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Social Dominance and Cultural Consensus: The Case of the Bakiga-Banyoro Conflict in Uganda

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Introduction

'Tribal' land conflicts are an increasingly troubling phenomenon in African societies (Deininger and Castagnini, 2006). A recurrent and widely accepted *institutional explanation* for the persistence and increasing severity of these conflicts points towards the inability of current land tenure systems to cope with rising values of land. Informal property rights and land use conventions rooted in traditional legal arrangements often still govern ownership of and access to land in many African societies. In combination with half-hearted and incomplete efforts towards formalization (e.g. through land titling), ambiguity and insecurity about tenure rights are the result. The lack of clearly defined property rights, in turn, creates ample opportunities for competing claims on land, causing widespread land conflict. Consequently, according to this perspective the solution of such conflicts requires the institutionalization of a formal system of land titles which are anchored in a functioning modern legal system. The argument is that formal institutions provide transparent and unambiguous rules about ownership rights which facilitate non-violent legal resolution of potential conflicts. Though conventional land tenure policies such as land titling proved a successful strategy to resolve conflicts in many other parts of the world, there is cumulating evidence that this strategy so far was less successful in resolving inter-ethnic land conflicts in Africa: 'Factors that have made an effective response difficult include a lack of clarity about the role of formal and informal institutions in land administration, the limited outreach of the former, and the fact that reaching a consensus on land policies is made difficult by the structural inequalities inherent in these systems, e.g. along gender and ethnic lines. As a result, traditional interventions such as titling, which were very effective in other parts of the world, have proven inadequate in many African contexts where, instead of fostering growth, they may even have led to higher levels of conflict' (Deininger and Castagnini, 2006).

Departing from this legal institutional view, *cultural explanations* emphasize the crucial role of ethnic identity, out-group stereotyping, in-group favoritism, ethnocentrism, and intergroup blaming. Accordingly, this perspective considers legal interventions as insufficient to solve such conflicts, pointing towards the need for conflict resolution strategies which attempt to tackle the

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cultural rather than the legal basis of inter-ethnic conflict. Though the large variety of conflict resolution strategies (see Ross, 2000, for an overview) differ in important respects, all of these 'theories of practice in ethnic conflict resolution' (Ross, 2000) share one key assumption: the importance of mutual understanding as a major precondition for the design of successful conflict resolution strategies. For example, conflict transformation theory argues that conflicts are cultural constructions 'whose meanings can be transformed as people change their knowledge, perceptions, and models of what is at stake' (Ross, 2000: 1020). Similarly, principled negotiation approaches, psychoanalytically informed identity theory, community relation, as well as intercultural miscommunication and human needs approaches all emphasize the importance of awareness about how each side understands the conflict. Such understanding, in turn, 'presents opportunities for conflict transformation in constructive directions which can reshape perceptions, social relationships, and lead to mutually beneficial outcomes' (Ross, 2000: 1020). Insight into the content of such 'lay theories' and the degree to which they are shared in and between populations can be a crucial ingredient in the design and implementation of viable and sustainable conflict resolution strategies (Ross, 1997; 2000). Consequently, a vital precondition is to have detailed insights into the conflict related cultural meaning systems and knowledge structures of the conflicting parties.

Building on this cultural approach and focusing on the long standing land conflict between the Bakiga and Banyoro in Uganda's Kibaale district as a case, the present contribution examines similarities and differences in both groups' conflict related knowledge structures. More specifically, we address the question to what degree Banyoro and Bakiga differ in their perceptions about the major causes of land conflict (between-cultural variation), and to what degree various stakeholders within each ethnic group share a common view on the causes of conflict (within-cultural variation).

In what follows, we first sketch the theoretical background and elaborate testable hypotheses. Section two presents background information on the Bakiga-Banyoro land conflict. Section three provides an outline of the research design, methods and data. Results are presented in section four. Section five concludes.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

The focus of this research is emic perceptions of conflict causes, i.e. statements about cause-effect relations made by the subjects of our study. We build on two complementary theories to derive testable hypotheses about the content and structure of emic conflict cause perceptions: Social Dominance Theory and Cultural Consensus Theory. The Cultural Consensus Model emphasizes that cultures should be conceived as aggregates of potentially diverging individual mental models, which are shaped by context specific processes. It highlights the structure of beliefs within and between cultures as an important factor in modeling conflict, but has little to say about their content. Social Dominance Theory assumes that hierarchical groups had an evolutionary advantage, and

argues that most inter-group conflicts are manifestations of the resulting human predisposition to form group based hierarchies. It allows deriving hypotheses about the content of in- and out-group related beliefs, but so far did not explore the implications for consensus structures. Hence, both theories address different elements of indigenous knowledge structures.

Cultural Consensus Theory

Previous culturalist reasoning tended to portray cultural meaning systems as homogenous and static, constraining individual behavior through norms, rules and values. In the past decades, constructivist approaches to culture have gradually replaced this perspective. Such constructivist models see cultures as potentially heterogeneous, dynamic knowledge structures which are actively produced and constantly changed by individuals and groups. The *cultural consensus model,* developed by Atran and colleagues (2005), can be seen as the most elaborate methodological attempt to tackle the shortcomings of previous approaches to culture. It emphasizes the need to conceive of culture as aggregates of potentially diverging individual mental models. It focuses on the *distribution* of beliefs, rather than on shared norms and values. It conceives within-cultural variability as key to the analysis of social processes, and emphasizes inference, reasoning and perception rather than socialization and learning as the primary factors affecting cultural beliefs. As a result, cultures are seen as potentially fragmented and inherently dynamic, since perceptions can change quickly as individuals update their beliefs due to altered circumstances. Variability in beliefs is caused by the history of economic, political, and military relations between and within groups (Atran, Medin, Ross, 2005: 751). Consequently, 'cultural differences in mental models and associated values play an important role in creating intergroup conflict and, therefore, may hold the key to addressing these conflicts' (Atran, Medin and Ross, 2005: 744). The cultural consensus model is a major improvement over previous conceptualizations of culture, because it allows taking intra-cultural variations and cultural change seriously, and because it provides a well-defined methodological toolbox to assess within and between cultural consensus empirically.

The cultural consensus model suggests that there will be significant within-culture variation in mental models. Hence, consensus about cause-effect relations is not necessarily more likely among members of the same ethnic group – depending on the setting and the stakes, consensus can emerge among different categories of stakeholders, thereby crossing ethnic lines.

