**Disaggregating the Causal Factors
Unique to Child Soldiering:
The case of Liberia**

James B. Pugel
2007

About the Ford Institute for Human Security
The mission of the Ford Institute for Human Security is to conduct research that focuses on a series of transnational threats to the human rights of civilian populations. The Institute's purpose is to generate independent research, disseminate policy papers, and advocate nonpartisan policy proposals available to both domestic and international policymakers.

In today's increasingly globalized world, there has been a shift from traditional threats focused on the territorial integrity of nations to global threats that center on the safety of individuals. The Ford Institute for Human Security at the University of Pittsburgh recognizes the critical importance of these emergent problems in human security.

This working paper is a product of the Ford Institute's working group, "Child Soldiers Initative: Building Knowledge about Children and Armed Conflict". The Child Soldiers Initiative is an ongoing network of scholars, policymakers and representatives of civil society engaged in promoting and developing policy proposals addressing the recruitment and reintegration of child soldiers.

Disaggregating the Causal Factors Unique to Child Soldiering: The case of Liberia

James B. Pugel

Abstract

Many studies on the phenomenon of child soldiering have asserted demographic profiles and postulated causations, but few have done so within the context of an empirically based, faction-oriented population study. The failure to disaggregate the population of former fighters for analytical comparison has resulted in findings that, albeit valid for the category of children, are not necessarily factors that are unique to child combatants. Drawing upon a new, randomized, large-N, nationwide ex-combatant dataset taken from across Liberia in February and March 2006, this chapter endeavors to highlight the differences as well as similarities that exist between the child and adult fighter along factional lines. The interviews collected information on the ex-combatants' socio-economic demographics, geographic locations during the 14-year civil war and various combatant actions while serving with their former factions during the conflict, factional recruitment and incentives, level of participation in international intervention programs in post-conflict Liberia, and the current status of their social integration and political expressions. The chapter will disaggregate the sample of ex-combatants into adult and child categories as well as by their associated former factions for comparative analysis. The findings follow a methodology that tracks the sample of ex-combatants from the onset of conflict through to the current state of their attempts at reintegration. Discussion illuminates the factors associated with pre-conflict family structure and disposition, factional recruitment, incentives, and participation activities. The former combatants' cycle of participation will close with a discussion of the variables that are then affected in a post-conflict community reintegration. The chapter

ultimately reinforces some of the prominent anecdotal evidence presented in the literature, but also presents an argument that challenges the uniqueness of their suppositions regarding child soldiering and offers a new approach for continued research.

Put the boys in, and may God forgive me for the order.[1]

-Confederate General J.C. Breckinridge,

Battle of New Market, 15 May 1864

Introduction

With a contemporary international focus on the issue of employing child soldiers in inter- and intra-state conflicts, a new area of research for academics has opened to identify and quantify the causal factors attributable to the practice. While the practice of employing children in combat, both in direct actions and supporting logistical roles, is not new to the world stage, the increased usage and blatant disregard of moral and human rights have been so pervasive in recent years that numerous statutes and protocols have been set by international bodies[2] in order to curb miscreant behaviors and bring some semblance of order to the chaotic nature of warfare. International expectation may well be defined by a line that demarcates a child from an adult with respect to the attribute of age, but the researcher and analyst interested in determining the causal factors associated with child soldiering will find the line fraught with ambiguity and complication. The situation is further complicated by the plethora of nefariously enigmatic military leaders that accompany many of world's contemporary conflicts. The extreme variety of organizational and leadership styles advanced on the modern African landscape during the pursuit of power, glory, or resource attainment directly affects the conduct and environment

within which the conflict is propagated. Through a rigorous investigation of a large-N data set of a sample of ex-combatants from Liberia, the relevance of factional disaggregation will become starkly apparent within the context of determining causal factors that are unique to the population of child soldiers.

Defining the Child Soldier

As Singer (2006) points out in his chapter, the phenomenon of child soldiering is not particularly new to the landscape of warfare. Confronting the issue and exacting punishment upon the heads of those who employ the practice within their respective fighting forces, however, is quite new. It is not until 1989 and the Convention on the Rights of a Child that a measurable attribute is offered to identify a child soldier – age 15. The UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Children and Armed Conflict currently cites 30 situations of concern around the world and estimates that over 250,000 children are currently serving as soldiers in conflict.[3] An increase in the propagation of child soldier employment across the African continent is quantified by Achvarina & Reich (2006) and allows great insight into the seriousness of the issue. World reaction to the "epidemic" has resulted in a further affirmation of the eradication of the phenomenon through introduction of an optional protocol to the 1989 Convention which lifts the age to 18 years. A step towards enabling enforcement was taken with the February 2005 Children and Armed Conflict Report of the Secretary-General when it framed a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the gravest violations and their perpetrators.[4]

While 18 years of age may be a fair delineation for adulthood in most western societies, the threshold is looked upon by many societies and cultures in Africa, as well as South America,

as inflated. In the chapter offered by Andvig & Gates (2006), the precision associated with the attribute of age as a competent variable from which to distinguish a child is challenged. The authors argue that "childhood is a social construct" and that the demarcation of the world's youth may be more properly identified within the context of their unique societies. Gutiérrez (2006) reinforces this view in his chapter on the organization of minors in the conflict in Colombia. Citing Ferro & Uribe (2002), Gutiérrez remarks that the 15-year-old threshold for entrance into the very powerful guerrilla force Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) is justified as an "act of social inclusion which unequivocally shows the massive character of the cause."

The ambiguity that taints the international definition of a child soldier is also resident within the societal constructs that exist in Africa today. A universal feature of African social institutions is the concept of "age-grades" and "age-sets" (Khapoya, 1998) that define a collection of a local communities' males by age groups. Khapoya notes that the cohorts subsequently proceed through "distinctive life stages" that pass them from infancy to elderhood. In Liberia, secret societies assist communities with the transition of these cohorts from boys and girls to men and women. The Poro and Sande societies represent the communities' male and female equities, respectively. One Liberian tribe, the Kpelle, has been known to initiate its members to young adulthood as early as seven years old (Erchak, 1998). Once initiated into a society after undergoing all the tests of the rites of passage, the inductee is no longer regarded as a child and may pursue employment and marital opportunities as well as take on more significant communal responsibility. Defense of one's community is also an obligation of the society's members and is actually the primary objective of initiation training of communal cohorts in Liberia that fall outside the influence of the Poro and Sande.

Predilections and Indications

A variety of theories have been put forth to explain some of the causal factors associated with the employment of child soldiers as well as postulations on rebel recruitment and allegiance. With regard to the general study of recruitment, Weinstein (2002) argues that how warring factions are organized, either around material incentives or through commonality of identity, affect the dynamics of the unit during conflict. Azam (2004) seeks to address the question of why warlords victimize their own civilians – an effort to model insurgent leaders for the determination of their propensity for violence. Gates (2002) offers a model of rebel organizations, based upon principle-agent analysis, which demonstrates the criticality of geography, ethnicity, and ideology in shaping recruitment.

In the examination of the causal factors associated with child soldier recruitment, many more theories have been derived in order to postulate predilections. The nature of a child's pre-conflict disposition is analyzed by numerous authors in this volume. Poverty and socio-economic disruptions are examined by Reich & Achvarina (2006), Becker (2006) and Singer (2006). The idea that one's unfortunate socio-economic circumstance is causally related to child soldiering lies at the root of most of the anecdotal evidence in circulation today.

