ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere appreciation is due to many, for supporting me and collaborating on this research over the past years.

Most importantly I am indebted to many young people in Yumbe, Arua and Juba who allowed me to enter their lives and thoughts, by endless chats, exchanges of ideas, and the sharing of time, food and journeys. I have chosen to anonymize all of your narratives for your own protection or the protection of the people you spoke about with me, however it fills me with regret that this implies that I cannot honour your often beautiful personalities here. Allow me to say that although it has been long (I last visited Yumbe in 2013) and although staying in touch has been challenging, especially with a small baby around, I look back on a very precious period with very special friends and hope to pick up where we left very soon. I hope that you recognize yourself in the way in which I convey some of your ongoing struggles and resilience.

Fortunately I am also able to mention a few people by name who have been generously helpful to me in Yumbe. First of all Ibrahim Okuonzi, having facilitated the start of my research as a former TPO coordinator in the region and having remained an important source of information and feedback ever since. I also thank Francis Alumai and Patrick Onyango for insightful exchanges at TPO Uganda headquarters in Kampala, and Ria Reis and Joop de Jong for connecting me to them. Amadile Charles, if we hadn’t crossed paths that day in 2010 accidentally, a lot of joy and laughter as well as understanding would have been lacking during the research. Not only do I admire your wonderful, kind, cheerful and wise personality, you also invited me to your warm family, with more loving and fun people like you who made me feel very much at home. I would like to thank Avako Jannet and children & Nite Florence and her late husband for the laughter and for hosting me in their homes when I was lonely. The same goes for Lily, Zeinabu and Annet. Mr. Drasi Rogerson has been a great inspiration, a vast source of knowledge, of wisdom and compassion. Our extensive interviews on film have hardly found a place in this dissertation but I trust I will find a good place for them to still be shared with the world. Robert, Rovis, Solo, Hippo, Abasi, and Drajiga, Austin and Samuel you have brought laughter and fun to life in Yumbe and have been of great help in allowing me to understand more about the place. I am also grateful to the various members of the administration of Yumbe District, the CAO Elly Piwang and LC5 chairman Taban Yassin, and the various RDC’s I met for answering my questions and supporting this research.

The staff of Praford and of Fredericus brought a lot of joy to my life in Yumbe, so did sister Helen, sister Lilian and Mark Alagi in Arua. I feel deeply connected to you, Ronald Leku Marx, Richard Asea and Patrick Pariyo, despite the distance that is now between us. You still inspire me. Thank you for your warm companionship over the years.

I would not have embarked on this adventure if Ria Reis and Mirjam de Bruijn would not have convinced me to get back to academia and go to Uganda for this research project.
Although the first (and later) year(s) were filled with doubt, I am glad to have accepted this pathway. Ria I thank you for all I have learned from you and for your positive feedback on every draft I shared and that you read each time very thoroughly. I have learned a lot from you about analysing my data and your critical remarks about my writing have pushed my work forward I hope.

Mirjam you keep giving me the confidence and opportunities to contribute to our field of work and I am grateful for that. I hope the coming years will bear the fruit of our ongoing sharing of ideas and all its accompanying efforts.

I am also indebted to Robert Ross and Baz Lecocq who, during my Bachelor in African Studies at Leiden University, encouraged me in my writing. Robert Ross has been an anchor ever since, always deeply interested in my progress during the PhD and always willing to read and comment on what I was struggling with. Kristof Titeca at the University of Antwerpen guided me towards Yumbe, when I expressed an interest in undertaking research in West Nile. I am thankful for this guidance and to Lotje de Vries who connected me to you in the first place.

My roommates made my years at the AISSR into a very valuable time, Anna Mann, Amalinda Savirani, Sasha Ramdas and towards the end, Roanne van Voorst. Due to our exchanges, your friendship and support, the sometimes difficult times of writing before and after fieldwork became lighter and are now a precious memory. Next door neighbours contributed to feeling at home at the AISSR as well, in particularly Marten Boekelo and Theoneste Rutayisire; thank you for the warm exchanges and fun. For all the practical support at the AISSR I am thankful to Janus Oomen, Nicole Schulp, Yomi van der Veen, Hermance Mettrop, José Koomen, Joanne Oakes & Teun Bijvoet. The same counts for Muriël Kiesel at the Anthropology Department.