The cultural consensus model is mainly concerned about the structure of beliefs, rather than about their content. It remains incomplete if one wants to explain how and why mental models in a specific knowledge domain differ between or within ethnic or other social groups. For this purpose, additional assumptions need to be introduced. We turn to social dominance theory to realize this objective.

Social Dominance Theory

Social dominance theory (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999; Sidanius, 1993; Schmitt and Branscombe, 2003; Schmitt et al., 2003) assumes that there is an evolution-

ary advantage for hierarchical groups, because hierarchies are superior to achieve coordination in situations of crisis or threat through out-groups. Social hierarchies consist of a hegemonic group at top and negative reference groups at bottom. Most forms of group conflict and oppression (e.g., racism, ethnocentrism) are seen as manifestations of the same basic human predisposition to form group-based hierarchies. Human social systems are subject to the counter-balancing influences of two tendencies: hierarchy-enhancing forces (producing and maintaining ever higher levels of group-based social inequality) and hierarchy-attenuating forces (producing group-based social equality). Processes of hierarchical discrimination are driven by legitimizing myths – beliefs justifying social dominance, e.g. beliefs about incapable minorities.

At the core of social dominance theory are four behavioral asymmetry assumptions. (1) Systematic out-group favoritism or deference (minorities favor hegemony individuals). (2) Asymmetric in-group bias (as status increases, opposition to interracial mixing increases). (3) Self-handicapping (low expectations of minorities are self-fulfilling prophecies). (4) Ideological asymmetry (as status increases, so do discriminatory political beliefs, i.e. members of high-status groups will be more invested in maintaining current hierarchical relationships than will members of low-status groups).

Social dominance theory predicts different perceptions among ethnic or social groups because members of elite enjoy many benefits by virtue of their structural position, and so have a great interest in preserving that structure and their positions within it against any political threat (Ferguson, 1989: 146). Social dominance theory builds on the perspective that social dominance orientations tend to reproduce cultures of structural inequality that exists within them, and produce discriminatory acts (e.g. insulting remarks about minorities).

Hypotheses
Combining assumptions from *cultural consensus theory* about the differentiation of knowledge domains with the propositions of *social dominance theory* about the role of status as a shaper of meaning, we can formulate the following hypotheses:

> *Hypothesis 1 (Out-Group Favoritism):* Low status groups are more likely to exhibit out-group favoritism than high status groups.

> *Hypothesis 2 (Status Based Consensus):* Mental models of high status groups will differ from mental models of low status groups: consensus within a status group will be higher than consensus between status groups.

> *Hypothesis 3 (High Status Discrimination):* Members of high status groups will show higher levels of discrimination than members of low status groups.

The Bakiga-Banyoro Land Conflict in Uganda

The focus of this paper is on the long standing inter-ethnic conflict between the Banyoro and Bakiga tribes in Kibaale district in Western Uganda. Uganda provides a good test case for research on inter-ethnic land conflict due to its high level of ethnic diversity in combination with its high population growth

rate (Green, 2007): Uganda ranks 4th on the list of most ethnically diverse countries worldwide, with the largest ethnic group, the Baganda, constituting only 17% of the population. With its population growth rate of 3.7% Uganda ranks 2nd in the world, making it the fastest growing country on the African continent.

A brief sketch of the history of the conflict and the Banyoro's and Bakiga's role in it provides an interpretative framework for their collective ethnicised claims to land and political supremacy in Kibaale District.

In pre-colonial times, Kibaale district belonged to the *Banyoro* kingdom, which was the most powerful kingdom in Eastern Africa at that time. The British colonized Uganda in 1894 and donated Kibaale district to the Baganda as a reward for their collaboration in conquering anti-colonial Banyoro ('Buganda Agreement', 1900). The Banyoro resistance to Baganda administration and ownership of the land became organized in the 1907 Nyagire revolt, and the 1918 formation of the Mubende-Banyoro Committee (MBC), a political and military movement whose main objective was to oust the Baganda/British rule and to reclaim their land. A referendum, held in 1964, turns political administration of land back to the Banyoro. Baganda landlords flee, taking with them their land titles, but without being able to exercise effective control over their land like collecting ground rent or collecting settlements on their land. The Mubende-Banyoro Committee considers this as a victory and ceases its activities.

The Banyoro interpreted Amin's Land Reform Decree of 1975 as returning the land to them, yet the Baganda still kept the land titles (Nsamba-Gayiiya, 2003: 7). The 1995 Ugandan Constitution vested land in the citizens of Uganda and not the state, and reverts tenures to their pre-1975 status (Espeland, 2006: 84). Outspoken indigenous Banyoro are unhappy that their land is titled to absentee landlords, who can use their titles as collateral to finance developments in another district, while the indigenous live in fear of losing their land to the absentee title-holder. In 1998, through the Land Act, the Government creates a Land Fund to buy land from the absentee Baganda landlords and return the same titles to the Banyoro who are currently squatters, but all these have been slow to come into effect.

The *Bakiga* originally lived in south-west Uganda's Kigezi region. Already during the early colonial period this region, and in particular the areas surrounding greater Kabale town, experienced one of the highest population growth rates and densities in Uganda (partly caused by immigration from neighboring Rwanda as a consequence of the 1927 famine). In order to mitigate the problems resulting from overpopulation, the government launched resettlement schemes to relocate Bakiga from these densely populated areas to Kibaale. The first of such schemes was effectuated in 1946, many others followed. Ethnic stereotypes portraying the Bakiga as hard working and industrious initially facilitated the acceptance of the settlement schemes by other ethnic groups. The resettlement schemes lead to a constant influx of Bakiga into Kibaale district, with two major waves of migration taking place from the mid 1970s onwards and in the 1990s. From 1991 to 2001, the population of Kibaale district almost doubled, with an annual population increase of 5.9% (Green, 2007). The Bakiga also became politically influential in the 1990s, as evidenced by Bakiga representatives being elected into high

level political functions. The Banyoro, who had not received any free land from the government, blamed the resettlement schemes for favoring the Bakiga at their expense, and increasingly emphasized their own position as the only 'indigenous' and legitimate owners of the land: 'What is indeed striking in Kibaale is the way the local Banyoro repeatedly refer to both the Bakiga migrants to Kibaale and the absentee Baganda landlords who own land in the district as non-natives, despite the fact that members of all three groups are Ugandan citizens' (Green, 2007).

Research Design, Data, and Method

Content analysis of national newspapers, face-to-face interviewing, and written questionnaires were used to collect data on mental maps related to the conflict. Both types of sources are assumed to at least partially reflect the perceptions and knowledge structures of the urban elite.

