the girls wanted or needed, and would not have been helpful partners in decision-making around gifts. (Who is in the best position to know what the girls need or want?)

Decision-making on gifts was made either by the teams alone or in dialogue between the teams and the girls. (Who will make the decision about gift-giving?)

### *Building Trust in the Interviewing Relationship*

What does the giving of gifts mean for future researchers in an area?

The giving of token gifts at the beginning, and in some cases throughout the study, blurred the line between “study participant” and “aid recipient.” (Why are gifts being given?) Gifts could have set the girls apart from the community. (What are the safety concerns around giving gifts?) Many of the girls benefited from talking about their lives in addition to receiving the gift. (Are there outcomes for the participants other than a physical token?)

As is evident, the conclusions and questions that emerged under “Gifts” did not address the intersections between gifts and guide development, gifts and definitions, gifts and sampling and access. Partly this is because the sample for this study was small, and partly because some impacts will have greater relevance to certain areas of implementation than others. “Gifts” will have a greater relevance to Conceptual Frameworks and Building Trust in the Interviewing Relationship, and less to Technology; however, each intersection in each new study may uncover different questions and different answers and different methodological solutions.

## **Future Directions for Research with Similar Populations**

The matrix presented above will need testing and modification; indeed, as consistent with reflective theory, the matrix should be an adaptive tool for use in studies in situations of violent conflict. Testing and evaluation of the matrix will be needed so that it is most helpful. Perhaps a series of similar matrices could be developed that reflect helpful practices in specific conflict situations, with a list of conflict variables included to help future researchers in their decision-making.

In addition to the matrix, the current study points out other areas for research and for the refinement of research methodology. As stated earlier, the current study is really a study of a study. Its value suggests that future studies of all types should include some reflective evaluation of the methodology employed, to determine what has been effective and what has not, and why. Obtaining this information from the widest possible sample of stakeholders involved in the study would provide a comprehensive retrospective assessment of the methodology used and areas for modification.

Additionally, it would be potentially interesting and helpful to use the factors in trust building (historical, cultural, contact/prior association, logistical, and process) as a framework for future qualitative studies. Likewise, it would be interesting to compare a qualitative study that utilized the matrix factors in contrast to one that did not, to determine whether there was any difference in the process of the study, including impacts on everyone involved, or on the outcome data.

In this study, team members experienced a great deal of secondary traumatization. Methods for coping with the tragic and horrific information heard by interviewers need to be developed for research team members in any study of this kind. Structural efforts to prevent secondary traumatization, ongoing support for coping, and

access to help when team members are not coping, all need to be considered. To insure an effective and humane working environment, these issues need to be acknowledged and resourced throughout the study process.

Technically, children under 18 cannot give consent. What did it mean for girls, without parents or guardians, to sign a “consent” form when they are legally meaningless? Little or no research has been done on this topic, and a review of the literature is needed as a starting point for a dialogue (that should include minors) on consent and unaccompanied minors.

Like journalists, social researchers need to consider what it means to come into a country where people have little or nothing, and take the stories of the people in distress. Should compensation be given? If so, how much and what type? Does this set a pattern of expectation that creates dependence and taints the ground for future researchers and journalists? As with consent and children under 18, little has been written on this topic. Consequently, a review of the relevant literature should be conducted as a preface to maintaining a dialogue on the issue.

Finally, as per the findings of this study, there needs to be a reconsideration of current Western conceptions of research ethics in qualitative methodology. This reconsideration should not be thought of in terms of “positive” or “negative” in relation to current methodologies and ethics (e.g., having a minor’s parent or guardian sign a consent form in contrast to children under 18 signing their own), but in terms of what is in the best interest of the child in a situation where the laws and their enforcement are spotty and unpredictable, war is raging, and things can change at any moment. Research methods need to be adaptive and context specific; this takes time at the front end of a study, is in addition to regular preparation for qualitative research, and continues

throughout the entire process, including data analysis and study distribution.

Safety, or lack of safety, in a war situation, is perhaps the best example of the need for reconsideration of methods and ethics. Although the American Psychological Association's *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* describe the responsibilities of researchers, including responsibility for welfare, performing only those tasks for which one is appropriately trained and prepared, and consultation with other experts throughout the process, these responsibilities are written mainly for Western psychologists who are bound by their cultural upbringing, training, and the legal systems in which they work (1992). This is not to demean the APA Code; indeed many of the principles can be applied generally to research in countries where war exists; however, the aspects of safety in a lab, or a freshman psychology class, or even a hospital are far different from the aspects of safety in a war zone; ethics and method both need to reflect this continuum of risk. It might be helpful, at some point in the future, to gather people who are conducting research with children in war situations, from both less- and more-developed countries to "compare notes" and to consider the creation of a code of ethics for children in war situations.

Western ideas about traumatic life events and ways of conducting social research with people who have experienced them have merit, particularly in the Western context; however, they are not universally applicable. A willingness to listen and to suspend belief in one's own knowledge base is critical in coming to an understanding of methods of coping and healing indigenous to a culture. This willingness is not only applicable to psychodynamic issues, but to the areas of politics, culture, and gender; it is critical in confidence building and is the basis for genuine partnerships. This is not to say that Western researchers should completely put aside their knowledge, experience, and value

base; however, there must be an openness that removes the aura of “expertise” from the researcher investigators from the more developed country and the assumption of “ignorance” on the part of research implementers from the less developed.

Researchers, particularly social science researchers working with children in situations of violent conflict, have the potential to reinforce the long-established elitist and exploitative patterns of relationship between people in more- and less-developed countries; however, this is clearly antithetical to the ethical foundations of social science and social work. As this study has demonstrated, research of this type has consequences for the people involved that run much deeper than increasing the knowledge base. More positively, research conducted between less- and more-developed countries has the potential to build bridges between cultures and to provide healing for everyone involved. This is unlikely to be the case in every study conducted, but it is an ideal that should be aspired to in all qualitative studies implemented by indigenous research teams with children in war zones. Their shared risks and vulnerabilities require it.

## Appendix I

### THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF FEMALE CHILD SOLDIERS

*“Children represent the future of human civilization. To permit them to be used as pawns in warfare, whether as targets or perpetrators, is to cast a shadow on the future.”(Otunnu, 97)*

#### I. GOAL

To provide culturally relevant empirical criteria for the development of model demobilization programs that would meet the needs of girls who have been child combatants.

#### II. OBJECTIVES

- To determine specific cultural cues and frameworks for interviewing;
- To obtain data for culturally- and gender-salient reintegration programs;
- To develop a “time line” of reintegration needs;
- To disseminate the information to those who need it.

#### III. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

##### Children in Armed Conflict Today

During the past decade, the use of children under 18 years old as soldiers and in support roles in armed conflict has increased dramatically. The 1999 report of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG/CAC) states that children are “participating in over 30 armed conflicts around the world—as front-line combatants, porters, sexual slaves, messengers or spies” (Otunnu, 99). Although most child soldiers are between 15 and 18 years old, recruitment can begin at age 10, and even younger children have been used (Radda Barnen, 98). The United Nations Children’s Fund reports that at least 300,000 children are currently serving as soldiers in 30 areas of conflict around the world (McCallin, 98). A study by Margaret McCallin, part of the Child Soldier Research Project, indicates that the longer a conflict continues the more likely it is that children will be recruited into the military, and that the number of children recruited will increase and the ages of the children recruited will decrease as the conflict progresses. Data from the same group shows that children are more vulnerable to recruitment if they:

- are poor and disadvantaged;
- inhabit a conflict zone;
- are separated from their families; or
- have little or no education (Peters, Richards, 98)

Peters and Richards report that the increase in the use of child soldiers is driven by a number of considerations; however, the primary reason is that children are freed from the responsible world-view that characterizes adults; war becomes merged with

play. Indeed, many of the most heinous acts of violence during armed conflict are committed by youth. A second variable, and perhaps equally salient, is the lack of adult recruits. As a conflict continues, the adult population is decimated, leaving a gap in the number of people available to fight, carry, cook, etc. Children are used to fill these gaps. A third principle determinant is the availability of small arms, which because they are lighter in weight, easier to use, and less costly than large weapons, enable children to be effective combatants (Brett, McCallin, 98; Peters & Richards, 98). Olaraa Otunnu, the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has stated:

*"Children become in a very cynical way the best raw material to fashion into efficient, ruthless, unquestioning tools of war. Because they are impressionable, they're like a vessel. Whatever you want to shape them into, they'll be shaped. So you indoctrinate them, you shape them, and then as we see, from Sierra Leone to Congo to Sri Lanka, they are the most ruthless"*(Sussman, Mohan, 99).