Recruiting techniques as well as the incentives utilized by warring factions are of primary concern when looking to uncover the linkages to the employment of child soldiers. Abduction and coercion are by far the most prevalent techniques cited by the popular media. Becker (2006) and Oluwaniyi (2003) examine methods of forced recruiting in Asia and Africa, respectively. The vulnerabilities that enable the recruitment are keenly addressed through Lischer's (2006) theory that vulnerability paths are key to understanding "voluntary," coerced recruitment while

Achvarina & Reich (2006) examine the issues of human security involved with refugee and displaced person movements and settlements.

While many of the theories above infer causal relationships for the factors attributable to child soldiering, there has yet been a study that examines the uniqueness of the suppositions in a quantitative approach. The failure to disaggregate the population of former fighters for analytical comparison has resulted in findings that, albeit valid for the category of children, are not necessarily unique to child combatants. As alluded to in the section on defining the child soldier, age can be a fairly subjective attribute. This subjectivity produces an ambiguity that makes it very difficult for researchers, analysts, NGOs, and others to distinguish factors that are uniquely tied to the plight of the child soldier. Children are products of the general population and associated societal constructs and will exhibit many of the same vulnerabilities as the population that they are derived from. Therefore, for example, it is possible that poverty and societal breakdowns,[5] which garner much attention as a catalyst for conflict, affect adults as much as children. With so many of the same contextual variables present within a given conflict, or for that matter, across conflicts, how does one discover variation?

Disaggregation is then posed as requisite to fully understanding the nuances of the causal factors associated with child soldiering, and the identification of an appropriate unit of analysis must be identified. Andvig & Gates (2006) postulate that the factors that "shape supply are largely invariant across conflicts" and that researchers should focus on the factors influencing the demand for the child soldiers. The theory advanced by the authors recognizes the impact of personal leadership styles, organizational structures, and a military group's resource endowment as factors possibly enabling high child/adult ratios within a fighting force. Gutiérrez (2006) provides an illustration of the uniqueness of warring parties within the context of the ongoing

conflict in Colombia. The author contends that "organizations are a reference point" and that generalities regarding the causal factors of child soldiering attributable to the conflict (vice a particular faction within the conflict) have limited utility.

Civil War in Liberia – A Review of the Warring Factions

Fourteen years of civil war in Liberia saw a successive escalation of child participation. As a rebel leader on Christmas Eve 1989, Charles Taylor began his advance on President Samuel K. Doe's regime. Achvarina & Reich (2006) suggest that Taylor carried with him a force comprised of almost 30% children by the time Liberia made it to an interim peace in 1997. A failed DDR and the installation of warlord Taylor as president breathed renewed life into the conflict and plunged the country into anarchy again. From 1999 to 2003, the final stage of the conflict, Levitt (2005) labels the "LURD and MODEL Insurrections." By 2004, a Joint Needs Assessment conducted by Liberia's transitional government, the World Bank, and the UN estimated there to be approximately 53,000 combatants – this time, almost 40% of them were children.[6] All signatories (Taylor's government, LURD, and MODEL) to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which ended the conflict were known to have children in their ranks. While each warring party operated generally within the confines of a nation-state slightly larger that the US state of Ohio (111,369 sq. km), each faction took on specific characteristics – driven in part by the goals of their respective organizations and the men at their helms.

Taylor's Government Troops and Militias

Charles Taylor's troops were distributed throughout the depth and breadth of Liberia. The Liberian president had made his initial entrance in 1989 through the rural stretches of Nimba county. At the town of Butuo, across the border from Côte d'Ivoire, Charles Taylor's Libyan trained force of approximately 100 fighters began the march to Monrovia (Ellis, 1999). During the seven years of conflict, Taylor especially recruited children to support his operational efforts. The most notorious of all was the Small Boys Unit (SBU). Many of these boys would obediently return to arms when Taylor called for support during the LURD and MODEL insurrections. The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) was a shell of an organization after two purges in seven years. The first was Doe's push to fill the ranks with ethnic Krahn, and the second was the result of a dismal disarmament process that failed to re-create a suitable national defense force. Taylor would now rely on his militias and a few specially trained paramilitary units to protect Liberian interests. When the two rebel organizations began to hem Taylor into the confines of Monrovia, the demand for child soldiers reportedly rose. By December of 2004, the number of ex-combatants claiming government affiliation through registration with the NCDDRR[7] was 28,008, of which 2,886 were children.

Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)

In April 1999, only two years after the end of the first round of violent conflict, insurgent activity erupted in the northern county of Lofa. The LURD, however, reportedly initiated the second major incursion of the new stage of the war in mid-2000 with the singular goal of ousting Charles Taylor. Journalist James Brabazon, who lived with the LURD during operations, stated that through his interviews, the rebel organization initiated the conflict with a group equal in size to the one Charles Taylor had on his Christmas Eve raid in 1989 – approximately 70

fighters.[8] The largest and longest-acting antagonist of Charles Taylor the president, the LURD is said to have been formed in July 1999 in Sierra Leone as a result of dissatisfied Liberian exiles from the ULIMO faction - a faction that competed against Taylor during the first stage of the war but had since disbanded. Brabazon (2003) and Levitt (2005) both note that the core members of the LURD came from the Krahn and Mandingo tribes and that many joiners were non-Liberians from bordering countries. Brabazon notes that during his stay with the LURD in the second half of 2002, the use of child soldiers in a combat capacity was discouraged, but employment of children as porters was commonplace. June and July of 2003 saw heavy fighting with the LURD putting Monrovia to siege, practically starving it. Discipline in the ranks was heavily dependent upon the unit commander. By December of 2004, ex-combatants claiming LURD affiliation through registration with the NCDDRR[9] was 34,285 of which 4,228 were children. This number of registered child soldiers is almost double the size of the MODEL and government forces.

Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL)

The MODEL insurgency came out of southeast Liberia and has been said to have run its operations from Grand Gedeh county. It is thought to be a breakaway faction from the LURD,[10] whose membership was heavily dominated by the Krahn tribe. Little has been published in the literature on this rebel organization which entered the fight in the final stages of the conflict. Entering the war in early 2003, news reported that by the 28th of April, MODEL had attacked urban areas along the coast (Greenville) as well as a major town deep in the interior county of Nimba – Tappita.[11] The MODEL was reportedly supported from bases in Côte d'Ivoire and initially drew recruits from Liberian refugees. By December of 2004, the number of ex-

combatants claiming MODEL affiliation through registration with the NCDDRR[12] was 13,156, of which 2,232 were children.

Methodology

Against a backdrop of a nation emerging from civil war and a peaceful round of national democratic elections, a large-scale nationwide study was conducted. Fieldwork and data collection for this project occurred in February and March of 2006 - just over two and a half years from the signing of the CPA on 18 August 2003. The survey was conceived in order to provide an initial assessment of the progress made towards the objectives of national reconciliation, conflict prevention, and social and economic reintegration and the sustainable development made by the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DDRR) and the Community Based Recovery (CBR) interventions. A 185-question interview intake form collected respondent information that pertained to wartime factional recruitment and participation as well as post-conflict socio-economic expressions and status. A local Liberian NGO, the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), was contracted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to take the interviews from the respondents in private one-on-one environments, and the author served as the project's principal investigator.

The study instituted a randomized, nationwide sampling approach in order to obtain a representative sample of ex-combatants by category of DDRR program participation or non-participation and gender. Former combatants under the age of 18 were excluded from this study for focus and logistical reasons. Of note, however, is that approximately 108 of the 590

respondents included in this survey would have been under the age of 18 at the time of the signing of the CPA in 2003. As of February 2005, the National Commission on DDRR (NCDDRR) commission reported that almost 11% of the disarmed combatants were children.