It has been inspiring to be part of the Health Care & the Body programme group at the AISSR during all those years and I want to thank many of its members for fruitful exchange, also in my function as a PhD representative in 2012 and 2013. In particularly I need to mention Janneke Verheijen, Chris Pell, Ellen Blommaert (at a distance) Daniel Reijer, and later on Jude Rwemisisi, Emmanuel Turinawe, Laban Musinguzi, Theoneste Rutayisire, Thijs de Hertog and Rosalijn Both for the various reading groups we formed and the precious feedback I received on my work. Similarly, the Children and Youth group, with Ria Reis and Lidewyde Berckmoes, Naomi van Stapele, Eric van Ommering, Nicola de Martini, Sarah Spronk, Carola Tize, Karin van Bemmel and many other members coming and going has been a great inspiration. Later on, in Leiden, I have enjoyed being part of a small reading group with Inge Butter, Leonie Meester & Eefje Gilbert and benefitted greatly from their feedback on my draft chapters.

Important pillars under my PhD existence were Lidewyde Berckmoes and Naomi van Stapele. Our reading and eating together, the conferences, the discussions, the fun, are unforgettable. I feel rich as a person knowing you and sharing in your friendship and I feel
humble next to both your experience and knowledge as anthropologists. You and Anna Mann, are an example for me both personally and academically. Anna you’ve taught me how to enjoy life and conquer the PhD stress at times and I miss our regular contact ever since you left the Netherlands. Silke Oldenburg, you were a great support during our short stay in Copenhagen, I will never forget that.

For the editing of this dissertation sincere appreciation goes to Zoe Goldstein and Ruadhan Hayes.

I deeply thank my friends who put up with me and my evasive answers on how far I was with the PhD, who stayed friends despite my regular absence and who made and still make life worthwhile. Hilde, Ratih & Daniel, Lidewyde, Esther, Anna, Tanja & Jur, Sara, Naomi, Natalie & Pieter, Katharina & Olivier and Nebo, thank you all for your friendship and infinite support!

In my new workplace in Leiden I am particularly appreciative to having found inspiring and warm colleagues; Mirjam de Bruijn, Lotte Pelckmans, Meike de Goede, Inge Ligtvoet, Catherina Wilson, Souleymane Abdoulaye Adoum, Inge Butter, Adamou Amadou, Boukary Sangare, Eefje Gilbert, Leonor Faber-Jonker, Lucia and Loes. I look forward to the last year of our project together. It has been an enriching experience to get to know each of you and to work together. The same counts for (renewed) colleagues at the African Studies Centre and its library. Ella, without you I would have incurred major debts for the books I needed for so long, thank you for your help and never failing interest. I am grateful for new research endeavours, undertaken with talented colleagues from the Central African Republic; Dr. Jean Bruno Ngouflo, Crépin Marius Mouguia, Marie Louise Tchissikombre, Wilfiried Poukoule, and from Leiden: Catherina Wilson, and Mirjam de Bruijn.

It’s hard to thank my family for all that they have done for and meant to me over the past years. Something as pervasive as our strong family ties does not allow an easy translation into a short word of thanks in this acknowledgement. You have been there before, during and will be there after this dissertation and on our communal pathway this was just one of many important developments over the past years. I am grateful for all your support, regardless of what I achieved or did not achieve. For the writing retreats at your home; papa and mama. For your visits to the field; mama and Pieter. For our content related discussions; papa, Rosalijn & Pieter. For the PhD companionship: Rosalijn. For the moral support and pleasant distraction: Marieke, Fatim, Jiyan & Evin, but also Hewan, Adiya, Abe, Kim and Diederik. For looking after Neelah and always being there for us: papa & mama. For coping with my PhD frustrations and with my hobby of watching war documentaries and movies (presenting it as ‘shall we watch a movie together’, making you excited only to come up with a depressing suggestion); Emmelie. Also for the design of the final layout and cover of this dissertation and for the availability I thank you Emmie. There is much more to say…
Djibrine, thank you for the good times, for what I learned from you about people, psychology and culture. And for believing that I could finish this project.

Neelah, you brought extreme happiness and love to my life. You came faster than this dissertation could be written and fortunately, you are here to stay, unlike this dissertation writing process. You are teaching me what is important in life. So..... Aya! Let’s make even more fun now that mama has more time for you!