If their own families are scattered by war, children are often loyal to their fighting group. Groups of children have been found to operate on their own initiative for long periods in remote terrain, making up rules of war as they go (Brett, et al, 96).

The current 300,000+ child soldiers represent very diverse populations, varying according to age, gender, ability to evaluate and appraise situations objectively, willingness to participate, reason for participation, pressure from significant others, family loyalty, isolation, feelings of fear and vulnerability, and an inconsistent understanding of the future. Several defining studies (Brett et al, 96, Goodwin-Gill and Cohn, 94, Machel, 96) have been conducted on the effects of war on children. As a result of these studies and the work of Machel and Otunnu (Machel, 96, Otunnu, 97, Otunnu, 99) there is an increased awareness of and growing international concern for the future lives of these children (1997 report: Appendix I).

### **Girls in Armed Conflict**

There are limited data on the experience of female child soldiers based on in-depth descriptions by children who have lived through the experience. Current available information is primarily demographic in nature, specifying age, number of children in the family, father's occupation, age upon joining the army, engagement in actual combat, and plans when the conflict is over. Girls have been recruited in smaller numbers than boys, and are more likely to be combatants in armed opposition groups than in governmental armed forces; Brett and McCallin indicate that between 25 percent and 30 percent of the combatants in Ethiopia were female (Radda Barnen, 98).

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (WCRWC) has recently published a report on girls and armed conflict. The report states that adolescent girls are primary targets for sexual violence perpetrated as a weapon of war (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 99). This violence may take the form of rape, sexual assault, or sexual slavery, as illustrated by the following vignette:

*"For two years, Grace (currently 15) was forced to live as Ocholi's (a military commander) 'wife' and submit to his sexual demands in between forays into the battlefield. She's not sure which was worse: being a soldier or a sex slave. I hated both. Each seemed worse than the other"*(Susman, 99).

The resulting emotional trauma and stigma of rape in many cultures can result in self-isolation and community ostracism (UN Security Council Resolution, 99). The health consequences of sexual violence and exploitation include sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs), unwanted pregnancy that often leads to potentially dangerous childbirth

or unsafe abortion, and physical and mental trauma (Haggstrom, 98).

While this thorough and insightful study provides critical information, it does not provide an in-depth understanding of the experience of being a female child combatant in the multiple roles adolescent girls serve. There are few systematic data on the post-conflict reintegration needs from the point of view of the former child combatant. Because of the complexity of individual situations and the manner in which ongoing reaction to a traumatic event unfolds (Herman, 97), the needs of a female child ex-combatant immediately following a conflict may be substantially different from her needs a year later. Health and personal safety needs, and therapeutic and relationship issues, may be at a critical level immediately following a conflict. A year after the conflict, vocational and educational issues may be the most significant. Developing timeliness for culturally relevant intervention around these identified needs when they are most acute, and intervention therefore most effective, must be clarified by the adolescent female combatant who has lived the experience. Programs and reintegration strategies must then be developed and tailored to fit her needs.

Adolescence is a critical stage of development, the transition from childhood to adulthood. Available data reveal that female adolescents between thirteen and eighteen, an already vulnerable population of children, are at the end of a conflict even more vulnerable due to their age, their experience as soldiers, and their unmet needs upon termination of combat service. The WCRWC study indicates that adolescent girls are often at the bottom of the list when reintegration programs are developed. The international failure to develop programs diminishes the ability of female former child soldiers to contribute constructively to society as they enter adulthood (99).

### **Demobilization and Reintegration**

“Demobilization in a peacekeeping environment is the down-sizing or complete disbanding of armed forces of parties to a conflict. Generally, demobilization accompanied by the disarmament, retraining and integration into civilian society of some of the former combatants, and others into a restructured national army, police, or other paramilitary force...the success of demobilization efforts is contingent upon effective rehabilitation of the former combatants and their integration into civilian life or the restructured army” (Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Lessons Learned Unit, 96).

The unique needs of children regarding demobilization and reintegration into the society from which they came will vary according to the culture they left (including economic and social factors), their gender, the side they represented, and the functions they performed while serving as child soldiers. Did they volunteer for service? What was their role before the conflict? Did they participate in combat? Were they wounded? Did they kill or wound others? Who were those others, and what are the ramifications of those deaths? Are they returning heroes, or did they bring disgrace and dishonor upon their family and community? Did they serve by providing meals, or were they forced to provide sex? The answers to these and other questions must provide the criteria and serve as the point of departure for meaningful reintegration and acceptance into non-military life (Brett, et al, 96).

Current demobilization practice now includes programs for child soldiers and for their reintegration into the society from which they came; these are critically important initiatives. But post-conflict programs that are specifically designed to meet the needs of particular populations of child soldiers are limited and needed (United Nations Security Council Resolution, 99, Appendix II). Specialized programs are few primarily because

the research on specific populations is lacking, as demonstrated by the lack of empirical studies. This paucity is understandable given the immense diversity of culture-specific need and the growing numbers of child soldiers. Program planners, due to the demographic nature of previous studies, may lack the specific and unique information that would allow them to create and implement programs that effectively meet the reintegration needs of particular populations of child soldiers.

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, in a letter to the Security Council based on its Adolescent Study Report of February 1999, indicates that despite growing international attention to the plight of children affected by armed conflict, adolescents are not receiving what they require even though amongst all former child combatants they have some of the most critical post-conflict needs. The letter goes on to state that the international community has largely failed to recognize the specific needs of adolescents and, consequently, to develop effective reintegration programs.

### **Role of the UN and Non-Governmental Organizations**

A major effort is currently taking place at the United Nations to decrease the use of child soldiers. A special thematic meeting of the Security Council considered issues related to children and armed conflict in August 1999. As part of this effort, the UNICEF NGO Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict has made a number of specific recommendations that would protect against the use of child soldiers in Sierra Leone. These recommendations were presented in a letter sent to the Security Council on November 11, 1999 (Appendix III). The Quaker United Nations Office/New York is a member of this working group.

Within the United Nations system the Security Council, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights have all addressed the issue of children in armed conflict. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court makes it a war crime to conscript or enlist children under the age of fifteen into national armed forces or armed groups, or to use them to participate actively in hostilities. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions already prohibit all recruitment of those under fifteen, not just forced recruitment. In a 1996 report, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations stated: "The disarmament-demobilization-reintegration process requires a commitment in terms of political will and considerable resources on the part of the international community and the parties to the conflict. This commitment is a prerequisite for the success of demobilization and reintegration efforts" (Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Lessons Learned Unit, 96).

On 25 August 1999 the Security Council adopted resolution 1261, a groundbreaking series of requests from the UN Secretary-General. This resolution directs the Security Council to act on behalf of children in situations of armed conflict.