Newspaper Data

The two Ugandan newspapers, The Monitor and New Vision, published the most information about the conflict and were searched directly using the Lexis-Nexis online newspaper search. Both are printed in Kampala and have similar content, but formally The Monitor is independent and The New Vision is government-owned (we address potential limitations of newspapers as sources for content analysis in the discussion section). Articles published from January 01, 2001 to April 28, 2006 were searched for keywords 'Banyoro' and 'Bakiga', yielding 93 articles. Content analysis resulted in 266 quotes about causes of conflict. For each quote, the following information was coded: 'Date', 'Newspaper', 'Speaker', 'Category of Speaker', 'Tribe of Speaker', 'Who is to Blame?', and 'Category of Cause'. This procedure yielded 24 different types of actors and 50 different types of causes. Examples for codes for perceived causes are 'uncontrolled immigration' or 'Bakiga grab land'. Examples for actors are 'President', 'Police' or 'Mubende-Banyoro Committee'.

Interview and Questionnaire Data

Since we cannot rule out completely that reporting on the Bakiga-Banyoro conflict in the two newspapers was systematically distorted (e.g. due to political pressure), we also conducted an interview study among members of the urban elite in order to elicit perceptions of conflict causes. Several field trips to Kibaale District plus one field trip to Kabale District (home district of many Bakiga immigrants) were used to carry out *face-to-face semi-structured interviews*. Snowball sampling was used to recruit respondents by asking each interviewee if he or she could suggest other persons to interview and if he or she wanted to take a copy of the questionnaire to pass along. In total, 31 persons were interviewed (17 Banyoro, 8 Bakiga, 6 from other ethnic groups). Informants were asked to free list causes of conflict using the following question: 'Please list ALL possible causes of the conflict you can think of'. Informants were then asked to rank the top causes of conflict which were found

from the newspapers. Causes ranked in the interview are the top cause cited by all newspaper speakers from frequency 6 or more out of 196 newspaper statements. This gives 13 causes for ranking in the interview. The *questionnaire* contained demographic questions plus open-ended questions. The main part consisted of a list of 25 causes of the conflict as they were elicited during the newspaper analysis. The list of causes was composed as follows: the Banyoro top causes of conflict from frequency 3 or more (out of 99 newspaper quotes); the Bakiga top causes of conflict from frequency 2 or more (out of 36 news-paper quotes); the top cause cited by all speakers from frequency 5 or more (out of 196 newspaper quotes). In total, 55 persons filled out a questionnaire (18 Banyoro, 15 Bakiga, and 23 Other).

The free listing exercise of both the face-to-face interviews and the ques-tionnaires yielded 60 different types of causes, the most frequently mentioned being 'political gain of both parties'. The interview and questionnaire data confirm results from newspaper analysis. The top causes cited by all speakers are first political gain for both tribes, then uncontrolled immigration, then historical land issue unresolved, then post-election troubles.

Age of respondents from both the questionnaires and interviews ranged from 18 to 74 years, with an average of 34 years. 56% are married and 38% are unmarried (6% did not indicate). 77% are male and 22% are female (1% did not indicate). Education of respondents is as follows: Primary (1), Ordinary Level (16), Advanced Level (9), Certificate (7), Diploma (28), Degree (18), Masters (3), and PhD (1). Four respondents did not indicate their level of education. This summary of the level of education of respondents confirms the elite position of most respondents, since they are among the highly educated in the district, as expected since respondents must be educated to understand the English language questionnaires and interviews.

Measures
Perceived Causes of Conflict. Mental models of conflict were measured on different levels of aggregation. First, on the most fine-grained level, coding of quotes in the newspaper sample yielded 50 different categories of causes, and the interview and questionnaire data yielded 60 causes. Second, we classified the codes of the newspaper data and the interview and questionnaire statements into four broader theoretical categories: economic (e.g. desire for land as economic commodity), historical (e.g. unresolved issues with Baganda land-lords), political (e.g. tribal voting), cultural (e.g. cultural disrespect between tribes). As can be seen from Figure 1, the two different data collection methods yielded strikingly similar distributions of causes across these four general categories, demonstrating high levels of concurrent validity of our coding.
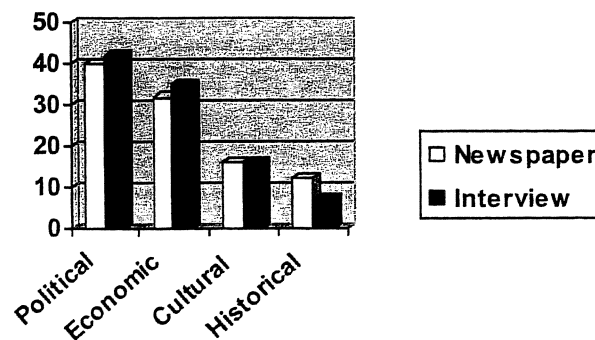
Figure 1 newspaper and interview causes

Rating of Causes. In the interview and questionnaire data collection, respondents were asked 'How important do you rate the following causes from 0 to 10? Note: 0 is not important. 10 is extremely important in causing the conflict'. In the interview, this question was followed by 13 causes, in the questionnaire by 25 causes drawn from the newspaper coding.

Blaming Relation. One of the working hypotheses derived from social dominance theory requires assessing out-group favoritism. We therefore assessed the degree to which members of each group considered their own or the other group as responsible for the conflict, by including the following question in the interview guideline and the questionnaire: 'Do you think the Banyoro or Bakiga are more to blame for causing the conflict?'. Similarly, in the newspaper quotes, for each quote we assessed whether the responsibility for the conflict or the incident was attributed to the Banyoro, to the Bakiga, or to both.

Social Groups. Both cultural consensus and social dominance theory consider individual's membership in specific social groups as a key variable. Whereas cultural consensus theory does not require making a priori assumptions about an ordering between the groups, social dominance theory suggests that any set of groups will have a status ordering specifying the type of social dominance relation in a specific domain. For both datasets, we therefore identify a speaker's membership in an ethnic group (Bakiga, Banyoro, other). Different sets of categories had to be used in the two datasets to assess intra-societal social position of actors. In the newspaper data, 24 types of actors were identified, based on the labels used in the newspaper article itself. Eleven of them refer to corporate actors, i.e. the speaker is identified as a member of this corporate actor. The remaining categories cover newspaper editors, reporters, politicians (minister, president, minister-president, members of parliament, government members), as well as civilians. In the interview and questionnaire data, respondents were asked to indicate their major source of making a living. This yielded seven categories: (1) Working/employed/dependent (n=18), (2) businessman or -woman or self-employed (n=8), (3) civil servant (n=13), (4)

student or teacher (n=12), (5) farmer (n=9), (6) member of NGO (n=14), (7) journalist (n=8).

