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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

ECONOMICALLY EMPOWERING WOMEN AS FOREIGN POLICY:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON
BUILDING PEACE IN NORTHERN UGANDA THROUGH SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership and Change

by

Lisa Liberatore Maracine

May, 2020

H. Eric Schockman, Ph.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Lisa Liberatore Maracine

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
DEDICATION	vii
VITA	viii
ABSTRACT.....	x
Chapter 1: Research Overview	1
Background of the Study	1
Problem Statement and Purpose	9
Importance of Study.....	12
Definition of Terms.....	16
Theoretical Framework	17
Research Questions	19
Limitations and Delimitations.....	20
Assumptions.....	21
Organization of Study	22
Chapter Summary	22
Chapter 2: Literature Review	24
Introduction and Organization of Chapter	24
Context of the Study	24
Social Enterprise and Development.....	30
Building Peace in Northern Uganda through Women and Business	38
Empowering Women through the Artisan Industry	49
Policy Approaches and Implications	53
Chapter Summary	72
Chapter 3: Research Framework and Methodology	74
Introduction and Organization of Chapter	74
Research Methodology and Rationale	76

Setting	79
Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedures	80
Human Subject Considerations	80
Instrumentation	82
Data Collection Procedures.....	84
Data Management and Analysis	85
Positionality	86
Chapter Summary	87
Chapter 4: Results	88
Introduction and Organization of Chapter	88
General Data	90
Theme 1: Entrepreneurship Success and Self-Sustainability	96
Theme 2: Leadership and Personal Development	100
Theme 3: Sustained Peace	104
Theme 4: Gender Equality	106
Chapter Summary	109
Chapter 5: Discussion	110
Introduction and Organization of Chapter	110
Discussion of Key Findings	111
Study Conclusions	118
Implications of the Study	123
Study Limitations	129
Recommendations for Future Research	129
Conclusion	131
REFERENCES	133
APPENDIX A: GPS IRB Approval Notice	149

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Age of participants.	91
Figure 2. Graduation year.	92
Figure 3. Marital status.	92
Figure 4. Number of kids.	93
Figure 5. Business type.	94
Figure 6. Number of employees.....	94
Figure 7. Mentorship of others.....	95
Figure 8. Dream.	96

DEDICATION

Dedicated to the courageous women entrepreneurs around the world,
particularly the women of 31 Bits in Uganda who shared their stories with me.

A special thank you to my husband, David,
and my incredible family for championing me every step of the way.

VITA

EDUCATION

Pepperdine University <i>Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership & Change (PhD)</i> Graduate School of Education and Psychology	2015-Present Los Angeles, CA
University of Southern California (USC) <i>Master of Public Diplomacy (MPD)</i> Annenberg School for Communications & Dornsife School of International Relations	2011-2013 Los Angeles, CA
Westmont College <i>Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Political Science, emphasis in International Affairs</i>	2004-2007 Santa Barbara, CA

EXPERIENCE

31 Bits, a Social Enterprise Empowering Women <i>Development Consultant & Customer Service Director</i> Creating a framework for using fashion and design to empower people to rise above poverty. Acting as brand development liaison, customer service director, and communications representative for artisans in Uganda and Indonesia.	Oct. 2014-Present Costa Mesa, CA
Pepperdine University, Graduate School of Education and Psychology <i>Career Development Specialist</i> Provided services and resources to students and alumni, both face-to-face and virtually. Helped individuals clarify their purpose and build lifelong employability skills in order to strengthen their personal brand and prepare for career advancement.	Mar. 2018-July 2019 Los Angeles, CA
UC Berkeley, Garwood Center for Corporate Innovation <i>Smart Village Consultant</i> Consulted for the Smart Village Project based in Mori, India of the Garwood Center for Corporate Innovation in the Haas School of Business. Spent 5 weeks with artisans developing a framework of long-term sustainability for their business.	Aug. 2016-Dec. 2016 Andhra Pradesh, India
USC Office of International Services <i>Resource Employee: Immigration Advisor</i> Processed visa requests for international students and visiting scholars, advised them on student immigration and work authorization matters, and helped organize and oversee cultural events to enhance their time in the U.S.	Sept. 2012-May 2014 Los Angeles, CA
USC School of International Relations <i>Undergraduate Teaching Assistant</i> Assisted the professor of IR 316: Gender and Global Issues with grading, conducting class, research, and administrative details.	Jan. 2013-May 2013 Los Angeles, CA
United Nations Women <i>Human Rights Intern</i> Created the human rights team Intranet site, the internal shared website database for UN Women globally, conducted research for Background Papers, and prepared Logistics Notes for Expert Group Meetings.	May 2012-Aug. 2012 New York, NY