The NGO Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict urges the Security Council to "explicitly condemn the use of child soldiers in all current armed conflicts and call on parties engaged in conflict not to recruit children below the age of eighteen." The working group's fourth recommendation calls for the inclusion of the needs of children in peace agreements. The recommendation reads: "Too often, the particular situation of a child soldier is not taken into account when peace agreements are being developed, and because parties to a conflict may be unwilling to admit to using children as combatants, children may be left out of demobilization programs. We urge the Security Council to ensure that the development of peace agreements include

comprehensive demobilization programs that are specifically designed for child soldiers and which provide for family tracing and reunification, counseling, rehabilitation, and the special educational and vocational needs of former child soldiers” (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 99).

Non-governmental organizations have developed networks to stop the use of child soldiers. The Non-governmental Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict was founded in Geneva by representatives of a group of concerned NGOs, including Rachel Brett of the Quaker UN Office in Geneva (QUNO-Geneva), one of the leading experts on the child soldier issue.

Given the dearth of information about, and the deep need of, adolescent women who are former child combatants, this study seeks to develop culturally relevant criteria for the urgent and neglected reintegration needs of young adolescent women between the ages of thirteen and eighteen years during participation (voluntary or involuntary) as child soldiers. Boia Eframe, Jr., a Mozambican teacher and psychotherapist involved in child soldier reintegration work in Mozambique, does work with young women and girls. He stated at a recent meeting of Human Rights Watch that there is a need for more research on female child combatants and victims.

Operative paragraph 10 of Security Council resolution 1261 urges all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect children, in particular girls, from rape and other forms of sexual abuse and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict, and to take into account the special needs of the girl child throughout armed conflicts and their aftermath, including in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Operative paragraph 19 of the same resolution requests the Secretary-General to ensure that personnel involved in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peace-building activities have appropriate training on the protection, rights, and welfare of children, and urges state and relevant international and regional organizations to ensure that appropriate training is included in their programs for personnel involved in similar activities.

The Security Council resolution expresses support for the development of coordination and coherence among United Nations programs and other international organizations working with children affected by armed conflict. It also welcomes and encourages, in operative paragraph five, efforts by all relevant actors at the national and international levels to develop more coherent and effective approaches to the issue of children and armed conflict.

This study directly supports the urgent needs and requests in paragraphs 10, 19 and 5 of the Security Council’s resolution. It addresses the critical needs of female adolescents as set forth by the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children in its letter of 24 August 1999 to the Security Council. This study will build upon and use as its point of departure the defining work of Brett, Goodwin-Gill, and Machel.

Data on what female child ex-combatants need for reintegration into their own society—data presented from their point of view—are absent in the literature. Such girls are emerging from a situation in which they were often completely controlled by their environment. Following the conflict some are confronted with the possibility of choice, while others feel as though their choices have vanished. How will they decide who they will become, where their homes are? Whether they can return to their communities? Whether they can deliberately direct their own lives vis-à-vis the many significant physical, cultural and emotional challenges they confront? All too frequently demobilization planners use methods that are available or familiar; these methods will

not, in their entirety, meet the needs of child soldiers from different cultures. We must assure ourselves that programs meet the specific needs of all groups of former child combatants. Models of intervention, however, well-meaning, must be molded or discarded as the gender- and culturally unique needs of the girl former child combatant emerge.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

Given that the objective of this study is to gain culturally salient information from which to build reintegration programs, study developers have decided on a qualitative format for information-gathering.

##### Study Design

Due to the in-depth information needed for the formative nature of this study, a qualitative, interview-guide format design will be used (Mintzberg, 83). A guide of this type is oriented to understanding the perspective of those being studied (Bogdan, Bilken, 83), and begins with a core question: What do adolescent women who participated in armed conflict need to assist with decommissioning and reintegration?

A self- or interviewer-administered quantitative survey with limited response categories would not get at the information stipulated by the core question, nor would a self-administered open-ended survey. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the lack of knowledge of this subject eliminates the possibility of creating mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories. New ideas and thoughts will emerge from the people being interviewed. The dialectic, the emergence and growth of ideas from the interaction between people is critical to the understanding and information-gathering process (Guba, Lincoln, 94).

As was described above, and given the specific gender/cultural nature of the information desired, new material is likely to emerge during interviews. The need for flexibility in study design is critically important to capture emergent information and ideas (Patton 90), although the core question will remain the "spine" of the study (Janesick, 94). Theoretical framework for the project lies within phenomenological and ethnographic constructs (Patton, 90). It is hoped that this work will lead to subsequent inquiries into findings that emerge from this research.

##### Methodology

###### *Interview-Guide Development*

To obtain the needed information, a process-oriented open-ended questionnaire will be developed using:

- information from the literature
- information from people currently working in the field
- information from trained interviewers
- information from the women being interviewed

In some cultures it is considered completely inappropriate to speak of events as these women have experienced. There may be danger in revealing information, or the nuances or specific knowledge of a given situation. Use of culturally appropriate language and phrasing will be critical for helping to put the woman being interviewed at ease (as much

as possible given the situation). The input from those working in the field with linguistic and cultural understanding is a key component of questionnaire design. There will be a need for debriefing after having dredged up what could be very painful memories.

Questions will move from general to more specific, and from less intrusive to more intrusive; they will be worded as neutrally as possible. Type of questions will be varied to prevent mechanistic answers, moving from primarily behavior/experience questions to knowledge questions to opinion. Difficulty in recollection may emerge due to the nature of the event or the time elapsed between the event and the interview. Space will be made for a response of "I don't remember," and also for error in recollection. Assessing replies for misleading information is addressed by Van Maanen (83), although in this case, there may be more reinterpretation of events due to the nature of the participation in the combat situation and the events to which the girls were exposed.

### *Sampling*

Qualitative research, in its orientation to plumbing for information rather than skimming, requires purposive instead of randomized sampling. "The issue is not one of generalizability. It is that of access...it is to gain access to the cultural categories and assumptions according to which one culture construes the world...it does not survey the terrain, it mines it" (McCracken, 88). There is a need for depth in the interviews because the sample is so small.

The unit of analysis for this study is the individual. Because the study is looking for patterns across subjects, it would ideally allow for the interviewing of many women in a number of post-conflict countries. Given the constraints of time and budget for this initial research, researchers have chosen a stratified criterion sample of between six and eight women in three or four different post-conflict countries. Bernstein presents four categories to be considered when deciding on a study sample: criteria, procedures, profile, and limitation. "For developing grounded theory, the objective was to select a sample 'necessary for the categories' fullest possible development" (Glaser and Strauss, 67).

### *Variables*

#### **Countries**

Post-conflict

Geographically diverse, including country representation from Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia and the Pacific, and Africa

Possibilities: Cambodia El Salvador Nicaragua  
Mozambique UgandaSierra Leone South Africa  
Bosnia

Accessibility (through Quaker service channels)

#### **Women**

Recruitment:

voluntary and assimilated  
voluntary and remained separate  
abducted  
conscripted

Less than 2 years out of conflict situation

Combat or other labor/slavery

## **Data Collection**

### *Interviewers*

So that the information collected is as accurate and nuanced as possible, native speakers will be essential to guide development, translation, and the interviewing task. One to two indigenous, native-speaking interviewers per country will be recruited and selected based on their willingness/ability to interview in a neutral manner and bilingual skills.

Interviewers will need skills or training in culturally-sensitive debriefing techniques in the likely event that the interview process triggers post-traumatic symptomatology.

Interviewers will then be trained in the specific skills needed to conduct the interviews and to translate and transcribe the data.