This chapter then disaggregates the sample population into two categories that correspond to respondent ages at the time of the signing of the CPA. The child soldier group consists of 108 cases that were between the ages of 15 and 17 in 2003. Some of these former child combatants reported seeing action as early as September 1990, but the majority of the respondents indicated that they joined the fighting between 2002 and 2003. The adult soldier group contains 482 cases of ex-combatants who were over the age of 18 at the time of the signing of the CPA. Greater insight is provided through a second round of disaggregation into their associated factional affiliations. While the original study separated the sample into groups that were present at various times throughout the entirety of the civil war, only the three major contemporary competitive factions will be addressed in this chapter. The LURD, MODEL, and government forces and militias of Charles Taylor account for 388 of the respondents.

Findings

Disaggregation analysis of the Liberian ex-combatant data set is presented in a staged, time-sequenced manner. The findings follow the sample from the onset of hostilities through to an assessment of their efforts to reintegrate into their communities two and a half years after the official close of hostilities. The findings discussed below are augmented with graphic representations of the data for better understanding. In most instances, the findings are first discussed within the context of the aggregate data set separating only for child and adult

combatants, but then a second level of disaggregation is introduced to illuminate the variance that exists when contrasting the competing factions.

Pre-conflict Dispositions

A number of questions sought to understand former combatant characteristics that have been identified through the literature as possible causal factors of child soldiering. The findings of this section focus on the factors associated with pre-conflict family structure and geographic locality.

Figure 1 demonstrates a lopsided urban locality characteristic when the sample of former combatants is disaggregated into child and adult components. The uniqueness of this finding is that it indicates a propensity for child soldiers to come from Monrovia at a rate of almost 2 –to 1 when compared with their adult counterparts and is amplified by the LURD child soldier sample, which reports that over three-quarters of its ranks lived in the Liberian capital prior to hostilities. Charles Taylor's forces had their roots equally distributed across Liberia before the war while MODEL fighters notably resided outside of the greater metropolitan capital.

Figure 1 Pre-war Dispositions – Location before Conflict
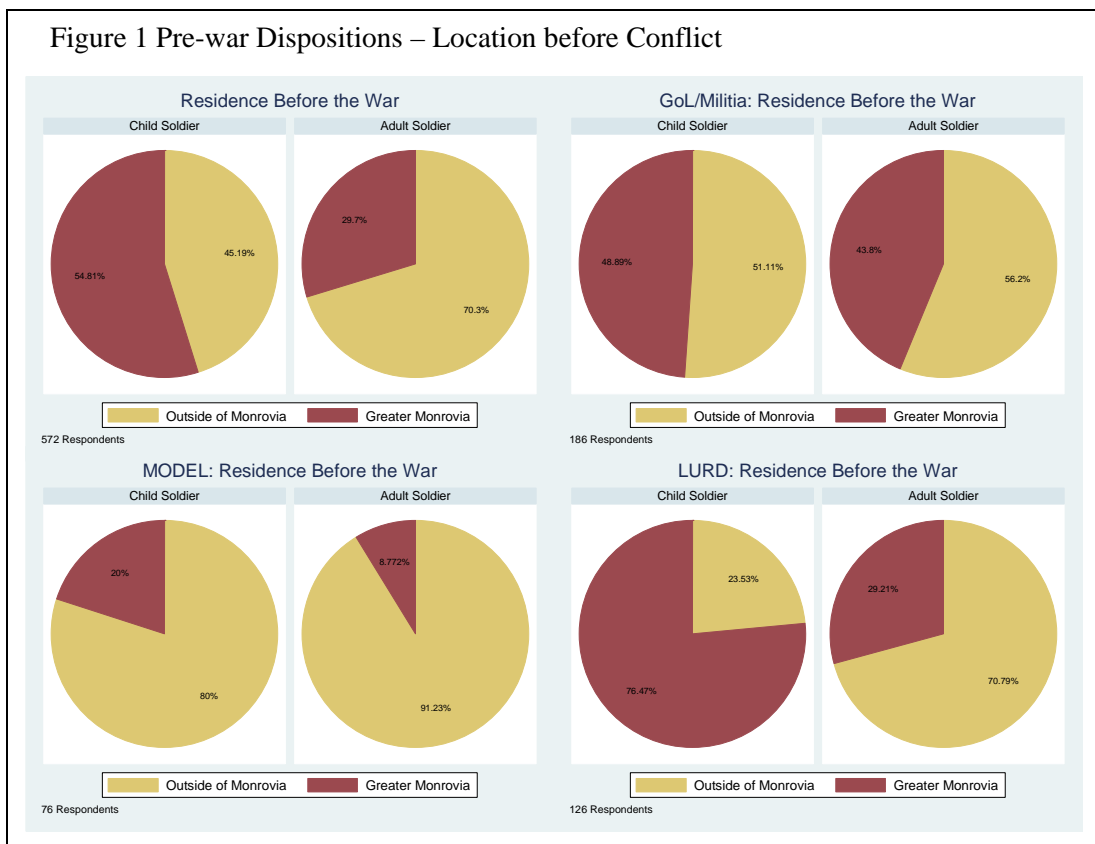
Arguably the primacy of family in the lives of Liberians holds the collective community together during times of strife. The absence of parental or guardian care in the lives of young children in conflict zones allows an acute vulnerability to surface when it comes to potential recruitment. Analysis of the pre-war demographics that details the family structure that was in place before the war began provides little in the way of variation when disaggregated by faction. While all factions were similar with respect to the percentage of having both a mother and father present (57-63%), it appears that factional identity uniquely shaped the remaining 40% of each group. The LURD child soldiers reported that 20% of their rank had neither a father nor mother at the beginning of the conflict compared with only 6% in MODEL.

Factional Recruitment and Incentives

As discussed, the literature suggests that certain recruitment techniques and incentives are inexorably linked to the phenomenon of child soldiering. This section focuses on findings within the disaggregated sample that inform on how initial introductions were made by competing factions, the reasons for joining the three major contemporary former warring factions, and the incentives tendered to prospective members. The impact of forced migration and its associated vulnerabilities is also examined.