USC Center on Public Diplomacy

Research Intern

Nov. 2011-May 2012

Los Angeles, CA

Conducted research focusing on the role of the Millennial Generation on Public Diplomacy under the direction of Public Diplomat in Residence, Atim George.

New Hope Hawaii Kai

Administrative and Public Relations Director

Jan. 2008-Jan. 2011

Honolulu, HI

Oversaw and accounted for non-profit finances, organized and managed the office including personnel, volunteers, files and information databases, led 7th-12th grade girls mentoring group, and worked closely with staff members on all major projects.

PUBLISHED WORKS

Fashion Diplomacy Blog, <http://fashiondiplomacy.wordpress.com>

Showcasing master's thesis on how fashion is economically empowering women around the world.

Conscious Magazine Article, <http://consciousshop.co/collections/magazine/products/la>

Writer for the Los Angeles Print Issue on *Darling Magazine*.

International Leadership Association, *Building Leadership Bridges*

Chapter Publication - Economically Empowering Women as Sustainable Conflict Resolution: A Case Study on Building Peace in Northern Uganda through Social Enterprise released in Fall 2019.

PRESENTATIONS & LECTURES

LIFE Pacific University, Round Table Session Speaker and Business as Mission, Guest Lecture on Alleviating Poverty through Entrepreneurship, Oct. 2019.

International Leadership Association, 20th & 21st Anniversary Global Conference on Leadership; Presentation on Peace, Reconciliation and Social Justice Leadership in the 21st Century: The Role of Leaders and Followers; Oct. 2018 & 2019.

University of Southern California, Association of Public Diplomacy Scholars: Women in Public Diplomacy Conference Panel Presentation on Social Entrepreneurship, April 2016.

Public Diplomacy in Los Angeles Course, Guest Lecture on Fashion Diplomacy, Oct. 2018 & 2019.

Hope International University, Business as Mission, Guest Lecture on Empowering Women through Entrepreneurship Training in the Artisan and Fair Trade Industry, Oct. 2018 & 2019.

University of California, Irvine, School of Business, Guest Lecture on Empowering Women through Entrepreneurship Training in the Artisan and Fair Trade Industry, Feb. 2019.

American Jewish University, Public Innovation and Strategic Advocacy Course, Guest Lecture on Addressing Poverty through a Social Enterprise Framework, Nov. 2016.

Azusa Pacific University, First Year Seminar, Guest Lecture on Addressing Poverty through a Social Enterprise Framework, Oct. 2016.

George Mason University, Center for the Study of Gender & Conflict: Feminism for the Future Conference Presentation on Economically Empowering Women as Sustainable Conflict Resolution, April 2016.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation advocates for the role of social enterprise in building sustainable peace by giving women agency and power in their communities. It examines this phenomenon through the lens of a social enterprise non-governmental organization, 31 Bits, that offers a valuable case study in the post-conflict Northern Uganda town of Gulu where over 100 women have been employed in the last ten years in a five-year training program that equips them to become fully self-sustainable through the creation of jewelry handmade from recycled paper. The holistic approach moves beyond the nonprofit model of charity and survival to giving their beneficiaries the chance to thrive. In this way, it is not relief or rescue work but rather informal sustainable peace development. When women are economically empowered their communities are closer to reaching gender equality and achieving positive peace.