Data Analysis Method
We applied consensus analysis (Romney et al, 1995) as implemented in the ANTHROPAC software (Borgatti, 1992) to find out to what degree the knowledge domain 'causes of conflict' can be considered as coherent or non-coherent. Consensus analysis of 'free lists' is a proven and robust anthropological technique for eliciting the boundaries and structure of knowledge domains. It produces reliable results already with sample sizes of around ten informants (Weller and Romney, 1999: 77).

As an input, it uses a matrix of agreement between respondents or subjects (e.g. correlation or covariance). In our case, the inputs per respondent are lists of perceived causes of the conflict as they were obtained through interviewing, questionnaires, or newspaper content analysis. The algorithm then tests to what degree the available information can be reduced or condensed into one or more coherent domains or 'factors'. The convention is to consider a domain as coherent (i.e. showing a high degree of homogeneity of knowledge) if the first factor is at least three times larger than the second factor (Caulkins and Hyatt, 1999: 9).

In addition to cultural consensus modeling techniques, we also apply several standard statistical techniques for data reduction (factor analysis, multi-dimensional scaling) and hypothesis testing (regression analysis).

Results

Coherence of the Knowledge Domain 'Perceived Causes of Conflict'
Results of cultural consensus analysis differ for the newspaper and the interview data. First, a calculation of consensus for the newspaper data was carried out for each of the three periods after the political key events mentioned above. The low ratios between the first and second factor for Periods 1, 2, and 3 (2.7, 1.7, and 2.6 respectively), are evidence of a lack of agreement among speakers in the newspapers about the causes. Hence, cause perceptions as they were mentioned in the newspaper represent a non-coherent domain with little consensus.

Further analysis of the newspaper data indicates that Banyoro and Bakiga hold very different positions. Members of the Banyoro most frequently cited the following causes of conflict: Bakiga's cultural disrespect, Bakiga grab land, Bakiga tribal voting, Banyoro prevent Bakiga from leadership, and Banyoro afraid to repeat history. The Bakiga most frequently cited political gain for both, Banyoro prevent Bakiga from leadership, history unresolved, and leaders inciting ethnic division.

Second, there is evidence for strong consensus concerning conflict causes among questionnaire and interview respondents. Consensus analysis for the whole sample – including Banyoro, Bakiga, and members of other ethnic groups – yields three factors (Eigenvalues 67, 1.9 and 1.3, respectively). With a

ratio of 35.8 between the eigenvalue of the first and the second factor, this domain can be considered as highly coherent. Similar findings are obtained if the analysis is performed separately for each of the three groups (Banyoro, Bakiga, Other).

In sum, consensus analysis of between-culture variation in the perception of conflict causes yields mixed results. Whereas elite opinions from interviews and questionnaires show a high level of coherence across ethnic groups, perceptions culled from newspaper quotes over a period of more than five years do not exhibit consensus, and exhibit more pronounced inter-ethnic differences in perceptions. We will discuss possible explanations for these inconsistent findings below.

Between-Cultural Variation in Perceived Causes

Figure 2 represents between-culture variation in perceived causes as they were elicited from the interviews. It exhibits a clear difference between the two ethnic groups. Statements made by Banyoro identify first and foremost political causes (79%), followed by historical causes (15%). Political reasons are key for Bakiga respondents, too, but to a lesser extent (57%). Instead, 22% of Bakiga refer to economic causes – compared to 3% of Banyoro. None of the Bakiga respondents mentioned historical reasons. These findings point towards the role perceptions rooted in collective identities and a shared history. The Banyoro, who consider themselves as the historical inhabitants of the area, derive the legitimacy of their claims partly from pointing towards historical reasons dating back to colonial times, whereas the Bakiga tend to frame it as primarily an economic issue, completely de-emphasizing historical reasons. The Bakiga fear expulsion by Banyoro, so they perceive political power as their means to sustain their control of land and other economic resources; on the other hand, the Banyoro fear domination by Bakiga, so they use their indigenous position to demand full control of political power and land. Banyoro in Kibaale feel ethno territorial supremacy over immigrants and even over other Banyoro due to their common history of suffering and resistance against their Baganda adversaries over the 'Lost Counties' which now make up Kibaale district.
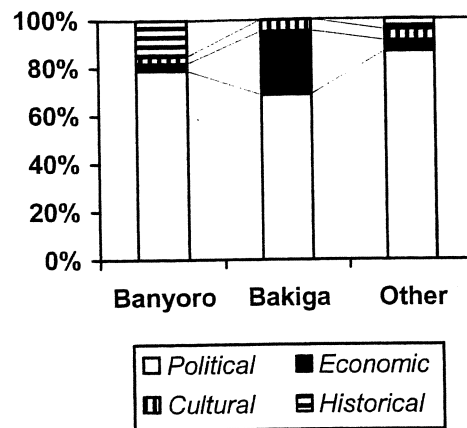
Figure 2: Perceived causes of conflict by ethnic group

Figure 3 provides a graphical representation of who blames whom per ethnic group, based on both the newspaper and the interview data. Again, the patterns between the two data sources are similar, though the results are more pronounced for the interview data. In both ethnic groups, the percentage of quotes in which the other ethnic group is blamed for the conflict is higher than the percentage of quotes blaming the own group. However, a striking difference exists in the relative frequency of quotes in which both parties are blamed simultaneously. More specifically, 36% (35% in interviews) of statements from Bakiga blame both, compared to 6% (12% in interviews) of statements from Banyoro. Moreover, 64% (52% in newspaper data) of Banyoro quotes blame Bakiga for the conflict, compared to 41% (33%) of Bakiga statements blaming Banyoro.
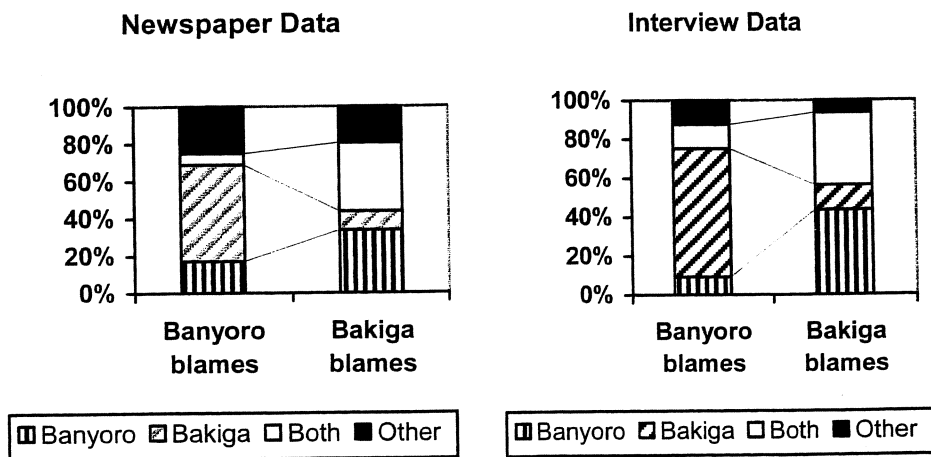