Figure 2 Factional Recruitment – The Introduction
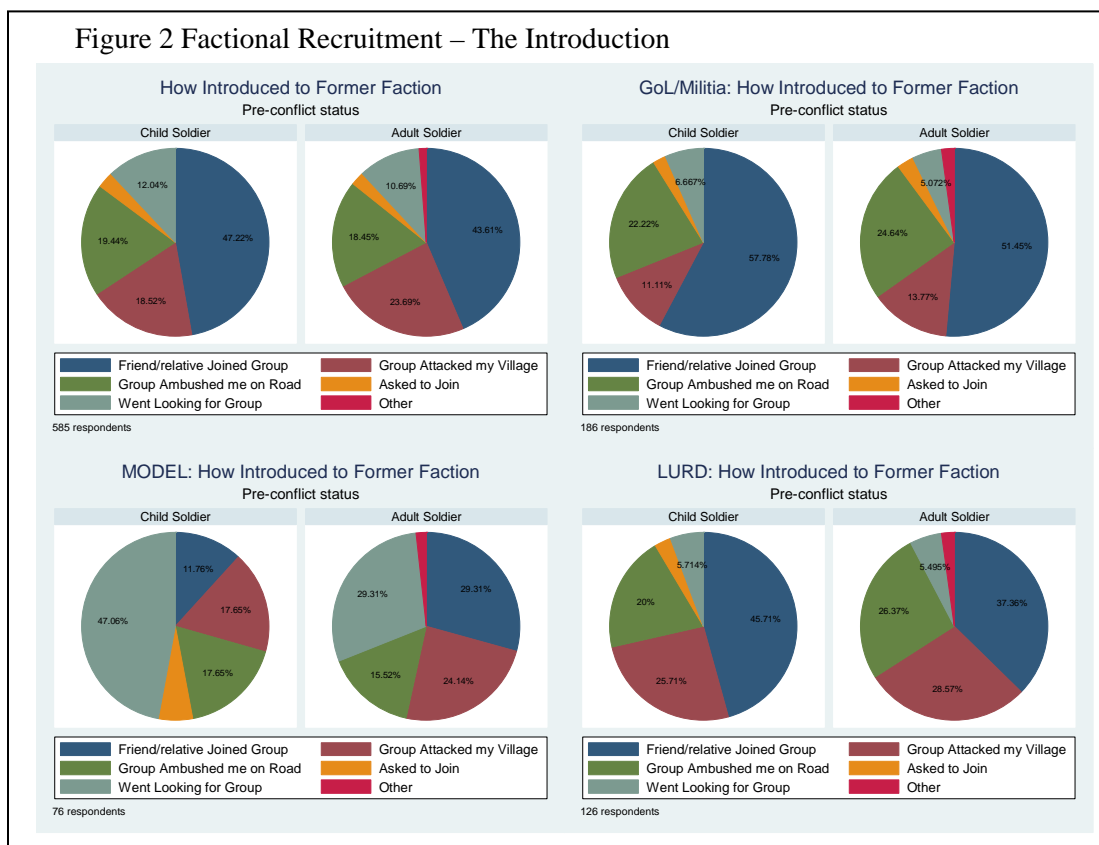
Again, disaggregation by age shows very little variance in the demographic profile as shown in figure 2, which addresses how the ex-combatants were introduced to their former factions. When the disaggregation is placed within the context of their respective factions, some insightful information begins to emerge. It is apparent from the figures presented that each former faction had a distinctive approach with first encounters. LURD soldiers were the most prone to violent introductions by favoring village attacks and ambushes as a way to meet their potential recruits. Taylor's government forces and associated militias relied upon friend and family introductions to solicit new membership, while almost 50% of the future child soldiers of MODEL actively went looking for the faction to join them.

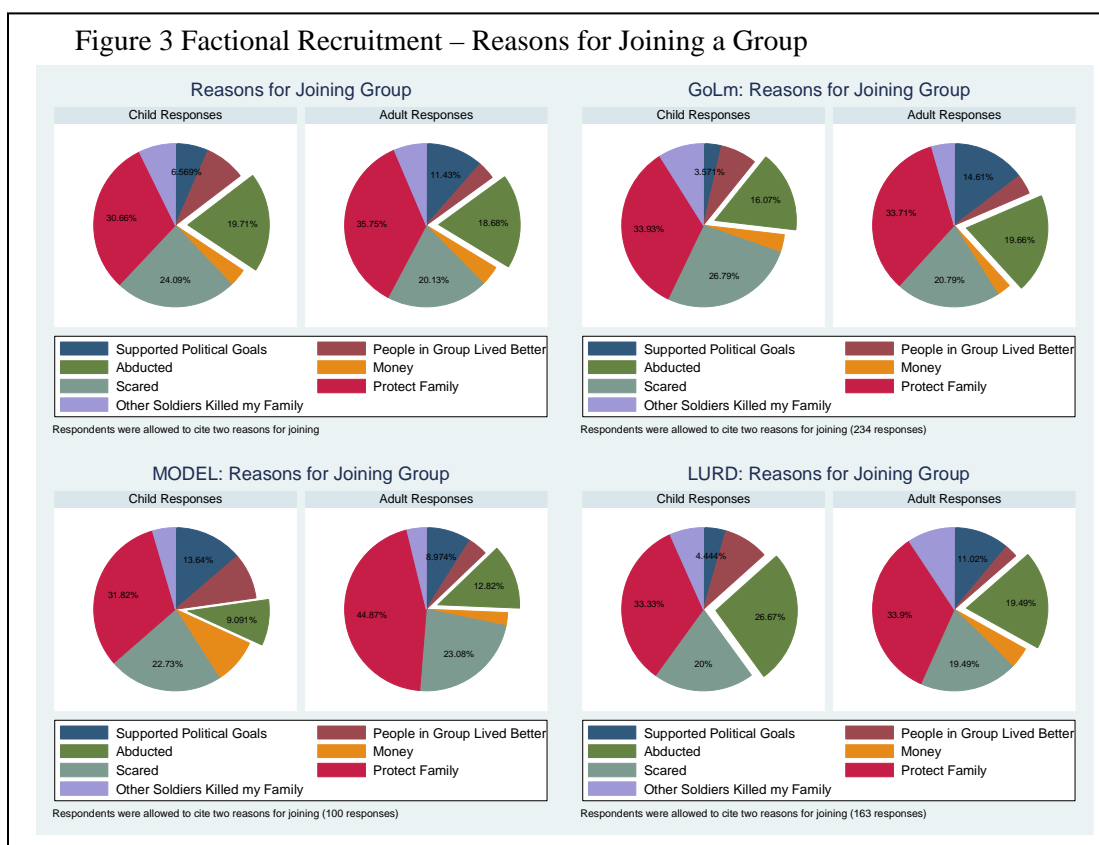Figure 3 Factional Recruitment – Reasons for Joining a Group

Figure 3 illustrates the various reasons that former combatants joined their factions. Key among the reasons is abduction. While abduction has been cited as a horrific atrocity that befalls children in conflict-torn lands, the findings of this study show that adults are equally at risk of being forced into military service. Alongside abduction lies a closely related catalyst for joining a faction – intimidation. In almost every disaggregation analysis, joining a faction because the recruit was "scared" accounted for at least 20%. Family protection was cited most often by the sample as the reason for joining while child respondents affiliated with the LURD reported the highest rate of abduction.

Many incentives are offered to prospective members to encourage joining their cause. In the Liberian conflict, altruism was rarely pandered, as can be seen in figure 4. Fewer than a quarter of the competing factions focused on improving the situation in Liberia, but money and family protection were often offered as tangible enticements. Again, a simple separation of combatants by age shows little demographic variation until we disaggregate by faction. Almost 40% of the future MODEL child soldiers were offered family protection, which is more than double the offer given to the collective group of child soldiers (17%). The possibility of getting revenge was almost solely attributable to MODEL recruiters, and money was the major motivator for both the child and adult soldiers loyal to Charles Taylor. The children of all three groups demonstrated a different population profile for targeted recruitment.