This qualitative research approach utilizes the phenomenology framework by gathering data through an interview process to measure the results of a business-training program through a social enterprise. Overall impact shows an advancement of women in leadership and peace and development in a post conflict region for the purpose of policy recommendation. The research contributes to a gap in the field examining the role of social enterprise and business training as a tool for women's economic empowerment. In addition to policy creation and implementation the significance of the study is most useful for those seeking to understand approaches to peacebuilding, social enterprise as a tool of development, advancing women's rights through cultural means, and examining the effectiveness of economic empowerment through the tools of microfinance, business training, and entrepreneurship.

Chapter 1: Research Overview

Background of the Study

The gendered consequences of war are often not fully realized as women are forced to bear the heavier burdens in post conflict situations yet at the same time are left out of the formal peace process. The United Nations (2018) conducted a study examining 82 formal peace agreements in 42 conflict zones between 1989 and 2011 and discovered peace agreements that included women as signatories showed an association with sustained peace. Furthermore according to the United Nations (2019), gender equality and sustainable development go hand in hand. Women are necessary actors, alongside men, in building positive peace and bringing sustainable development. In her seminal research on the post conflict communities Porter (2007) argues that women have a unique perspective and advantage in peacebuilding. She writes, “Because women universally are the prime nurturers in relationships, families and communities, they play crucial roles in peacebuilding, often in very informal, unofficial ways” (Porter, 2007, p. 3). Specifically, this dissertation argues women can be part of the peace process through economic empowerment and self-sustainability, as it becomes a launching pad to greater levels of gender equity. Sustained peace in this instance will be self-identified by participants through personal security.

It is important to note the foundation for women’s rights to thrive is connected to policy directive (Duflo, 2012). Economic empowerment gives women a greater voice and presence in their communities and families, as Porter (2007) contends it is “fundamental to the realization of human security” (p. 35). This notion of positive peace is more inclusive of women. Porter (2007) defines positive peace as meaning, “More than the absence of violence, but includes all the processes that facilitate social justice and gender equality” (p. 29). The United Nations (2018)

refers to this comprehensively as “sustaining peace” in both a goal and a process. Haan (2017) argues, “Policies that directly support women are key, not only from a justice perspective, but also to support beneficial links between empowerment and growth” (Seguino & Were, 2014, p. 21). Empowerment is defined by the World Bank (2016) “as the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” (Maguirre, Ruelas & Torres, 2016, p. 167). This element of choice is vital to achieving greater gender parity and the promotion of women’s rights worldwide. This dissertation will describe these linkages and examine them through the lens of the phenomenon for the culture-sharing group of women who have been led through a business-training program in Uganda – with a foundation built on leadership.

Transformational leadership seeks to bring social change and agency to followers, which can be seen throughout this dissertation as economic empowerment. It is empowerment from a collaborative approach, as Porter (2013) writes, “Empowerment responds to difference, thrives on security, mobilizes insecure communities to deal with conflict and is transformative in creating practical changes, including women’s participation in decision-making across all levels of social, political, religious” (p. 10). This leadership approach amplifies the role of the follower as co-creator and collaborator. In his foundational work on the concept, Bass (1990) writes of transformational leadership occurring, “When leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees [followers], when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purpose and mission of the group ... to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group” (p. 21). By creating opportunities for women to have access to resources to become financially self-sustainable as identified throughout this study, they are given transformative agency in peacebuilding as followers on their way to becoming leaders. Global leadership is the foundation

for this research. In their seminal work, Mendenhall et al. (2013) define global leadership as, “The process of influencing the thinking, attitudes and behaviors of a global community to work together synergistically toward a common vision and common goals” (p. 4). Leadership opportunities for women can be advanced through increased consideration on policy surrounding women’s rights.