Figure 3: Blaming relationships

While all three groups rank 'Political Gain Desired by Both Tribes' among the top 3 causes of conflict, the relative weight given to the rankings differs: Bakiga and Other rank this political cause especially high. Also, while all three groups rank 'Tribal Voting' relatively high as a cause of conflict, the Banyoro say it is Bakiga tribal voting causing conflict, but Bakiga and Other tribes say it is everyone's tribal voting causing conflict. Furthermore, while all three groups rank 'Ethnic Intolerance of Both Tribes' relatively high as a cause of conflict, the Banyoro rank 'Ethnic Intolerance' as second in importance to the 'Historical Land Issue Unresolved' and 'Lack of Land Titles', but Bakiga and Other rank 'Ethnic Intolerance' as *more* important than 'Historical Land Issue Unresolved' and 'Lack of Land Titles'.

These patterns are in line with the predictions from social dominance theory and our *out-group favoritism hypothesis (H1)*, which suggested that group identification should be positively related to the endorsement of hierarchy-enhancing ideologies (high social dominance orientation) among members of high-status groups: low status groups are more likely to exhibit out-group favoritism than high status groups.

In fact, stereotypes show the Bakiga as a hardworking tribe with large families and high ambitions (Green, 2007). The Banyoro derive their higher status from their perception of being the original 'owners' of the land, and consequently consider themselves as superior. The low-status Bakiga can be expected to disregard the traditional hierarchy. For example, Banyoro leaders say only Banyoro should hold leadership positions because only Banyoro know the history of the district and therefore only Banyoro can really understand what is best for the district. For members of low-status groups, in contrast, the relationship should be just the opposite, as strong identification with one's lower status group should be associated with endorsement of ideologies that moderate the status hierarchy (low social dominance orientation). For example, Bakiga emphasize their significant contributions to the economic development of Kibaale.

Within-Cultural Variation in Perceived Causes

Our *status based consensus hypothesis (H2)* addresses within cultural variation and states that mental models of high status groups will differ from mental models of low status groups. In order to test it, we first need to distinguish high vs. low status social groups within both cultures. Earlier work on social stratification in Uganda has identified membership in civil service or the business community as the most prominent sources of societal status and prestige, whereas common peasants and the urban proletariat were considered as lower ranking groups (Byrnes, 1990; Heady, 2001: 327; Dahlberg, 1971: 621). Civil servants can be considered as a category of actors who – due to their closeness to power, their ability to control access to valued resources, and their relatively secure income situation – are not only likely to consider themselves as occupying a high status position in society, but are in fact perceived as such by other members of society. Business people and entrepreneurs, many of whom are part of the small but wealthy Ugandan elite which has accumulated wealth in previous regimes, are respected because of their economic success.

Hence, on the within-culture level, we distinguish the following social groups in our sample: (1) high social status groups: business entrepreneurs, civil servants; (2) low social status groups: farmers, workers, employees (of NGOs), teachers, and journalists.

In a second step, we need to test to what degree the conflict because perceptions differ between these groups. In order to achieve this, two operations were performed. First, we carried out a Multidimensional Scaling Analysis (MDS) on the respondent's consensus scores from the interview and questionnaire data (the Newspaper data did not yield sufficient information on membership in social groups). MDS is another data reduction technique designed to uncover hidden dimensions. Depending on the number of dimensions it uncovers, the technique determines the coordinates for each actor on each of these dimensions. The closer the coordinates of a set of actors resemble each other on all dimensions, the more similar they are with regard to the causes they mentioned. Second, to find out between which pairs of actors there were significant differences in cause perceptions, we then entered each respondent's score on the first dimension from the MDS into a Least Significant Difference Test (LSD). This method tests whether or not an observed difference between two categories is based on chance. If the values of two categories of actors differ significantly from each other, this means that these two groups disagree with regard to what they consider to be the solutions of the conflict. Results are reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean Differences in MDS-Score on Causes of Conflict between Social groups

	Business	Worker	Civil Servant	Student/ Teacher	Farmer	NGO employee
Working/Employed/ Dependent	.25			-		
Civil servant	.75*	.49				
Student/Teacher	.37	.11	-.38			
Farming	.17	-.08	-.57	-.19		
NGO	.27	.01	-.48	-.09	.09	
Journalist	-.12	-.38	-.87*	-.49	-.30	-.39

* The mean difference is significant at the .5 level. Questionnaire/interview Data (n= 86).

The findings are in line with Hypothesis 2 and indicate that the group of civil servants exhibits significant differences in perceptions compared to both the category of business/self-employed and the category of journalists. Hence, significant disagreement about perceived conflict causes seems to prevail between actors close to the public sector on the one hand, and actors in the economic or business sphere as well as journalists on the other hand. These differences hold independently of ethnic group membership or age, i.e. they cut across tribal affiliations and age groups, since our analysis controls for both factors. The sign of the difference score between civil servants and business

people is positive, indicating that the difference between these groups is one of degree rather than of substance, with civil servants exhibiting a higher score than business people. The difference score between civil servants and journalists is negative, indicating that the mental models of these two groups differ in substance.

Social Categories and Perceptions of Conflict Causes
Our *high status discrimination hypothesis (H3)* predicts that members of high status groups will show higher levels of discrimination in their perceptions than members of low status groups. In order to test this hypothesis, we need to carry out three steps.

First, we need to distinguish between groups of high and low status. As discussed above, on the level of ethnic groups in Kibaale, the Banyoro as first settlers consider themselves as superior to the 'immigrant groups'; at the within-culture level, civil servants and business people are considered as high status.