### *Conducting the Interviews*

The purpose of the study and the questionnaire structure has led to the selection of a structured, open-ended interview strategy. Although this is a surer method to gain an in-depth assessment of the needs of post-conflict adolescent women soldiers, there are many intervening variables that will need consideration in the interview process: who has the knowledge, who will use it and how, hierarchical issues (particularly after armed service and forcible induction), cultural/gender influences on an interview situation (Wax, 83). What skills will be used to prevent re-traumatization of participants, and to help interviewers with secondary traumatization? (Herman, 97).

Transparency is critical in interview sessions such as these. Interviews will include thorough explanation as to the format and purpose of the study, assurance of anonymity, and encouragement to ask questions during the interview if the person being interviewed has any concerns or need clarification (Patton, 90).

The interviews will take about two hours, but more time will probably be needed for introductions, to build rapport with participants and to debrief and assist them in the event that the woman has overt symptomatic trauma-based reactions during the interviews (Herman, 97, Schatzman, Strauss, 73). The interviews will require two meetings: the first to introduce the topic and conduct the interview, and the second for follow-up with each woman. At the beginning of each contact, it will be stated that the meeting will be in interview format.

### *Data Recording*

Interviewers will be asked to tape the first interview session, and to transcribe it later. If the interview is done in two parts, all interview portions will be taped. Follow-up sessions will not be taped to allow the participants privacy to express their feelings.

### *Data Analysis*

The head researcher in partnership with the interviewers will analyze data so that nuances of the information may be captured. Data will then be coded, grouped by subject/theme, and similarities and differences in experience will be noted. Utilizing the groupings as a framework, a narrative will be developed and supported by the words of the women who were interviewed.

### *Data Presentation*

A final report, in narrative form, will be available for distribution at the completion of the study.

## V. SCOPE OF WORK

This study will include the following tasks:

### Task 1      Establish Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee of approximately six people will be established. Representatives with expertise in theoretical and practical work with children in armed conflict, demobilization and reintegration, adolescent women, and qualitative methodology would be included. The Advisory Committee would provide guidance for the study and serve to review results of the study.

### Task 2      Select three-four conflict areas for study

Meeting with UN and NGO representatives to identify choices; it is critical to understand similarities and differences within conflict situations.

Screening criteria:

- women used as soldiers
- women under 18 at time of participation
- interviewers available
- recent conflict (participant within last two years)

### Task 3      Develop understanding of the conflict(s) and identify and select interviewers

Once the conflict areas are selected, time will be spent in developing an understanding of the specific circumstances surrounding the conflict(s). Candidate interviewers familiar with the culture, language, and conflict will be identified and two interviewers will be selected for each conflict area.

### Task 4      Develop interview questions

In consultation with the interviewers selected and after evaluating other resources, interview questions will be developed. These will be reviewed with the Advisory Committee and other appropriate UN and NGO representatives.

### Task 5      Identify and select child soldiers

With the help of UN representatives, Quaker organizations, and local contacts, child soldiers will be identified. Selection criteria will be developed based on knowledge of the conflict, the child's experiences, and the interviewer's ability to implement the interview process. It is estimated that six to eight children will be selected for each conflict area.

### Task 6      Perform interviews

Arrangements for the interviews will be made. The interviewers will meet with the children and carry out the interviews. It is estimated that three interviews would be carried out per child. The specific time and number will be determined during Task 3.

### Task 7      Data analysis

The information from the interviews will be compiled and common themes identified. The data analysis process will be based on a phenomenological research method.

Task 8 Identify needs

Based on the results from the interviews, post-conflict needs will be identified

Task 9 Develop program concepts to meet needs

Program concepts will be developed to meet the needs identified.

Task 10 Follow up with children interviewed

The children interviewed will be contacted and, if possible, a follow-up meeting will be held. The purpose will be to provide them feedback on the study and to gain their reflections on the needs identified.

Task 11 Final report**VI. TIME FRAME**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Weeks After Start of Project</b>
1	0-3
2	0-6
3	6-16
4	14-16
5	21-37
6	30-41
7	41-45
8	45-52
9	52-60
10	52-64
11	64 onward

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**Girl Soldier Proposal Appendix I****AIDE-MEMOIRE**

BY

THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT,  
MR OLARA A. OTUNNU

## CONTENTS

- I. CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT
- II. THE UN RESPONSE
- III. THE NORMATIVE CONTEXT
- IV. PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION
- V. ROLE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE
  - A. Advocacy for Children
  - B. Fostering Concerted Action Within the UN System
  - C. Building Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations
  - D. Monitoring and Assessing Progress
  - E. Promoting Concrete Initiatives
  - F. Reporting to the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights
- VI. INITIAL STEPS
- VII. CONCLUSION

28 October 1997

## I. CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT

As the Preamble of the United Nations Charter underlines in its famous opening words, our first duty is to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." Yet not only are millions of children still the victims of war, far too often they are its principal targets and even its instruments.

For all of the children caught in the crossfire or maimed by anti-personnel land mines, many more have been deprived of their physical, mental and emotional needs in the context of societies long at war. Many have lost their homes and their parents, not to mention years of education and socialization. Some have been permanently traumatized by the events they have witnessed and experienced. In today's internecine conflicts, children are specifically targeted in strategies to eliminate the next generation of potential adversaries. To the same end, children, and especially girls, have been made the targets of gender-based violence and sexual abuse on a massive scale. Most cynically, children have been compelled to become instruments of war, recruited or kidnapped to become child soldiers, forced to give violent expression to the hatreds of adults. In all, an estimated two million children have been killed in situations of armed conflict since 1987, while three times that number have been seriously injured or permanently disabled. Countless more have been psychologically scarred, socially dislocated, physically and sexually abused, orphaned, and deprived of education.

This brutal reality has been exacerbated by the qualitative change in the nature of conflicts since the end of the Cold War. Today's conflicts are primarily internal, fought by armed groups within existing state boundaries. The rules of warfare, which for so long governed inter-state wars fought by regular armies, routinely go unobserved in these "total wars." The village has become the battlefield and civilian populations the main target. Indeed, nearly 90 percent of the casualties of wars in the 1990s have been civilians, mostly women and children.

While the international community needs to be concerned about all non-combatants caught in the midst of violent conflict, there is an urgent need to focus on the plight of children. They are the ones least responsible for the conflicts, yet most vulnerable to their excesses. Children, as the most innocent and voiceless victims of war, require special protection.

Children represent the future of human civilization. To permit them to be used as pawns in warfare, whether as targets or perpetrators, is to cast a shadow on the future. From generation to generation, violence begets violence, as the abused grow up to be abusers. Children who are thus violated carry the scars of fear and hatred, which could well become the seeds of future rounds of violence and retribution. School-age children are forced to learn how to kill when they should be in the classroom gaining the knowledge and skills they need for a better future. For society, the opportunity lost, not least in

terms of lives destroyed, could have a devastating effect on its long-term development and well being.

## II. THE UN RESPONSE

The General Assembly has sought, for a number of years, to draw international attention to the plight of children affected by armed conflict. In resolution 48/157 (1993), the Assembly asked the Secretary-General to appoint an expert to undertake, in collaboration with the Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a comprehensive study of this question, including specific recommendations for international action. The subsequent report by Ms. Graça Machel (A/S 1/306 and Add. 1), submitted on 26 August 1996, contained important recommendations on child soldiers, refugee and internally displaced children, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence, land mines and unexploded ordnance, sanctions, health and nutrition, psycho-social well being, education, and standards. In response to Ms. Machel's study, the General Assembly adopted resolution 51/77 of 12 December 1996, in which it recommended the appointment of a Special Representative for children and armed conflict and called upon States and institutions concerned to provide voluntary contributions in support of the work of the Special Representative.

In appointing the Special Representative to this new post, effective 1 September 1997 for a three-year term, the Secretary-General underlined the urgent need for a public advocate and moral voice for children in situations of armed conflict. The role of the Special Representative is non-political and impartial, with the sole objective of ensuring the protection, healing and rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflicts across the world. In line with the reform program announced by the Secretary-General earlier this year, the work of the Special Representative will emphasize an integrated response by the United Nations system as a whole.