Figure 4 Factional Recruitment – Incentives
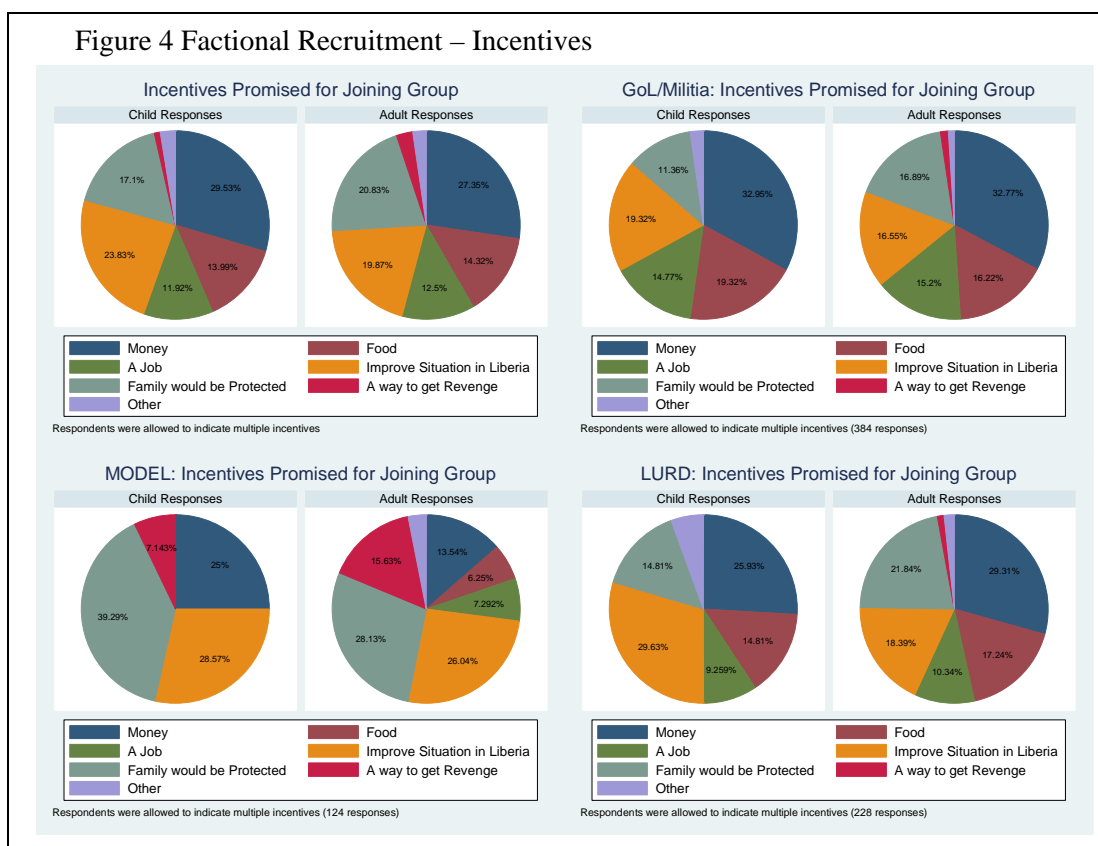
When personnel are displaced from their home communities either as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) or as refugees across their native borders, many personal security vulnerabilities surface. The analysis of the data failed to disentangle the issue of faction abduction and its relationship to displacement with regard to adults and children. At the surface, a simple disaggregation by age indicates that adults are actually more vulnerable to abduction while displaced than children are. Further separation shows that the three contemporary former factions prioritized "recruiting" among displaced persons differently with regard to abductions. The LURD accounted for the highest rate with almost 40% of their formerly displaced persons recruited through abduction while MODEL's sample was only around 6%. While abduction of

displaced peoples was found to be an issue of concern, its uniqueness to the plight of child combatants is yet to be determined.

Factional Participation

A number of questions sought to understand former combatant characteristics as pertaining to their participation in particular factions. This section seeks to illuminate the attributes of the combatants within the organizations that they fought in. The findings include information on ranks and roles within the factions as well as a look at how often the combatants were injured.

An analysis of disaggregation shows that approximately 83% of both the child and adult soldiers served as frontline combat soldiers. Some corroboration of this fact may reside in the finding which indicates a near identical wounding rate among child (58%) and adult (52%) fighters. Again, though, the differences surface in the analysis of particular factions. While the government forces profile nearly mimicked the general demographic profile for factional roles, the LURD and MODEL had stark contrasts. While all (100%) 17 child soldiers of MODEL indicated that they were combat soldiers, only 24 (69%) of the LURD soldiers reported themselves as combat troops. The remaining 30%, like their adult counterparts in the LURD, served in administrative or supporting roles.

A look at former combatant ranks held during the conflict provides an expected distribution. Over 98% of the child soldiers reported leaving their factions at or below the rank of captain (81% were privates or did not hold a rank). Conversely, 86% of the adults reported leaving their factions at or below the rank of captain, leaving 14% to hold the most senior

military positions at the time of disarmament. Only 63% of the adults reported leaving their former factions as privates or members without rank.

Coming Home in the Aftermath

While the challenges facing former combatants both young and old were daunting during the pre-war and war years, a number of barriers stand in the way of reintegrating these citizens into their respective communities. Not only do the ex-combatants have to overcome the sometimes violent destruction of their family structures, they must also endeavor to reinsert themselves socially, economically, and politically into their respective communities.