Post conflict situations are ideal times to ensure women’s rights are paramount. Women’s rights are vital to achieving sustainable positive peace (Schockman, Hernandez & Boitano, 2019). Entrepreneurship training offers an outlet for women to gain agency and power in their communities. Nicolas and Rubio (2016) consider this can be achieved through international regulation and law. They write, “The UN has programs to promote entrepreneurship among which are those targeted at the female segment, which pursue greater equality between men and women, reducing gender violence, achieving peace between territories and in general, promoting social change worldwide” (Nicolas & Rubio, 2016, p. 56). From a United States (U.S.) foreign policy perspective, the best course of action needs to be determined at a local level to employ long-term sustainable peace initiatives in post-conflict situations. This is true throughout the literature on social enterprise and policy that success is determined at the local level and one solution will not always ring true in different contexts. One such directive that sparked the start of a U.S. foreign policy initiative was introduced as a bill on May 17, 2017 in the House of Representatives “to ensure that the United States promotes the meaningful participation of women in mediation and negotiation processes seeking to prevent, mitigate, or resolve violent conflict” (House of Representatives). It is entitled the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 or H.R. 2484 and was passed by Congress in Fall 2017 and signed into law by the President on October 6, 2017. The head of the House Foreign Relations Committee first introduced the bill,

where the researcher of this dissertation interned in Washington, DC during her studies (Royce, 2017). The text of the bill reads, “It shall be the policy of the United States to promote the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of overseas conflict prevention, management, and resolution, and post-conflict relief and recovery efforts, reinforced through diplomatic efforts and programs” (House of Representatives). The bill enables greater U.S. policy goals of partnership around the world to advance the economic empowerment of women to increase the status of women in line with human rights precedence and international rule of law.

It does not mandate intergovernmental or private sector involvement. It acts as a gateway for greater policy freedom in partnership with other programs sharing a common goal of sustainable peace building and development. The Congressional Budget Office (2017) breaks down the directive of the bill:

H.R. 2484 would require the President to develop a strategy to promote the participation of women abroad in conflict prevention, management, resolution, and recovery. In addition, the bill would require the Departments of Defense (DoD) and State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to train personnel in such matters.

Finally, the bill would require the Department of State and USAID to provide their staff with guidelines on consulting with appropriate stakeholders and to report at intervals to the Congress on the implementation of the bill.

The following year building off of this policy, H.R. 5480 the Women’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act (2018) passed in Congress: “This bill requires the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to ensure that gender equality and female empowerment considerations are integrated into its strategies, projects, and activities” (H.R. 5480). The focus on economic empowerment is directly related to sustainable development and continued

peacebuilding. Fordham et al. (2017) note, “Constraints on women’s economic empowerment are rooted in unaddressed gender inequalities in society” (p. 38). Policies directing the economic empowerment of women will be tied to international directives of the United Nations and international rule of law set in place to advance women’s rights. Haan (2017) writes, “The World Values Survey suggests that an increase in women’s share of employment over time, and economic growth can lead to the weakening of restrictive gender stereotypes and gender norms” (p. 19). This transformative change in gender norms is an underlying goal of the work of this dissertation.

These acts of U.S. foreign policy are tied to the current administration in power and can be implemented in different ways through local initiatives of the State Department around the world. Each solution with policy implementation should be examined through a local lens with a needs assessment, as success will be determined at the local level. This study will aid in providing continued support for similar mandates now and in the future in a sustainable manner. Since beginning the research for this dissertation further progress has been made with the formation of The Women’s Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Initiative in February 2019. It mandates the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to invest \$50 million to promote 50 million women in the global economy. It comprises three pillars of focus: “Women Prospering in the Workforce, Women Succeeding as Entrepreneurs, and Women Enabled in the Economy” (W-GDP). The W-GDP (2019) records, “Research shows that promoting global women’s economic participation, especially in developing countries, could boost global economic growth by \$12 trillion by 2025” (p. 1). Fordham et al. (2017) estimate, “In the next five years, the global incomes of women will grow from \$13 trillion to \$18 trillion. That incremental \$5 trillion is almost twice the growth in GDP expected from China and India