The key partners of the Special Representative include those UN agencies, programmes and departments with the field presence and the expertise to translate concern into action. They include UNICEF, UNHCR, and UNHCHR/CHR, which are the bodies that have actively promoted this initiative since its inception, working together with WHO, UNDP, WFP, UNESCO, FAO; UNIFEM, the World Bank, the UN Department of Political Affairs, the UN Department of Peace-keeping Operations, and the Office of Emergency Relief Coordination. The role of the Special Representative is to support their work and to help develop a common agenda in support of children's welfare in conflict situations. The Special Representative will also work with regional organizations and civil society entities outside the UN system that are engaged in the protection, healing and rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict.

The appointment of the Special Representative was made only two months ago. This aide mémoire therefore represents preliminary thinking about his responsibilities and

activities, which will be the subject of an ongoing dialogue between the Special Representative and the Member States.

### III. THE NORMATIVE CONTEXT

There exist many international humanitarian and human rights instruments, along with a large repertoire of local norms and traditional values, which are designed to protect children in situations of armed conflict. The key international legal instruments pertaining to children in situations of armed conflict are the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1949 Geneva Conventions, along with their Additional Protocols. Together, they contain a number of provisions to ensure that children in situations of internal or international armed conflict are adequately protected from harm. The chief challenge now is to promote not only broader awareness, but, more important, the implementation of these norms.

The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, which form the basis of international humanitarian law, contain some 25 articles that specifically concern children. Protocol I stipulates that children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of assault during conflict. Article 3, common to all four Conventions, is the cornerstone of the protection of civilians in internal conflicts and its fundamental guarantees are supplemented by Protocol II. Article 4.3 of Protocol II is devoted exclusively to children, enjoining that they “be provided with the care and aid they require.”

All of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the almost universally ratified human rights instrument, apply equally in times of war and peace. It calls for the protection of children’s rights to life, education, health, and other fundamental needs and specifically enjoins parties against the targeting and recruitment of children during war.

Beyond the existence of these relatively recent international instruments, all societies throughout history have recognized the obligation to protect children from harm. Rules about what applications of force are or are not morally acceptable have tended to guide the conduct of belligerents. However, in many societies traditional norms and social codes of behavior have broken down in the wake of the pressures of modernization and sustained periods of violent conflict. In order to address this situation the Special Representative will also highlight the critical importance of traditional norms that provide for the protection and welfare of children in times of war.

### IV. PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION

Children have special needs in the periods before, during and after conflict, all of which must be addressed.

It is high time to put the old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure into practice through an emphasis on promotion and application of existing norms, education, mobilizing public opinion, early warning, and advocacy. These are areas in which the Special Representative can make a real difference. Actively promoting traditional intergovernmental norms and instruments is one aspect of prevention. In particular, the roles of those institutions that inculcate traditional values parents, extended families, elders, teachers, religious institutions must be supported and strengthened for this purpose. A second aspect of prevention is mobilizing public opinion in order to create a political climate that discourages the abuse of children in situations of armed conflict.

The protection of children in zones of active conflict, particularly in cases where the parties and lines of fighting are not well defined, is the most visible and daunting challenge. Protection of children includes, most important, their right to life and physical security, but also ensuring continued access to education, health services, and other rights. The international community should do everything possible to ameliorate the situation of children caught in the midst of armed conflict.

Equally important is the need for healing and reintegration of children in the aftermath of violent conflict. Children whose entire lives have been shattered by conflict are in need of physical, psychological, educational and other forms of rehabilitation. Such rehabilitation and reintegration require the long-term commitment of the international community and, in particular, the engagement of local actors, both governments and civil society.

## V. ROLE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

The Graça Machel report and General Assembly resolution 51/77 outlined a broad agenda for the Special Representative. The main responsibilities may be summarized as follows:

### *A. Advocacy for Children*

A key responsibility of the Special Representative will be to give a public voice to the disenfranchised children who have been victimized by the chaos, cruelty, and lawlessness that characterize contemporary conflicts. They need to be heard, and we need to heed their call. The Special Representative will be a public advocate and a moral voice for prevention, protection, and rehabilitation. He will seek to raise public and official awareness of norms, traditions and international instruments that could ameliorate the situation, even as he highlights the horrific impact conflict is having on children. He will also ensure that these issues remain priority concerns on the international agenda.

### *B. Fostering Concerted Action Within the UN System*

Within the United Nations system, the main responsibility for the protection and welfare of children rests with the agencies and programmes that have a field presence, expertise, resources and operational mandates. When they adopt a concerted approach towards a common cause, such as protection or rehabilitation of children, these agencies and programmes can have a significant impact. In support of the Secretary-General's efforts to streamline UN activities both at headquarters and at field levels, the Special Representative will work with the relevant UN agencies, programmes and departments to develop a common agenda for the welfare of children in situations of armed conflict.

To this end, he will develop and maintain a framework for regular consultations with the relevant UN agencies, programmes and departments, in particular UNICEF, UNHCR, and UNHCHR, ICHR, working together with WHO, UNDP, WFP, UNESCO, FAO, UNFEM, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, the Office of Emergency Relief Coordination, the World Bank, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

In April 1997, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) adopted a set of comprehensive conclusions and decisions regarding system-wide follow-up to the Graça Machel report (ACC/1997/4). The members of the ACC are developing arrangements at both the country and headquarters levels to pursue the implementation of the recommendations of the report and the mandates stemming from resolution 51/77. The Special Representative will encourage further progress in this direction.

### *C Building Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations*

A large number of civil society organizations, including humanitarian relief organizations, the human rights community, professional and civic associations, and others have been at the vanguard of drawing attention to the issue of children in armed conflict situations as well as in taking concrete steps to alleviate their plight. The Special Representative will seek to build on these efforts by lending his support and developing partnerships with these actors in a common effort to translate concern into action, good will into preventive, protective, and rehabilitative measures, and standards into implementation and practice.

### *D. Monitoring and Assessing Progress*

The role of the Special Representative is non-political and impartial. His preoccupation is protecting children's rights and ensuring their welfare before, during and after armed conflict. In support of this agenda, he will need an accurate and current picture both of the dimensions of the problem and of steps underway to address it. The Machel study provides an invaluable foundation of information and analysis. However, monitoring and

assessment will be required on an on-going basis to ensure the effectiveness and credibility of the Special Representative's work.

As the first casualty of war is often the truth, the importance of accurate, verified information cannot be overemphasized for the purpose of informing appropriate and effective action. The Special Representative will initiate a systematic process of information gathering and analysis through field visits, fact-finding missions, research and analysis.

The Special Representative will also facilitate documentation and collection of information on children and armed conflict. He will create a network with research institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and other resources on this issue. This will serve to support and reinforce the work of all those involved in this area.

#### *E. Promoting Concrete Initiatives*

On an ongoing basis, the Special Representative will develop ideas and take initiatives responding to particular thematic issues or the needs of specific conflict situations. Among the priority issues requiring attention are the following: child soldiers and the abduction of children; mine awareness and clearance programs; preventing gender-based violence and sexual exploitation of children; standards and training for peace-keepers; promoting awareness and application of international norms; education; and physical and psycho-social rehabilitation of children.

In situations of active violence where children are being seriously affected, the Special Representative's role will necessarily include proposing concrete steps to alleviate their suffering. The Special Representative will, whenever possible, constructively and impartially work with belligerents and other actors to prevent or relieve the suffering of children.