The horrors of the civil war in Liberia did not leave many families untouched with respect to violence. If they did not experience the violent nature of war through the loss of a family member, they certainly knew someone close who did, as demonstrated in figure 5. While the majority of child soldiers affiliated with warring factions did not lose either parent (approximately 63%), almost 53% of the child soldiers who fought with the MODEL lost a parent. Fathers represented the biggest loss rate between parents during the war. MODEL children suffered a loss rate of 35%, while government forces and militia troops lost at a rate of 16%. Over 10% of MODEL's adult fighters lost both mother and father. Fewer than 2% of the child soldiers indicated losing both parents.
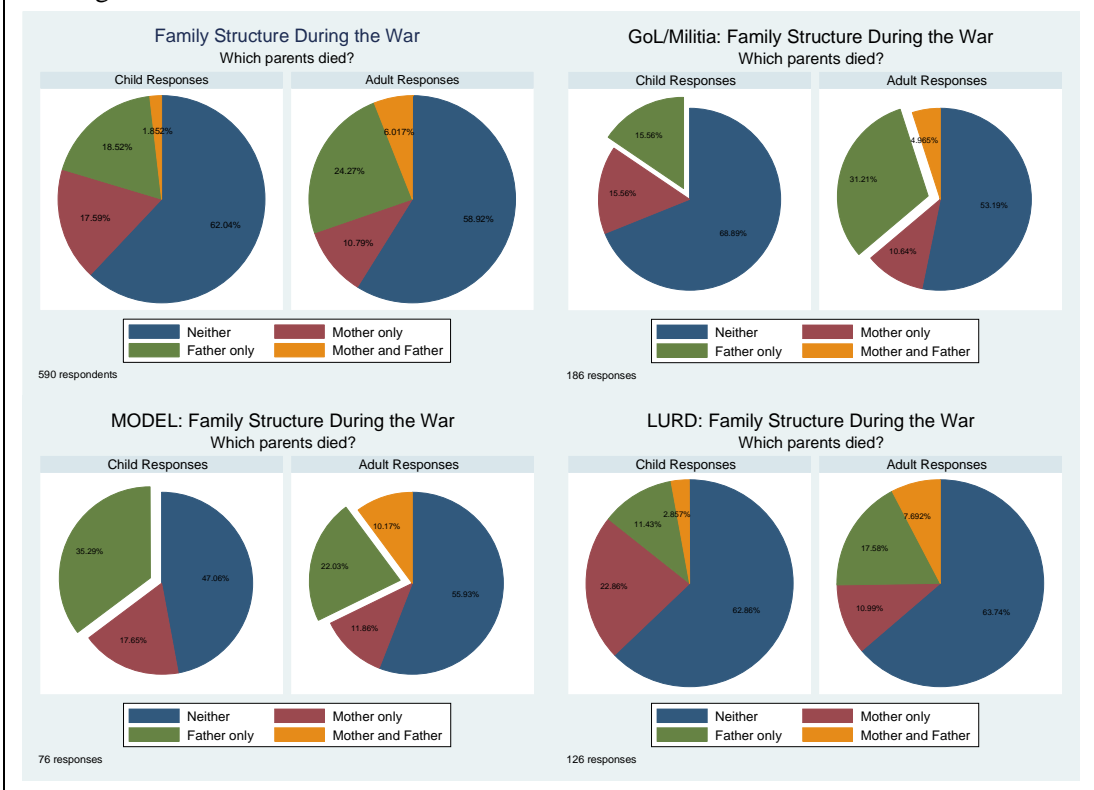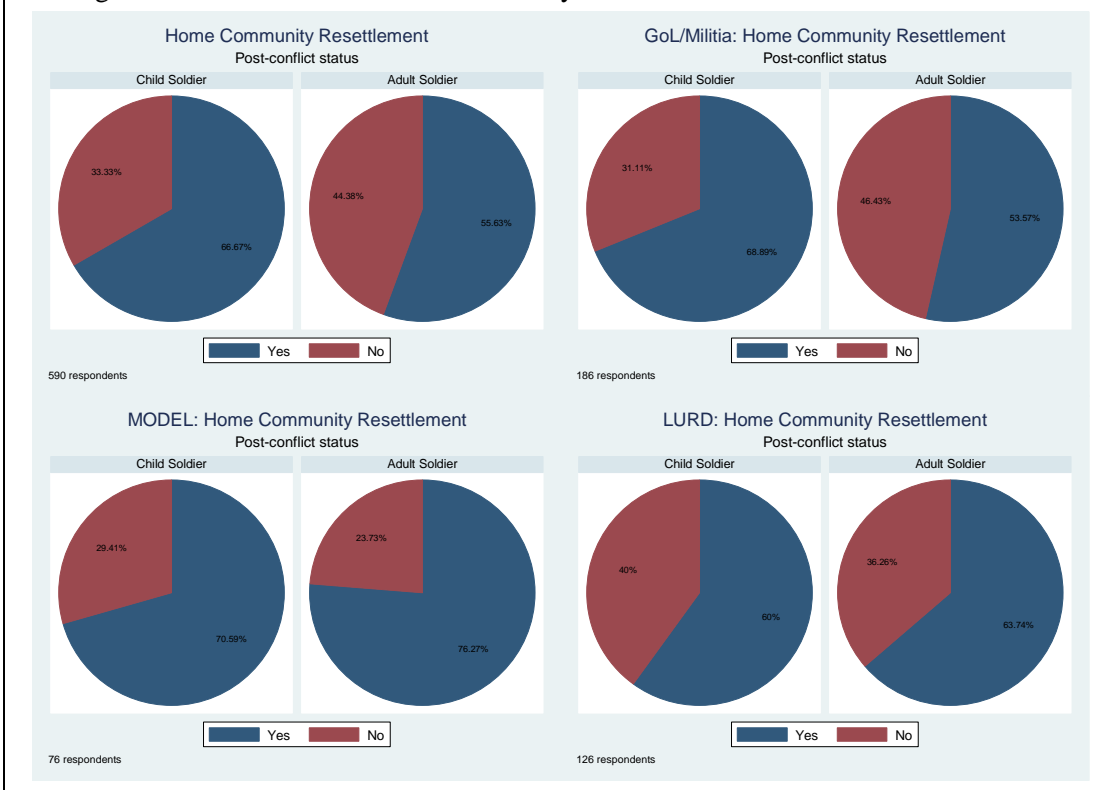
Figure 5 Post-conflict – The Loss of Parents

Figure 6 Post-conflict – Home Community Resettlement

Pre-conflict home community resettlement in the post-war environment is addressed in figure 6. Reintegration is often termed a misnomer[13] in post-conflict research as some, if not a majority, of ex-combatants will never really reintegrate into their home communities, but rather integrate into another. The decision to integrate may be made by the ex-combatant for a variety of reasons - better economic opportunities, home community completely destroyed, or simply as a mechanism to retain a modicum of anonymity after possibly participating in inexcusable wartime atrocities. In any event, the findings of this analysis show that child soldiers are more apt to return home (67% vs. 56%) in the aftermath. When examined through the factional filter, however, greater insight is made available. The GoL/militia child soldiers returned home on average 15% more often than their adult comrades (69% vs. 54%). The LURD and MODEL exhibit similar return rates between categories, but the MODEL children returned at a much higher rate (71% vs. 60%).

Figure 7 Post-conflict – Social Networks
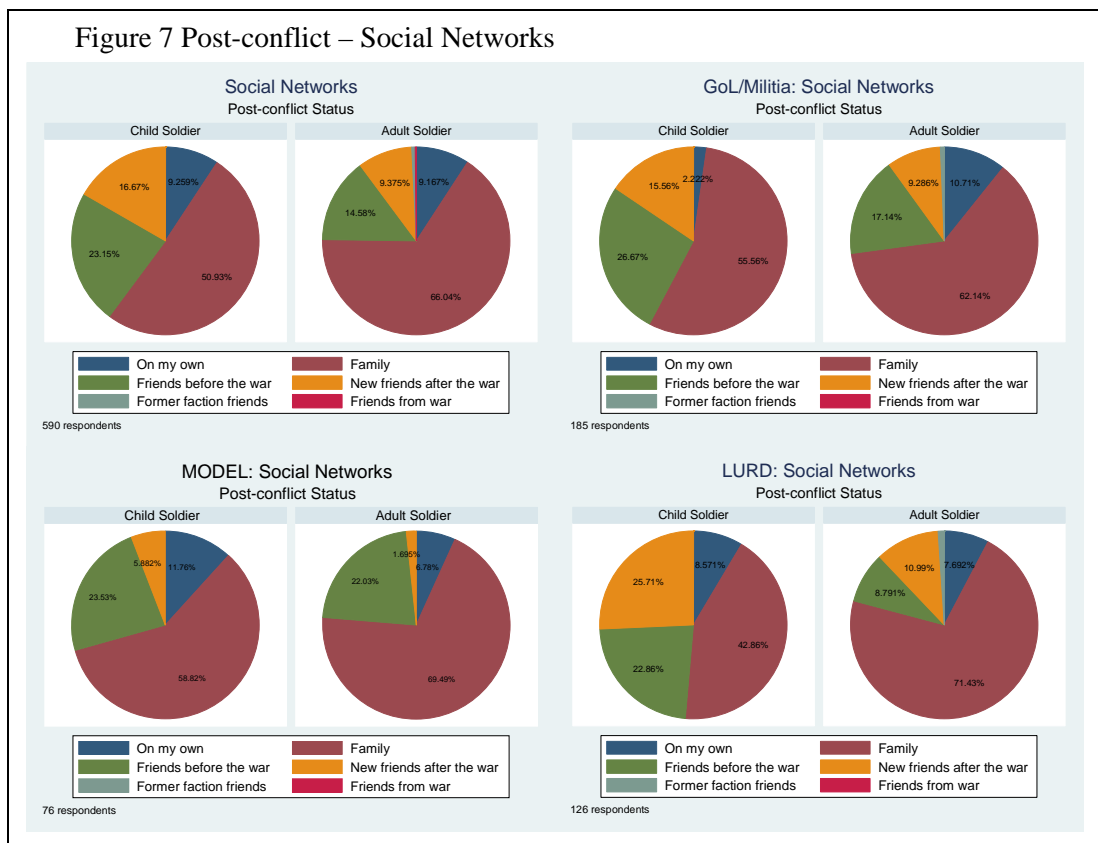
Social reintegration is a major component of any international intervention program, and an understanding of the community dynamics and the degree of reintegration in this area is critical to ensuring that a program stays on track. With respect to social networks, figure 7 shows that the two groups tend to demonstrate a similar "loner" rate (9%), but the adults tend to spend more of their free time with family (66% vs. 51%).