In a second step, we need to identify those cause perceptions which represent strong attitudes of out-group discrimination or can be seen as a legitimizing myth which serves to justify the 'superiority' of the high status group. Since the perceived conflict causes from the interview and questionnaire data refer to partially overlapping underlying dimensions, we first carried out an exploratory factor analysis on all 24 perceived conflict causes. Factor analysis is a data reduction technique which detects latent dimensions among a set of variables. It tries to summarize variation among a set of observed variables through a smaller set of unobserved variables, called factors. Factors are then interpreted based on those observed variables with a high 'loading' on this factor. Our analysis produced six factors (see Table 2). The first one covers perceived conflict causes related to immigration issues. This factor can also be seen as the most important one, since it explains almost 30% of the variance in the data, compared to 17% for the second, and less than 10% for the remaining factors. The second factor covers causes related to the political struggle between the Bakiga and the Banyoro, and captures beliefs about Banyoro rejecting or not accepting Bakiga leadership. The remaining factors refer to ethnic intolerance, forceful acquisition of land by Bakiga, elections and voting, and Bakiga domination, respectively. Two of them most clearly contain statements which can be interpreted as 'legitimizing myths' justifying Banyoro dominance. The first factor (immigration issues) refers to uncontrolled immigration and politically motivated immigration, thereby referring to a threat to supremacy which is caused by illegitimate strategies or bad immigration policies. The fourth factor contains the most explicit negative statements about Bakiga as a group, describing them as 'arrogant and forceful', in addition to directly accusing them for 'grabbing land'.

Table 2: Factor analysis - from questionnaires and interviews

		Factor					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Uncontrolled immigration	.862*			.245		
2.	Big shots send Bakiga to Kibaale	.823*		-.291			.223
3.	Immigration for political votes	.765*		-.357	.289		
4.	Bakiga in political power leads to domination	.659				.303	.453
5.	Land disputes	.629	.427			.312	
6.	Banyoro ethnic intolerance	-.537	.234	.214		.273	.222
7.	Lack of a clear policy on resettlement	.521			.408		
8.	Banyoro reject Bakiga in leadership after election		.888*				
9.	Banyoro prevent Bakiga from leadership in Kibaale		.851*				
10.	Political gain desired by both tribes		.726*	.303	-.302		
11.	Leaders inciting Banyoro against Bakiga	-.265	.579	.387			
12.	Losers making fuss after election		.458	.439		.430	
13.	Leaders inciting ethnic division			.825*			
14.	Ethnic intolerance of both tribes	-.282		.713*			
15.	Banyoro unwilling or afraid to repeat the past	.286		.615	.339		.345
16.	Bakiga cultural disrespect	.534		-.581	.272		
17.	Bakiga arrogant and forceful	.431			.756*		
18.	Bakiga grabbing land	.431		-.262	.739*		
19.	Historical land issue unresolved				.714*	.231	
20.	Election results		.360			.795*	
21.	Bakiga tribal voting	.564				.629*	
22.	Economic interests of both tribes			.206	-.508	-.528	-.269
23.	Bakiga domination						.848*
24.	Allocation of land to Bakiga	.331					.742*
	% of Variance	29.6	16.7	8.5	7.2	5.6	4.6
	Initial eigenvalue	7.1	4.0	2.0	1.7	1.3	1.1

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

In a third step, we need to assess to what degree the different status groups differ in terms of holding strong or weak attitudes of out-group discrimination. We used stepwise regression analysis to do this. Six models were estimated,

one for each of the above mentioned factors as dependent variables, and membership in the ethnic (Banyoro, Bakiga, Other), and social (civil servant, business person, student, teacher) as independent (i.e. explanatory) variables. The findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Results from Stepwise Regression Analysis (interview data)

	Factor 1 Immigration issues			Factor 3 Ethnic division			Factor 4 Forceful acquisition of land by Bakiga			Factor 5 Elections and voting		
	Beta	t	p	Beta	t	sig	Beta	t	sig	Beta	t	sig
Constant		.880	.385		1.584	.122		-1.911	.064		.806	.425
Bakiga	-.356	-2.318	.026**	-.011	-.064	.950	.154	1.237	.224	.180	1.185	.244
Banyoro	.033	.192	.849	-.391	-2.583	.014**	.757	6.348	.000**	.102	.664	.511
Other Tribe	-.035	-.192	.849	.012	.064	.950	-.175	-1.237	.224	-.253	-1.702	.097
Business	-.202	-1.314	.197	-.135	-.862	.395	-.010	-.084	.933	.020	.127	.900
Working	-.263	.794	-.044	.017	.114	.910	.036	.307	.761	-.374	-2.456	.019**
Journalist	.420	.677	.070	-.069	-.451	.655	-.104	-.925	.361	-.113	-.732	.469
NGO	-.397	.694	-.066	.047	.302	.764	-.053	-.445	.659	-.167	-1.059	.297
Civil servant	.897	.376	.148	.116	.748	.459	.264	2.332	.026**	-.024	-.152	.880
Student-teacher	.372	.712	.062	-.076	-.494	.624	.061	.527	.602	.165	1.061	.296
Farming	.001	.999	.000	-.066	-.406	.687	-.444	-3.767	.001**	.030	.188	.852
Age	-1.690	.100	-.271	.097	.636	.529	.118	1.064	.295	.086	.556	.582
Model stats	P=.026, Adjusted R²=.103			P=.014, Adjusted R²=.130			P=.000, Adjusted R²=.532			P=.019, Adjusted R²=.117		

For two of the six factors ('Political struggle between Banyoro and Bakiga' and 'Bakiga domination') none of the explanatory variables yielded significant effects. That is, neither ethnic group nor social position explains variations in the perception that political struggle or Bakiga domination are among the causes of the conflict.