combined” (p. 76). Furthermore Haan (2017) records, “The McKinsey Global Institute (2015) calculates that equal economic participation would add 26 % of annual global GDP by 2025. UNDP’s 2016 Africa Human Development Report concludes gender inequality costs sub-Saharan Africa \$95 billion a year, six percent of the region’s GDP” (p. 7). This dissertation seeks to build off the research within the above-mentioned policy mandates and further interpret the best practice for sustainable peace development through the economic empowerment of women. It is important to understand the international policy mandates established as well within women’s economic empowerment.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, created in 2000, was, “The first resolution adopted by the Security Council to recognize the crucial role of women in restoring and maintaining peace and security” (U.S. National Action Plan, 2011, p. 11). Additionally the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) adopted in 1995 offer international law protocol for ensuring women’s rights are paramount (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2014). Most recently the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (2019), adopted in 2015 by all member states to be met by 2030, include a goal on gender equality. Two noteworthy targets within this pillar of the SDG address both leadership and economic empowerment: “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life” and “Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws” (United Nations, 2019).

Creating opportunities for women working globally in the informal sector will be the key to reaching the SDGs (Fordham et al., 2017). Fordham et al. (2017) write,

On a global basis, the UN points to four systemic constraints to the economic empowerment of women: adverse social norms; discriminatory laws and lack of legal protection; the failure to recognize and redistribute unpaid household work and care; and a lack of access to financial, digital, and property assets. (p. 4)

International policies implemented at the local level will be the key to success. It may look different in each region taking into account the historical background and context for implementation of women's rights policy.

UN Women addresses policy development for women's empowerment comprehensively as the governing body of the United Nations focused exclusively on gender. The following seven principles were established for guiding the policy recommendations surrounding women's rights:

1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination
3. Ensure the health, safety and well being of all women and men workers
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality. (Women's Empowerment Principles, 2010, p. 1)

One primary way UN Women expects to achieve these principles is with partnerships in the field through UN Global Compact's 8,000 business participants in over 135 countries. UN Women found,

Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors and throughout all levels of economic activity is essential to: build strong economies; establish more stable and just societies; achieve internationally-agreed goals for development, sustainability and human rights; improve quality of life for women, men, families and communities; and propel businesses' operations and goals. (Women's Empowerment Principles, 2010, p. 4)

Furthermore OECD (2011), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, established the need for the following policy focus on economically empowering women: "public financial management; social protection; cash transfers; and trade policies" (p. 14).

Fordham et al. (2017) in partnership with UN Women recommend these seven drivers of change:

1. Tackling adverse norms and promoting positive role models
2. Ensuring legal protection and reforming discriminatory laws
3. Recognizing and redistributing unpaid work and care
4. Building financial, digital and property assets for women
5. Changing business culture and practices
6. Improving public sector practices in employment and procurement
7. Strengthening visibility and representation of women. (p. 4)

These international law recommendations will be further expanded upon in this study and throughout the literature review.

Problem Statement and Purpose

Women hold far less formal leadership positions than men in every part of society globally. As it relates to sustainable peace development the United Nations (2018) found, “Between 1990 and 2017, women constituted only two percent of mediators, eight percent of negotiators, and five percent of witnesses and signatories in all major peace process” (p. 5). As is important for the background of this study for the culture-sharing group of women in rural Uganda only 12.8 % of agricultural land in the world is owned by women, yet agricultural based employment accounts for a third of women’s employment globally (United Nations, 2018). The United Nations (2018) reports globally there are over 2.7 billion women who are bound by laws that do not allow them to have the same types of jobs as men. This is especially true in entrepreneurship; Aidis et al. (2015), “Estimate that millions of jobs could be created if women started businesses as often as men” (Haan, 2017, p. 11). Furthermore in managing finances and starting businesses, women are behind men at the most basic levels. The United Nations (2018) records, “While 65 % of men report having an account at a formal financial institution, only 58 % of women do worldwide. ... In 40 % of economies, women’s early stage entrepreneurial activity is half or less than half of that of men’s” (p. 5).