#### *F. Reporting to the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights*

General Assembly resolution 51/77 requires the Special Representative to report annually to the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights. The Special Representative will utilize this opportunity to inform the Member States not only of continuing or emerging problem areas, but also the progress achieved by governments, UN agencies, and others in strengthening prevention, protection, and rehabilitation of children in situations of armed conflict. He will also make concrete recommendations for action in specific cases and issue areas, as appropriate.

## VI. INITIAL STEPS

The agenda outlined above is a broad one. The next few months will therefore be spent

determining priorities for action and engagement. Among the steps already underway are the following:

- Planning for familiarization visits to countries in conflict or in post-conflict recovery in order to observe first hand the developments on the ground.
- Consulting governments of countries affected by conflict and those in post-conflict recovery, to exchange views and concerns. A number of high-level meetings with Ministers of relevant countries have already taken place.
- Developing a framework for consultation and concerted action within the United Nations system. In this connection, initial discussions with the heads of UNICEF, UNHCR and UNHCHR have started.
- A process of engagement with members of the NGO community that are working in this area. The NGOs that have met with the Special Representative so far have expressed tremendous interest in collaborating with him on this agenda.
- Initiating cooperation with a few universities and policy research centers that can provide research and analytical support for the Special Representative's work.
- Developing a system for monitoring developments, both thematically and geographically, in order to assess progress achieved and problems encountered in efforts to improve the situation of children affected by armed conflicts.
- Ensuring that the welfare of children is fully taken into account in ongoing policy debates. Currently, five sets of deliberations that are relevant to children affected by armed conflict are receiving priority attention by the Special Representative: the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court; the draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts; programs for mine awareness and clearance; promoting standards and training for peacekeepers; and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation of children.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The report submitted by Ms. Graça Machel in August 1996, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 48/157 (1993), was a call to action on a problem of critical importance. It set forth recommendations for preventing armed conflict, for protecting the rights of children and ensuring their welfare in times of war, and for ensuring their rehabilitation and reintegration after violent conflict. The appointment of the Special Representative is a sign that the international community is determined to respond to

this call. The present aide mémoire sets forth the broad agenda, responsibilities and method of work of the Special Representative.

Much work remains to be done in the months ahead to further develop these initial thoughts into effective strategies for engagement and action in specific cases and on themes relevant to children in armed conflict situations. The Special Representative will remain in continuous dialogue with the Member States on the best ways to give concrete shape to this urgent agenda.

**Girl Soldier Proposal Appendix II****SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1261 (1999) ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT**

25 August 1999

RESOLUTION 1261 (1999)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 4037th meeting,  
on 25 August 1999

The Security Council,

Recalling the statements of its President of 29 June 1998 (S/PRST/1998/18), 12 February 1999 (S/PRST/1999/6) and 8 July 1999 (S/PRST/1999/21),

Noting recent efforts to bring to an end the use of children as soldiers in violation of international law, in International Labour Organization Convention No.182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour which prohibits forced or compulsory labour, including the forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, and in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in which conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen into national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities is characterized as a war crime,

1. Expresses its grave concern at the harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on children and the long-term consequences this has for durable peace, security and development;
2. Strongly condemns the targeting of children in situations of armed conflict, including killing and maiming, sexual violence, abduction and forced displacement, recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of international law, and attacks on objects protected under international law, including places that usually have a significant presence of children such as schools and hospitals, and calls on all parties concerned to put an end to such practices;
3. Calls upon all parties concerned to comply strictly with their obligations under international law, in particular the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the obligations applicable to them under the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, and stresses the responsibility of all States to bring an end to impunity and their obligation to prosecute those responsible for grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949;
4. Expresses its support for the ongoing work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), other parts of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations dealing with

children affected by armed conflict, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to develop coordination and coherence among them;

5. Welcomes and encourages efforts by all relevant actors at the national and international level to develop more coherent and effective approaches to the issue of children and armed conflict;

6. Supports the work of the open-ended inter-sessional working group of the Commission on Human Rights on a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and expresses the hope that it will make further progress with a view to finalizing its work;

7. Urges all parties to armed conflicts to ensure that the protection, welfare and rights of children are taken into account during peace negotiations and throughout the process of consolidating peace in the aftermath of conflict;

8. Calls upon parties to armed conflicts to undertake feasible measures during armed conflicts to minimize the harm suffered by children, such as "days of tranquility" to allow the delivery of basic necessary services, and further calls upon all parties to armed conflicts to promote, implement and respect such measures;

9. Urges all parties to armed conflicts to abide by concrete commitments made to ensure the protection of children in situations of armed conflict;

10. Urges all parties to armed conflicts to take special measures to protect children, in particular girls, from rape and other forms of sexual abuse and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict and to take into account the special needs of the girl child throughout armed conflicts and their aftermath, including in the delivery of humanitarian assistance;

11. Calls upon all parties to armed conflicts to ensure the full, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all children affected by armed conflict;

12. Underscores the importance of the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations and associated personnel to the alleviation of the impact of armed conflict on children, and urges all parties to armed conflicts to respect fully the status of United Nations and associated personnel;

13. Urges States and all relevant parts of the United Nations system to intensify their efforts to ensure an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of international law through political and other efforts, including promotion of the availability of alternatives for children to their participation in armed conflict;

14. Recognizes the deleterious impact of the proliferation of arms, in particular small arms, on the security of civilians, including refugees and other vulnerable populations, particularly children, and, in this regard, recalls resolution 1209 (1998) of 19 November 1998 which, inter alia, stresses the importance of all Member States, and in particular

States involved in manufacturing and marketing of weapons, restricting arms transfers which could provoke or prolong armed conflicts or aggravate existing tensions or armed conflicts, and which urges international collaboration in combating illegal arms flows;

15. Urges States and the United Nations system to facilitate the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of children used as soldiers in violation of international law, and calls upon, in particular, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, the UNHCR and other relevant agencies of the United Nations system to intensify their efforts in this regard;

16. Undertakes, when taking action aimed at promoting peace and security, to give special attention to the protection, welfare and rights of children, and requests the Secretary-General to include in his reports recommendations in this regard;

17. Reaffirms its readiness when dealing with situations of armed conflict:

(a) to continue to support the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilian populations in distress, taking into account the particular needs of children including, inter alia, the provision and rehabilitation of medical and educational services to respond to the needs of children, the rehabilitation of children who have been maimed or psychologically traumatized, and child-focused mine clearance and mine-awareness programmes;

(b) to continue to support the protection of displaced children including their resettlement by UNHCR and others as appropriate; and

(c) whenever adopting measures under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, to give consideration to their impact on children, in order to consider appropriate humanitarian exemptions;

18. Reaffirms also its readiness to consider appropriate responses whenever buildings or sites which usually have a significant presence of children are specifically targeted in situations of armed conflict, in violation of international law;

19. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure that personnel involved in United Nations peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building activities have appropriate training on the protection, rights and welfare of children, and urges States and relevant international and regional organizations to ensure that appropriate training is included in their programmes for personnel involved in similar activities;

20. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the Council by 31 July 2000 a report on the implementation of this resolution, consulting all relevant parts of the United Nations system and taking into account other relevant work;

21. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.

## Girl Soldier Proposal Appendix III

### UNICEF NGO SUB-WORKING GROUP ON CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

#### LETTER TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

President of the Security Council  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations  
United Nations  
New York, NY 10017

November 11, 1999

Dear Dr. Danilo Turk,

The NGO Committee on UNICEF, Sub-Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict is a coalition of non-governmental organizations working to ensure that the human rights and humanitarian needs of children caught up in armed conflict are placed at the highest levels of the international policy agenda. On the eve of the 10th anniversary of the widespread ratification of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, we are concerned that the rights and needs of Sierra Leonean children are being insufficiently addressed by the international community.