For the remaining four factors of cause perceptions, the following patterns could be found. First, whereas Bakiga respondents have a significantly lower chance of mentioning immigration as a cause of the conflict than other social groups, the Banyoro have a significantly lower chance of mentioning ethnic divisions, but are significantly more likely to mention forceful acquisition by Bakiga as a cause. Second, workers are significantly less likely to consider elections as a cause of the conflict. Third, and particularly noteworthy: whereas civil servants are more likely to consider forceful acquisition by Bakiga as a cause, farmers are significantly less likely to mention Bakiga aggression. Again, these findings are in line with social dominance theory's prediction that members of high status groups will show higher levels of discrimination than members of low status groups, if we consider civil servants and Banyoro as high status categories: being a Banyoro or a civil servant significantly increases the likelihood of perceiving forceful acquisition of land through Bakiga as a conflict cause. This is particularly noteworthy in the light of the fact that farmers are significantly *less* likely to share this view. This may be explained by the fact that the rural population does not experience 'Forceful acquisition of land by Bakiga', as explained by The Kibaale Land Rights Desk Officer during our interview: 'I have 1879 cases filed in this office, which deal with dispute resolution. There is no case of Banyoro accusing Bakiga of grabbing land. All cases are between Banyoro and Banyoro or Bakiga and Bakiga. Banyoro are selling land to Bakiga. I checked tribunals and paralegals in each area. There is no case of Banyoro accusing Bakiga of grabbing land. Bakiga buy land or were given land from government'.

The differential effect for civil servants and farmers indicates that independently of being Bakiga or Banyoro, farmers and civil servants seem to have completely opposite opinions concerning forceful acquisition of land by Bakiga as a cause.

Discussion

Drawing on both cultural consensus and social dominance theory allowed us to formulate hypotheses on the content and structure of emic perceptions of conflict causes. As predicted, asymmetries in perceptions are systematically related to power differences between different types of actors. Members of both ethnic groups agree that the salient root causes are first and foremost political in nature, and also seem to have highly overlapping perceptions with regard to other causes. The high level of agreement between both cultures in the perception of causes puts into perspective earlier arguments which suggested ethnic fault-lines as the major obstacle against the formation of a sustainable solution to land conflict. Whereas consensus between ethnic groups is high with regard to perception of conflict causes, social dominance mechanisms fuel asymmetric

patterns of mutual blaming, with Bakiga respondents being far more inclined to blame both ethnic groups as responsible for the conflict than Banyoro respondents. Our analyses further show that opposing views concerning perceived causes mainly exist between different types of stakeholders – independently of their ethnic affiliation. Civil servants play a key role in the creation and maintenance of this ideological divide, since their perceptions are significantly opposed to those of other important stakeholders in Ugandan society.

We conclude with a discussion of potential methodological, theoretical, and practical implications of our findings.

Methodological Implications
With regard to our research methods, two issues deserve further attention. The first finding that requires further exploration is the difference found between newspaper data and interview data about consensus between ethnic groups. A major potential limitation of these newspapers may derive from politically biased and one-sided reporting. Ugandan media certainly are under political pressure. During our period of observation, Uganda dropped in the Worldwide Press Freedom Index from rank 52 (out of 139 countries) in 2002 to rank 116 (out of 167 countries) in 2006 (Reporters Without Borders). In particular The Monitor has been the target of intimidation and pressure from the Museveni government, which increased its pressure after 9/11 (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2009). Most of the sedition charges relate to reports on military operations, in particular related to the insurgency in northern Uganda (Tabaire, 2007). We do not have evidence of systematic government pressures with regard to reports and statements about the conflict between the Bakiga and Banyoro, which are the focus of our study. In its country report on Uganda, Article 19, a human rights organization focusing on the promotion of free expression and freedom of information, is positive about the quality and neutrality of Ugandan newspapers: 'Although the standard of reporting in the print media and the neutrality of the papers is good, low levels of literacy and the costs of newspapers restrict their impact. Even so, the print media have given a significant voice to varying political views, and the government has previously sought to limit the free expression of opinion in newspapers through law suits, threats and restrictions on publication and reporters. Even the State-owned *The New Vision* is neither averse to criticizing the government nor immune from government criticism.' (Article 19, 2009).

In addition to the possible biases that might result from political pressure on journalists, three more technical explanations for the difference between newspaper and interview results can be given. First, since respondents were recruited through snowball sampling, the tendency towards attitudinal and class homophily which usually guides the formation of social relations is likely to produce a more coherent result. Second, stressing differences in positions may to some degree be inherent in journalistic accounts of social conflicts. Third, there is only partial overlap between the types of actors in the newspaper quotes and the actors in the interview data. The former contains a large number of speakers representing corporate actors, some of which have as an explicit purpose to propagate a specific position in the land conflict (e.g. the MBC).

Given these differences in the sources, the divergences we found in consensus between newspaper reports and interview data are less surprising. It should also be noted that the two types of sources show very high overlap in the relative frequencies of the types of causes, which indicates that newspaper reports are not biased with regard to the content of reports on the Bakiga-Banyoro conflict.

The second issue relates to the methodological requirements for cultural consensus analysis. Unlike traditional attribute based statistical analysis in which individuals are the unit of analysis, the investigation of consensus structures uses cognitive representations of informants as units of analysis, and can produce results with high statistical power even with very small numbers of informants (Weller and Romney, 1999: 77). In the context of such research designs, our study can build on relatively large sample sizes. The newspaper study is based on 196 conflict cause perception statements, grouped into 50 categories, for 24 types of actors. Our interview data yielded 60 types of causes, for 86 informants.

Finally, a potential limitation of our design is the focus on elite perceptions. Literacy rates in Uganda are still very low, and newspapers are far less popular than television or radio transmissions. Our study also did not investigate the reverse process of media influencing conflict cause perceptions. More fine-grained investigations of consensus structures in non-elite settings, differences between types of media, and the effect of media on individual knowledge structures all represent potentially fruitful future refinements of our approach.

Theoretical Implications

Though building on a well-established line of conflict theories which stress the importance of perceptions and cognitions in triggering or reproducing social conflict, our theoretical approach demonstrates the fruitfulness of jointly considering cause perceptions and their social structural foundations. Social dominance theory identifies hierarchical structures as one of the major root causes behind inter-group conflict, and offers explicit assumptions about the cognitive expression of these structural differences. Other classical conflict theories have done so before, emphasizing the material basis of ideologies, prejudice or hegemonic control. In the majority of these attempts, cognitions were not approached in terms of a fine grained analysis of consensus between knowledge structures. More recently, also institutional scholars have suggested paying closer attention to the link between institutional structures and cognitions. Emphasizing the distinction between rules-in-form and rules-in-use (Aoki, 2001), these scholars argue that deliberate institutional change through the creation or modification of formal rules can only be effective in guiding human behavior if people expect others to act according to the rules. Institutions should therefore be conceptualized as sets of shared perceptions that give rise to common knowledge (Aoki, 2001). Institutions constitute the overarching cognitive structures which tie together individual mental models, because individuals only have a truncated and simplified mental model of the overall game. Changes in formal property rights will therefore only have the desired effects if the different types of stakeholders involved actually believe that all actors will comply with the rules.