UN Women found, “Investing in women can yield a significant ‘gender dividend’, according to a 2011 Deloitte report urging the public and private sectors to reap this benefit by investing in women and bringing them into leadership positions. The report highlighted the growing power of women consumers – already controlling roughly \$20 trillion of total consumer spending globally and influencing up to 80 % of buying decisions” (Women’s Empowerment Principles, 2010, p. 12). Haan (2017) notes, “Micro-studies show that women’s increased bargaining power within the household has been associated with a range of positive development

outcomes, which in turn can have a positive impact on growth” (Roncolato, Reksten & Grown, 2017, p. 8). The Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (2018) found that each 1 % increase in entrepreneurship correlates with a 2 % decrease in poverty. Further data is needed to show the linkages between women’s economic empowerment, sustained peace in a community, leadership development through training programs, and policy formation. Fordham et al. (2017) found for example, “In advanced economies, a number of common threads, including fiscal incentives, reducing the high cost of childcare and elder care and removing cultural impediments about women in leadership positions, could unlock women’s economic empowerment” (p. 87). Therefore the phenomenological approach of this dissertation is needed to add value to the growing research in this field.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to identify and understand the role of economically empowering women in peace and development work as a tool of foreign policy. It will describe the common meaning of the lived experiences of women in the town of Gulu in Northern Uganda who have completed holistic entrepreneurship training and created their own businesses in their communities. Research shows when women are economically empowered, it brings positive and lasting change to a community (Buvinic et al., 2016; Golla, Malhotra, Nanda & Mehra, 2011; United Nations, 2018; Women’s Empowerment Principles, 2010). Buvinic et al. (2016) write, “When women earn, society as a whole benefits, through increased investments in children’s schooling and health, reduced poverty for all, and enhanced aspirations for the next generation of girls and women” (p. 2). Moreso as Haan (2017) notes, “The World Bank in 2006 argued that gender equality was ‘smart economics’” (p. 1). Yet, there is little research connected to entrepreneurship training and business skill development for women. Studies have shown

education and training overall has a positive association with gender parity and economic growth (Bandiera & Natraj, 2013; Klasen & Lamanna, 2009; Knowles, Lorgelly & Owen, 2002).

The impetus on economic development for women most often centers on microfinance, which does not always include a training or leadership development aspect, nor does it generally reach the poorest women in rural areas. OECD (2011) found, “The challenge is to reach poor women who are landless laborers, smallholder agricultural producers, cross-border traders and factory and domestic workers and ensure that these women have access to the opportunities and benefits of economic growth and trade” (p. 10). Many microfinance programs essentially offer a handout in the form of a loan leaving the recipient to figure things out on her own or within her already established community. Microfinance often lacks in providing a holistic training component or in providing a foundation for a community of support. As Buvinic et al. (2016) found, “Capital alone, as a small loan or grant, is not enough to grow women-owned subsistence-level firms” (p. 3). Rather both policies and communities of support are needed for long-term sustainable growth and development to take place.

This dissertation will observe commonalities in the outcome of training in developing women as leaders in the community of Gulu in Northern Uganda. It will describe meaning through the shared experiences of the women who have gone through the same training program in the span of ten years. Throughout this study and forthcoming research the success of the economic empowerment of women as a policy initiative will be defined by measuring leadership development, measuring experience of sustained peace through overall wellbeing, and measuring income generation improved from the start of the training to the end of the training program. It will take into account the capacity for self-sustainability while understanding possible outside uncontrollable factors.