As for the international intervention DDRR program in Liberia, children and adults exhibit a similar non-participatory rate of around 11%. The findings as to the stage of the DDRR program that the participants are currently in suggest that adults may have moved through the program slightly ahead of the former child soldiers as the adults show a program completion rate at 16% (versus 10%) and an actively enrolled reintegration training participation rate of 27% versus 38% for the children.

The Merits of Disaggregation

A methodological approach that disaggregates by faction has surfaced many different types of variations to analyze. While this chapter reviews only one country case – Liberia – it unquestionably establishes a quantitative grounding in the method suggested for employment across other country cases. In most of the theory related to the phenomenon of child soldiering, simple disaggregation of child and adult former fighters yielded very little insight into the causal factors unique to youth employment with an armed faction. The sorting of the sample according to age and faction has given rise to two methods of comparison that provide much more tangible insight into the plight of the children in conflict. Comparisons surface variations between the adult and child members of particular factions (intra-factional) and also an extremely pronounced difference when only the children are compared as a group against the other formerly competing factions (inter-factional). Through a combined approach in analysis, the causal factors unique to child soldiering can be uncovered.

With factional disaggregation complete, the findings amplify the nuances embedded in the sample previously separated only by age. In understanding that the aggregate sample of ex-combatants in Liberia consists of respondents from three very different organizations and commanders, it should be apparent that any statistical averaging would surely be imprecise. The findings presented in figure 1 illustrate the importance of this first method of comparisons. All three factions are unquestionably unique with regard to the variable of pre-war locality disposition. The uniqueness of the factional disaggregation is overridden and hidden in the simple separation as the LURD child soldiers' pre-war dispositions were almost exactly opposite that of their adult comrades.

While intra-factional variations surface with disaggregation, the contrast is even more pronounced as one investigates the population of children across factions. As noted in the literature, the essence of a fighting unit is ultimately a reflection of its commander and the organizations' goals. The differences among the three factions under investigation have most certainly been identified in the findings presented, and each one paints a picture of child recruitment and participation that is unique. The variable on recruitment introductions at figure 3 provides an excellent example of contrast between groups of child combatants. The massive variance between an organization built on family/friend recruitment (GoL), a propensity for violent introductions (LURD), and an attraction that draws the youth to them (MODEL) should be recognized as very much worth pursuing.

Characterizing Liberia's Warring Factions[14]

Disaggregation by faction in this chapter seeks to characterize the fighting organizations in an effort to explain actions and identify linkages that may be attributable to the causal factors of child soldiering. Through an examination of variables that characterize Liberia's contemporary warring factions, the following section presents a summary of each faction as characterized in the findings that will serve to amplify the discussion of the chapter's most important findings on the phenomenon of child soldiering. Take note of the extreme contrasts between groups as we begin to build a model from which to make our deductions.

Taylor's Government Forces and Militias

The core of Charles Taylor's forces was the group of fighters that served the leader when the president was only warlord. The presence of Taylor's military force was resident not only

within the capital but also throughout the hinterland. The findings on pre-war dispositions note a ratio of Monrovian to non-Monrovian residents to be only slightly higher than the population's estimated national ratio. Approximately 40% of the ranks had lost either one or both parents before the conflict's onset. Recruitment into Taylor's forces appears to be quite familial as over 50% of its members were introduced by their friends and family. Family protection and loyal support to Taylor's political ideals constituted the bulk of the reasons cited for joining; a method of coercion (abduction or scaring) was indicated in 41% of the responses. Pecuniary incentives were used as the primary means of recruitment by the sub-factions under Taylor's control. Over 80% of Taylor's forces indicated that they were combat troops, with a fair distribution of combat support roles identified in the remaining 20%. The war impacted the family structures of the government forces and militias. Approximately 40% of the combatants lost a parent during the conflict. Only a handful of ex-combatants lost both their mother and father. The adult fighters of this group have been the least likely to return to their home communities as of the time of the survey – 43% had not yet returned home.

Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)

The adult fighters of the LURD primarily resided outside the Greater Monrovian area. On average 60% of the fighters had both parents alive before the conflict, but the youth of the faction had a 20% orphan rate – the highest percentage of the three organizations studied in this chapter. Violent introduction (54%) was the predominant method employed by the LURD in securing new recruits, and coercion (41%), through either abduction or scaring, was cited as the primary reason for joining the group. Pecuniary incentives – job, food, money – were cited the majority of the time as rewards promised for joining. Significant emphasis during the recruiting

process was also placed upon ensuring family protection and touting the group's ideological goals. During operations the LURD maintained the lowest percentage of combat soldiers within their faction (71%). Dedicated camp workers made up over 15% of the fighting force. Similar to Taylor's forces, the LURD fighters had a little less than 40% impact on the family structure because of the war losing one or both parents. At the time of the survey, almost 63% of the LURD combatants had returned to their home communities.

Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL)

The MODEL pre-war disposition identified only 11% of its members as residing in Monrovia. Just like the other two factions, approximately 60% of MODEL fighters had both parents living at the commencement of hostilities. The rebel faction had an attraction that induced over 32% of its members to actively seek them out and join. Violent introductions by the faction were made only 38% of the time for recruitment. Significantly, the fighters of this faction primarily joined to protect their families (42%), with coercion (35%) playing a smaller role than the other two competing forces. Non-pecuniary incentives topped the rewards scheme for joining the MODEL. Family protection was at 31% while ideological goals and combined pecuniary incentives tied at 27%. The primary role during operations most cited by MODEL ex-combatants was as a combat soldier (93%). Very few of the respondents in the sample acknowledged a combat support role. The MODEL fighters' family structures were greatly affected by the war, the most of any other faction. Over 46% of MODEL's fighters lost a parent or both during the war. At the time of the survey, fully 75% of the MODEL fighters had returned to their home communities – the highest return rate of any faction.

Uncovering the Nuances

In employing the approaches to comparative disaggregation as outlined above, many factional nuances in the data have been amplified. Generally speaking, almost all of the variables investigated exhibited similar distributions when simply disaggregated by age. Stopping the analysis at this point informed us of unique variance associated with pre-war locality dispositions and post-conflict reintegration measures. The simple disaggregation did nothing, however, to inform us on the issue of factional recruitment and incentive techniques or the generalized child's participation in conflict. This section will re-visit the findings presented earlier in this chapter as a function of conflict stage during the Liberian war (pre-conflict, conflict, post-conflict). Analysis and discussion now focus on distinguishing the causal factors of child soldiering and will be synthesized through the lens of the two approaches outlined above - first, the nuances resulting from intra-factional comparison, and second, the variances observed across factions (inter-factional).

Pre-conflict Dispositions

While the aggregate of responses suggests that child soldiers were overwhelmingly recruited from the Greater Monrovian area, this finding holds true for only one of the factions – LURD. A generalized characterization that urban youth were the ones that predominately filled the ranks of the warring parties in Liberia would be a bit overstated. While the GoL and MODEL troops showed little variation at the intra-faction level, the LURD's makeup was weighted significantly by a population of Monrovian youth. As expected, the government forces indicated a distribution of recruits from across the country, and the MODEL's roots are characterized as coming from the hinterland. The LURD's preponderance of Monrovian children is also significantly greater

when comparing youth populations across factions. The imbalance between child and adult pre-conflict dispositions in the LURD is possibly a result of the final push on the capital that the rebel organization conducted. The higher rate of children in the LURD from Monrovia is then consistent with the data that shows very late entry into the war by most children. This finding highlights the vulnerability of children in a war zone with no other avenue of escape. As for family structures before the onset of hostilities, little variation is noted in an intra-faction comparison. Two minor findings do arise in comparisons across factions – the LURD had the highest child orphan rate entering the war at 20%, and nearly 30% of the MODEL soldiers were raised by only their mothers.