The cultural consensus model provides a tool for such fine grained approaches to cognitions, mental models and knowledge structures. In combination with structural approaches to conflict, it has the potential to transcend the often invoked dichotomy between structural and cognitive theories of conflict.

Practical Implications

Which implications do our findings have for the design of viable conflict resolution strategies and theories of practice as mentioned in the beginning of this article? To complement our study on cause perceptions we also have asked our respondents to free-list their perceived solutions of the conflict. We received 249 statements referring to 53 different solutions. The most frequently cited solutions were: land titling (28), sharing of political positions (17), control of immigration (14), dialogue (12), and resettlement policy (12). These statements point towards the need for a two pronged strategy. The first one is also advocated by institutional explanations as they were mentioned in the beginning of this article. It builds on the design of legal institutional solutions like land titling and transparent regulations of resource allocations to different groups. The second and complementary strategy of conflict resolution advocates peace dialogues. It is in line with the culturalist approaches to conflict, since one key mechanism underlying this strategy consists in the creation of consensus among the conflicting parties. The first Peace Dialogue to tackle the Bakiga-Banyoro conflict was indeed held in Kagadi (September 18, 2006), during fieldwork for this study, and was attended by the second author. The meeting was well attended beyond expected numbers with about 80 persons including many opinion leaders; however, the majority of participants were Banyoro, and leaders of the Bafuruki community and leaders of the Mubende Banyoro Committee (MBC) chose not to attend. Peace dialogues can be one means for political leaders to learn about local perceptions, and can thereby facilitate consensus building. As one of the speakers at the 2006 Peace Dialogue Speaker said, 'We have a problem of many power centers in Kibaale. I call them centers of confusion'. Therefore, with the Banyoro and Bakiga in Kibaale, as with any conflict, the conflict is not likely to be fully resolved until consensus is reached on the local issues that matter in the minds of local groups. When locals were asked in questionnaires and interviews how they thought events would continue, 88% reported that they thought the conflict would continue, and 12% reported that they thought the conflict would not continue for long. One interview respondent was optimistic that the conflict would not escalate because of dialogue: 'Conflict will continue in the near future but in longer term there is hope because dialogue has began. [...] The question is how long, not sure. 2-3 years maybe will have sobered. I hope for next election.'

The increasing significance of such public dialogue has recently been stressed also by academics such as Poletta and Lee (2006): 'Public discussion of hot-button political issues can yield areas of unanticipated agreement. Even if participants do not change their minds, they will likely come to recognize a greater range of preferences as legitimate. Once that recognition occurs, people are likely to accept a decision that does not match their preferences exactly'.

Understanding the local perceptions of a conflict is crucial for finding a mutually satisfactory solution. Local perceptions offer several key insights for intervention which need to be incorporated in intervention plans.

First, all the locals, both Banyoro and Bakiga, perceive political causes as paramount in the conflict. Since political leaders have successfully used the historical land issue to polarize tribes and gain support, conflict resolution strategies must address the politicizing and associated tribal sentiments which are now dominant in the conflict. Indeed, many respondents expected more violent conflict at election times: 'Conflict has died down now because no election. I expect a crisis again next election'. Political motives, not land, and not tribalism, was confirmed by all analyses to be the top motivation for conflict. Based on the variations of statements among ethnic and social group and their shift in focus after political events, it appears that political leaders have used the unresolved historical land issues and economic interests to stir up tribal animosity for their own political gain and such conflict is likely to occur at election time. Hence, timing of conflict resolution interventions will be crucial, since elections are likely to increase the salience of dissensus rather than consensus between the relevant stakeholders.

Second, policy makers' inconsistency and lack of agreement with the majority's view of the causes of the conflict indicate that policy makers need to find consensus among themselves, and they need to understand the views of the different status groups within their own culture, before it will be possible to agree on policy.

Third, identifying the majority social grouping (locals, district council, MPs, and Ministers) and the social grouping in opposition to the majority (the national reporters, the Lands Minister, and the MBC) is key for identifying the key camps which must be reconciled, for identifying which influential actors could be targeted to have the greatest impact on other's perceptions, and for determining how to prioritize and target different groups differently. For example, realizing the Banyoro's extreme Bakiga-blaming position, led by the Mubende-Banyoro Committee (MBC), suggests that this group is a priority party for moving towards conflict resolution, and a specific, culturally sensitive plan will be necessary to negotiate with the MBC. Sensitive topics for each tribe can also be predicted and prepared for since only Bakiga gave high significance to 'Banyoro jealous of Bakiga prosperity' as a conflict cause, only Banyoro and Other tribes gave high significance to 'uncontrolled immigration', and only Other tribes gave high significance to 'economic interests' and 'poverty'. Furthermore, identification of subgroups within the Banyoro and Bakiga tribes that share perceptions, such as civil servants, suggests a starting point for reconciliation between the tribes.

Fourth, events identified by the locals as sparks of the conflict, which so far are the Bakiga winning elections and allocation of land, should have specific resolution strategies designed, so that future elections and allocation of land do not spark the same conflict sentiments. Such findings from local perceptions are extremely valuable when designing an effective, properly targeted intervention.

Conclusion

This research is among the first to apply cultural consensus methodology to the analysis of perceptions of conflict causes. The method proved to be a powerful tool to reveal context specific cognitive patterns underlying the emergence and perpetuation of social conflict. It is to be hoped that such insights into emic or lay theories of conflict may eventually also provide useful information for the design of durable interventions.

Most outsiders refer to the conflict in Kibaale as the 'land' conflict, and others refer to it as the 'tribal' conflict. Yet local views of the causes of conflict are much more complex. In fact, differences in perceptions are found between civil servants and other social groups, regardless of tribe. To fully understand a conflict, this research provides an example of the value of asking locals their perceptions of the causes and considering differences among ethnic groups and social groups.

As this Ugandan situation has shown, local groups can use political means, land issues and historical grievances, etc. to further their own (selfish) ends. This does not resolve the conflict, it only perpetuates it, perhaps even escalates it. No matter where such conflicts exist, consideration must be made of the variances between factions. Consensus can then be developed from that knowledge. This is no small task, but it is the path that must be followed if stable security is to become more than just a future hope. This is the task and duty of the reader who expects to contribute to a brighter future, in Uganda, or wherever similar conflicts arise.

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