In the words of Mr. Olara A. Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, Sierra Leone is experiencing a "crisis of children," as children comprise more than sixty percent of the three million Sierra Leoneans who have been displaced as a result of long and brutal war in their country. Thousands of children have been a deliberate target of rights abuses. Over 10,000 children were engaged in the conflict as soldiers and countless others suffered amputation and sexual violence, among other atrocities. An unknown number were abducted by combatants throughout the country, and 9 out of 10 abducted girls are believed to have been sexually abused.

While the Sub-Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict applauds the child-specific provisions in the Lome Peace Agreement (7 July 1999) and Security Council resolutions 1260 (20 August 1999) and 1270 (22 October 1999), we recognize that the success of the peace process is dependent upon the success with which the international community safeguards the rights and addresses the needs of Sierra Leonean children, giving them the highest consideration.

The Sub-Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict calls on the international community to provide sufficient funding and ample political support for the following:

1. More support for child soldier disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

Despite its critical importance for the future stability of Sierra Leone, the child soldier disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, mandated by international agreements, has thus far been too slow and reached too few children. More resources and support are needed to ensure that vocational or other skills training opportunities offered to demobilizing child soldiers are successful. In particular, former child soldiers require specialized education, health care services and psychosocial care during the rehabilitation and reintegration processes.

## 2. Make child rights a priority for peacekeeping personnel

We commend UN Security Council resolution 1261 (25 August 1999) on the protection of children in armed conflict, which mandates you to ensure that personnel involved in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building activities have appropriate child rights training. This training must be effectively implemented in Sierra Leone, where it can serve as an example for future peacekeeping missions. Currently only ten human rights monitors have been deployed, two of which specialize in children's rights. Given the serious and widespread nature of the abuses committed against the civilian population, and the fragile stability of the region, this number must be greatly increased. Moreover, UNAMSIL's Child Protection Advisor must be afforded a comprehensive mandate and full access to all aspects of carrying out the mission.

## 3. Ensure accountability for human rights violations

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Human Rights Commission and the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace mandated by the Lome Peace Agreement must be promptly established and provided full international support. Each of these entities must pay special attention to issues related to children, who have been both victims and perpetrators of violence. Those responsible for mass violations of human rights, including children's rights, committed in Sierra Leone must be held accountable.

## 4. Secure a commitment to education

As Sierra Leonean society was destroyed by armed conflict, so were opportunities for children and adolescents to obtain an education. But for children attempting to recover from war and rebuild their communities, education is a primary means to psychological healing, skills-building, social reintegration, good health practices and protection. Without educational opportunities, children in Sierra Leone not only face a substantial gap in their education, but they also become easy targets for exploitation and abuse. Lack of educational opportunities also produces hopelessness and can contribute to cycles of violence, as children and adolescents find few alternatives. The provision of education must be made a priority for Sierra Leonean children, girls and youth.

## 5. Protect and assist Sierra Leonean refugees and internally displaced

Refugees outside of Sierra Leone, particularly those in Guinea and Liberia, must be afforded the same levels of assistance and protection as those displaced within the country. It is not yet safe for the majority of these refugees to return home. At the same time, millions more are internally displaced within Sierra Leone. Both refugee and displaced children face serious protection problems, including sexual violence and exploitation of girls and women, killings and maiming. The international community must not ignore the plight of these refugee and internally displaced children, must increase assistance and prioritize their protection while working to create the conditions

for their return home in safety and in dignity.

6. Emphasize these child-specific matters in future reports to the Security Council on Sierra Leone

On all of these matters, including the provision of education for all children and adolescents, future reports submitted by the Secretary General of the United Nations to the Security Council on Sierra Leone should include assessments on the status of children, as mandated by Security Council in Resolution 1261 (25 August 1999).

Children and adolescents play a critical role in the difficult transition to peace; one that the international community cannot afford to overlook in Sierra Leone. The Sub-Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict appreciates your attention to these concerns and is happy to provide any additional assistance that you may require in carrying out the international communities obligations to the Sierra Leonean children.

Sincerely,

The UNICEF NGO Sub-Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict

Mary Diaz, Chair

Executive Director, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

## Appendixes II, III, IV

### Research in Countries at War: Studying the implementation of a qualitative study to determine guidelines for methodology development

#### *Interview Guide, Teams*

##### Participation of the research team

How and why did you/your group/organization decide to participate in the study on the participation of girls in armed groups?

##### Conceptual starting point

Tell me about the ideas or experiences that influence your thinking on this research project

-methodology                      -women                      -armed conflict -role of struggle

##### Definitions

3a. What is your definition of a girl soldier? Will this be answered by the above question?

3b. How do you define armed conflict? Will this be answered by the above question?

3c. Does the team hold common definitions of girl soldier and armed conflict? If not, how did you come to agreement on the terms?

##### Methodology

4. Describe your experiences and thoughts on the “dialogue on methodology” we did together.

-dialogue process –intro to study –qualitative/quantitative –codes of ethics  
 -interviewer actions and responsibilities –ethical guidelines for interviewers  
 -informed consent (safety, confidentiality, anonymity) –eliciting information: active listening, open- closed-ended q’s –working as a team –guide development –role-plays  
 -debriefings –technology –suicidality –PTSD/DID –stress reduction – unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

##### Sampling

5. Tell me how you decided on whom to interview.

-factors affecting choice  
 -access: where, how, who  
 -cost and affect on decision-making  
 -variety of the sample and thinking behind it  
 -unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

##### Stages of the interviews

- 6a. Tell me about how the 3-interview process worked or did not work  
 -pre-/during-/post-conflict experiences  
 -modifications  
 -pre- post-meetings  
 -unexpected/unanticipated outcomes
- 6b. How did the facility in which the girls were housed react to their research?

#### Informed consent

- What was your experience with the informed consent process?  
 -translation -explanation -comprehension of women -signing the form  
 -storage of forms -unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

#### Interview Guides

- Tell me about using the interview guide we created together  
 -modifications -effectiveness/questions that did/did not elicit information  
 -translation -unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

#### Data collection

- 9a. Tell me about how the team collected the data for the study.  
 -who was interviewed/why -who was present/why -where/why and description  
 -techniques used factoring in age of respondents -corroboration of data  
 -ability to recall events --unexpected/unanticipated outcomes
- 9b. Tell me about using the technology.  
 -computer -tape recorder -response from women -unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

#### Data preparation

10. Tell me about analyzing the data.  
 -transcription and interpretation -protection of information -delivery of data sets to head researcher -analysis of data for their own use-unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

#### Teams

- 11a. Tell me about how you worked as a team.  
 -formation of team -roles -decision-making -access  
 -mutual support
- 11b. Tell me about working with the team in the US  
 -support -ability to contact -needs during and post-study

#### Credibility and role of interviewer

- 12a. Tell me about being an interviewer in this study.  
 -establishing credibility with intermediaries and women  
 -building relationships with the women and others -language -were you part of the interviewed group? -unexpected/unanticipated outcomes
- 12b. What do you think the expectation of the girls were?  
 -unexpected/unanticipated outcomes
- 12c. What did the interviewers give the girls? Who made these decisions?  
 -unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

### Safety

13a. Tell me about the issues around the safety of the girls and the research team

-before-during-after    -protecting identity, etc.    -mental health  
 -problems/solutions    -confidentiality/anonymity    -unexpected/unanticipated  
 outcomes

13b. How would they like to see the info disseminated and subsequently used?

13c. How do we continue to protect the women during and after the presentation of the findings?

### Culture

14a. Tell me about the team's ability to understand the cultural component of the women's lives.

14b. How were cultural aspects integrated into the data sets?

-unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

### Ethics

15. Tell me about the ethical dilemmas you experienced during the study that we have not already spoken about.

-legal issues    -others    -unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

### Summary

16a. Why do you think that the girls engaged in the study?