Factional Recruitment, Incentives, and Participation

Simple disaggregation by age did not provide any variation at all in the variables pertaining to recruitment techniques. In examining the intra-factional child/adult differences of the variables concerned with recruitment, the MODEL shows an appreciable variance in introduction experiences, reasons for joining, and incentives, the LURD varied on incentives, while the population of child and adult fighters in Taylor's forces indicated a very similar generalization of the organization's recruitment efforts. MODEL's significant ability to attract new members was even stronger when it came to children. While adults went looking for the faction on average almost 30% of the time, children did so at a rate of over 47%. The adults in MODEL were more apt to cite "family protection" as a reason for joining (45% vs. 32%). MODEL child soldiers identified family protection as an incentive to join more often than their adult comrades (38% vs. 28%). An imbalance in pecuniary incentives within the LURD structure

for children led to the recruiters' promising an improved situation in Liberia at a rate higher than that pitched to the adults (30% vs. 18%).

Coming Home in the Aftermath

In the aggregate, child soldiers demonstrate a greater propensity for resettling in their home communities. This generalized parameter is in fact misleading when we disaggregate by faction. In this case, only the soldiers who fought for the government reintegrate at a higher rate. Both rebel factions exhibit latency in hometown youth reintegration with respect to their adult counterparts. Social network disaggregation shows that the former child soldiers tend to be a bit more independent in their free time as opposed to the adult ex-combatants, who reserve their non-working time for family. In analyzing post-conflict family structures, on average 38% of the child soldiers lost a parent during the war. Interestingly, fewer than 2% actually lost both parents. Of the 108 respondents who were child soldiers during the conflict, only those that participated with the LURD indicated a catastrophic loss of the family structure. The government forces and MODEL soldiers survived with at least one parent. Intra-faction comparisons show that the parents of Taylor's child soldiers survived the war exceptionally better than their adult comrades and also at a higher rate when compared across factions. MODEL children exhibited vulnerability in the area of post-conflict family structures as their population suffered parental loss at a rate higher than both the adults in their faction and members of the other competing factions.

Understanding the Impact and Relevancy

As demonstrated in the analysis and discussion of the contemporary former warring factions of Liberia, identifying unique causal factors of child soldiering is quite an onerous and complex task. In the end, it is quite difficult to distinguish singularly unique casual factors within the context of a generalized country-oriented study that only distinguishes adults and children within the population of former fighters. This fact was demonstrated in the above section, where the aggregate data did not surface many variances between adults and children – most of those variances that were identified were shown to be misleading when we disaggregated factional representation. With a limited amount of international donor support to dedicate towards eradicating the phenomenon of child soldiering, the precision of our policy recommendations must be tight and based upon evidenced-based research. A failure to identify and analyze the appropriate unit of analysis in conflicts involving children has a very real possibility of wasting precious resources on inefficient program schemes and preventative measures that never really target the intended audience – children in conflict.

Disaggregating the population of former combatants by age and factional affiliation has been shown to yield the richest possible variance for the analyst and researcher during the exploitation and search for identifying causal factors unique to child soldiering. Analysis of the sample of child soldiers from across the former warring factions produced very complex insights into the recruitment methodologies implemented by the diverse set of competing organizational leaders. Characterizing former warring factions as functions of the variables relevant to the causes and consequences of child soldiering is crucial to disentangling the nuances that point towards causality. The recruitment modalities implemented by the competing military factions and the unique ways that each prosecuted the war during operations reinforces the point that unit of analysis in research needs to reside as a minimum at the faction level. Any higher level of

disaggregation would completely neutralize the disturbing anomalies and nuances that the international community is keen to target.

A vision for continued research in this field would involve the modeling and characterization of military factions as a function of their recruitment modalities and operational patterns.[15] Expectation is that production of these models will produce a finite number of characterizations that begin to highlight similarities across cases. The motives of men in war are not that divergent across the globe, and once a set of inclusive models is formulated, the community will be armed with a predictive capability that should enable precision of policy and efficiency in implementation.

Conclusion

As demonstrated through the numerous dimensions of life as a potential, current, and former combatant during the Liberia civil war, inclusive contextual disaggregation analysis in the determination of causal factors unique to child soldiering has been shown essential to proper understanding. Through detailed discussions of findings that separated the child from adult fighter on issues of recruitment, participation, and incentive schemes, only a further disaggregation by faction illuminated the unique variances. In many instances, the issues previously touted as singular to the phenomenon of child soldiering were shown to be just as pervasive in the sample of adult combatants. More systematic research in this area is required in order to properly and efficiently channel the valuable resources meant to target former child soldiers.

Notes

This proposed chapter was presented at the University of Pittsburgh for inclusion into a volume on Child Soldiers. The author attended the Child Soldiers Initiative Working Group Session Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 15-16 September 2006. The chapter is drawn from a data collection effort sponsored by the UNDP Liberia while the author was doing thesis research at the Joint Military Intelligence College. I'm deeply indebted to Dr. Scott Gates for helpful comments concerning this chapter and Ms. Jamie Fuller for her keen editorial eye. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the US Government. Author takes responsibility for all errors and consistencies.

---

[1] General J.C. Breckinridge ordered his command to commit the Virginia Military Institute Corps of Cadets to battle on 15 May 1864. The Institute's Corps of 257 had boys as young as 15 years old in its ranks on the day of the battle.

[2] There are numerous recognized protocols and international laws. For details see URL:< http://www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict/English/index.html>.

[3] See the UN Children an Armed Conflict web-site at URL:< http://www.un.org/children/conflict/ english/conflicts2.html>

[4] UN (2005), Children and Armed Conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 9 Feb, A/59/695-S/2005/72.

[5] Kaplan, Robert D. (1994). "The Coming Anarchy." The Atlantic Monthly, February.

[6] National Transitional Government of Liberia, United Nations, World Bank: Joint Needs Assessment, February 2004, URL:<http://www.lr.undp.org/needs_assessment.pdf>

[7] NCDDRR JIU, 2 October 2006.

[8] Brabazon, James (2003), "Liberia: Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)," Armed Non-State Actors Project, Briefing Paper No. 1, The Royal Institute of International Affairs: Africa Program.

[9] NCDDRR JIU, 2 October 2006.

[10] Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Liberia (S/2003/582), 2 June 2003

[11] http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=33739&SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry= LIBERIA

[12] NCDDRR Joint Implementation Unit (JIU) Status report dated 2 October 2006.

[13] See Kingma, Kees (2002). Demobilization, Reintegration and Peacebuilding in Africa, *International Peacekeeping*, 9(2), pp. 181 – 201.

[14] For more detailed information on Liberia's former fighters and factions, see Pugel (2007) *What the Fighters Say: A Survey of Ex-combatants in Liberia*, Report for the UNDP Liberia.

[15] For more detail on operational activity modeling see Humphreys, Macartan and Jeremy Weinstein (2005). "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War: Determinants of the Strategies of Warring Factions." Unpublished Paper, Columbia and Stanford Universities.