16b. What do you feel were the most important methodological components of this study?

16c. What were the things that you felt was least effective and why?

16d. What change would you make to the project?

16e. Were there any surprises, and if so, what were they?

## ***Interview Guide, Head Researcher***

### Initial inquiries

What made you decide to undertake this study?

### Conceptual starting point

Tell me about the ideas or experiences that influence your thinking on this research project

-methodology                      -women                      -armed conflict -role of struggle

### Definitions

3a. What is your definition of a girl soldier?

3b. How do you define armed conflict?

### Preliminary work

4. Tell me about the process of creating the study

-methodology   -proposal writing                      -building a team                      -creating an advisory committee  
-unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

### Methodology

5a. Why did you choose this particular methodology for this study?

-stage-based interview process

5b. Tell me about your concept of and work on the dialogue on methodology.

-dialogue process –intro to study –qualitative/quantitative –codes of ethics  
-interviewer actions and responsibilities –ethical guidelines for interviewers  
-informed consent (safety, confidentiality, anonymity) –eliciting information: active listening, open- closed-ended q's –working as a team –guide development –role-plays  
-debriefings –technology –suicidality –PTSD/DID –stress reduction  
-unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

### Sampling

How did you decide who would be interviewed?

-criteria-access                      -cost and affect on decision-making  
-unexpected/unanticipated outcomes   -differences between regions

### Informed consent

7. Tell me about the informed consent in this project

-unexpected/unanticipated outcomes  
-differences between regions  
-storage of consent forms

### Interview Guides

8. How did the interview guides work?

-questions/areas that specifically elicited information  
-unexpected/unanticipated outcomes  
-differences between regions

### Data collection

9. Was there any way to corroborate the interview data?

- cross-referencing between women -geographic locale
- differences between regions
- unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

Data analysis

10. Tell me about analyzing the data.

- protection of information -cultural component
- differences between the data sets -unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

Teams

11. Tell me about your perception of and work with the teams collectively and individually by region, their roles, division of work, interactions.

- unexpected/unanticipated outcomes
- intervention by you at any time and why

Credibility and role of head researcher

12. Tell me about what it was like to be the head researcher in this study.

- establishing credibility with team and advisory group -building relationships with team and advisory group
- expectation of the teams and advisory group -differences between regions
- unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

Safety

13a. Tell me about the issues around the safety of the girls and the research team in relation to the study and to you as head researcher

- before-during-after -protecting identity, etc. -mental health
- problems/solutions -confidentiality/anonymity -unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

13b. How do you plan to present the data?

13c. How would you like to see the info disseminated and subsequently used?

- ways to prevent misuse

13d. How do you continue to protect the women during and after the presentation of the findings?

Culture

14. How was the cultural information presented in the data sets you received?

- overtly-reading between the lines -confirmation of suppositions

Ethics

15. Tell me about the ethical dilemmas you experienced during the study that we have not already spoken about.

- legal issues

Summary

16a. Did you get the information you wanted/needed from this study?

16b. How did the methodology work?

16c. What do you feel was the most important methodological component of this

study?

16d. What was the thing that you felt was least effective and why?

16e. What were the most obvious/important similarities between regions in the methodology?

16f. What were the most obvious/important differences between regions in the methodology?

16g. What change would you make to the project?

16h. Were there any surprises, and if so, what were they?

*Interview Guide, Advisory Committee*

Initial Inquiries

How did you hear about the study and what made you decide to participate in the advisory committee?

Conceptual starting point

Tell me about the ideas or experiences that influence your thinking on this research project

-methodology                      -women                      -armed conflict-role of struggle

Definitions

3a. What is your definition of a girl soldier?

3b. How do you define armed conflict?

Advisory Committee

4. Tell me about the purpose of the advisory committee

-roles    -unexpected/unanticipated outcomes

Methodology

5. Describe your thoughts and ideas on the methodology of this project

-conceptualization of the project                      -use of interviewing technique for data gathering  
-team approach                      -sampling                      -informed consent                      -safety

Ethics

6. Tell me about the ethical dilemmas you foresaw in this study, and how you would like to have had them handled.

-unexpected/unintended outcomes

Summary

7a. What do you feel were the most important methodological components of this study?

7b. What were the things that you felt was least effective and why?

7c. What change would you make to the project?

7d. Were there any surprises, and if so, what were they?

## Appendix V

### Consent Form

My name is Lori Heninger and I am a student in the Doctor of Social Welfare Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project entitled, "Qualitative Research in Countries at War: A Partnership Approach to Methodology." This is a research study of the effectiveness of qualitative research methodology in countries experiencing armed struggle. The study is expected to provide information for researchers looking to conduct studies in countries experiencing armed struggle in which they are not familiar with the culture. I would like permission to interview you about your experiences in the research project on girl soldiers which was conducted by the Quaker United Nations Office and your organization.

The interview will take from 2-3 hours, and can be done in one meeting or divided into two meetings. With your permission, I would like to tape record these meetings so that I can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by me, the transcriber, and potentially my advisor. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I will have access. The only known risk is that you may feel some discomfort talking about the material in this study; at any time, you can refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the study without any penalty.

The benefits of your participation include an authentic voice in the creation of a partnership research methodology. There will be approximately 18 participants taking part in this study.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please ask and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact the advisor to this project, Dr. Irwin Epstein, at 1.212.452.7030 or [iepstein@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:iepstein@hunter.cuny.edu) or me at 1.212.682.2745 or [lheninger@afsc.org](mailto:lheninger@afsc.org). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Hilry Fisher, Sponsored Research, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, 1.212.817.7523 or [hfisher@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:hfisher@gc.cuny.edu).

Thank you for your participation in this study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

I agree to have this interview audio-taped:

Yes                      No

If you agree to be interviewed, please sign below:

---

Participant's Signature

Date

---

Investigator's Signature

Date

## Appendix VI

### AGENDA: DIALOGUE ON METHODOLOGY

### GIRLS IN ZONES OF CONFLICT PROJECT

29 May-1 June, 2001

#### DAY 1

Introductions

Review of Agenda

Description of the Project

Reason for Study

Feedback on Description of Study

Number and Form of Interviews

Qualitative Studies: What They are and Why do Them

Interviewing

Why Interview?

Developing the Interview Guide Together

Expectations During the Interviewing Process

Working as a Team

#### Lunch

Introduction of:

Interviewer Actions and Responsibilities

Ethical Guidelines for Interviewers

APA Code of Ethics

Informed Consent Form

Western Ways of Eliciting Information:

“Roadblocks to Listening”

Three Exercises

Open-Ended and Closed-Ended Questions

#### DAY 2

Review of Day 1

First Interview: Informed Consent and Life History up to Time of Participation in Armed Group/Engagement

Discussion of First Interview Including Setting and Relationship-Building

Creation of Interview Guide

Role-Play

Debrief interview session with commentary for interviewing strategy

#### Lunch

Suicidality

Computer

Introduction to the Unit

Voice Recognition Software

Micro-cassette Recorder

**DAY 3**

Review Day 2

Second Interview: Life in the Armed Group/Mid-Phase Work

Discussion of Second Interview Including Setting and Developing Relationship

Creation of Interview Guide

Role-Play

Debrief interview session with commentary for interviewing strategy

Western Models of Traumatic Symptomatology

**Lunch**

Third Interview: Life After the Armed Group and Views of the Future/Termination

Discussion of First Interview Including Setting and End of the Interviewing Relationship

Creation of Interview Guide

Role-Play

Debrief interview session with commentary for interviewing strategy

Final Questions:

Responsibilities

Hardware/Software

Other questions

Stress Reduction

***Breaks will be taken as needed during the course of the mornings and afternoons.***

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