Furthermore this dissertation will address the greater problem of gender inequality and the need for economic empowerment as a means to achieving gender equality and advancing women in leadership globally. The United Nations (2018) underscores the need for women in leadership at the policy making level: “Women demonstrate political leadership by working across party lines through parliamentary women's caucuses - even in the most politically combative environments - and by championing issues of gender equality, such as the elimination of gender-based violence, parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender-equality laws and electoral reform” (p. 8). This dissertation will describe literature surrounding feminist theory as it relates to leadership and development within the research. It will examine linkages for further policy proposals that address development goals while also elevating women’s rights. In so doing the outcome will in essence play into multiple policy goals. Additionally it will identify and attempt to validate the role of social enterprise as a means to economic self-sustainability while offering a model for implementing entrepreneurship initiatives focused on women in leadership. It will describe the problem and purpose of entrepreneurship as it relates to gender parity in policy and leadership. There is a current gap in the literature measuring the sustainability and effectiveness of social enterprise as a tool of development. The study was designed to explore the collective lived experiences of women who completed a business-training program in Northern Uganda through a social enterprise. It will identify the common experiences of the phenomenon established through the creation of the non-governmental organization (NGO), 31 Bits, operating as a social enterprise.

Importance of Study

The study will primarily inform foreign policy goals for peace and development initiatives centered on empowering women within an economic framework using social

enterprise as a tool. The United Nations (2018) notes, “Women’s economic empowerment boosts productivity, increases economic diversification and income equality in addition to other positive development outcomes. For example, increasing the female employment rates in OECD countries to match that of Sweden, could boost GDP by over \$6 trillion” (p. 12). Fordham et al. (2017) record, “Reductions in workplace gender inequalities could perhaps add around six percent to GDP in the advanced economies over the course of one to two decades” (p. 3). Collaboration among actors is key to sustainability at the local level. Haan (2017) notes through the work of Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004), “A study in India found evidence that women’s entrepreneurship increased with implementation of political reservations that guaranteed women seats in village councils” (p. 10). This dissertation will give meaning to work already being done and will attempt to validate the need for greater policy initiatives surrounding the convergence of gender equality, peace building, sustainable development, and social enterprise. Haan (2017) notes through the work of Klasen and Lamanna (2009) and Gaddis and Klasen (2014), “Rising female share of the total labor force had a positive and significant impact on economic growth” (p. 9).

Government plays a defining role in setting the local success and long-term sustainability of entrepreneur-based development work. Yet without a proper analysis and network in place for implementation government initiatives can fail to fully understand the problem on the ground from a holistic perspective that includes the context, history, and people affected by the policy. This contributes to the problem of dependence on government programs that provide assistance in the form of relief, the lack of infrastructure needed to carry it to success, and a misdiagnosis of the larger problem. OECD (2011) found investments in infrastructure in a community, “Will bring returns in the form of increased women’s engagement in market-based activities and

greater productivity” (p. 24). It can become a cyclical phenomenon that creates dependence instead of building capacity for self-sustainability. Success will be determined at the local level given these factors. It is the convergence of policy, education, and business that creates a foundation for sustainable long-term success to take place.

One concept of convergence between policy, education, and business is known as the Triple Helix theory and it will inform the policy design and recommendation of this study. It will not inform the data analysis directly as this specific phenomenon being measured does not hold a policy component to interpret. It is not a theoretical model for this study but will offer a framework for building upon the foundation of this study in the form of future policy recommendation. Triple Helix model informed policy is developed and defined through systems that include the following:

1. *Components*, consisting of the institutional spheres of university, industry and government, each with a wide array of actors
2. *Relationships between components* (technology transfer, collaboration and conflict moderation, collaborative leadership, substitution, and networking)
3. *Functions*, in the sense of competencies of the system components that determine the system’s performance. (Ranga & Etzkowitz, 2013, p. 238)

The Triple Helix model operates by creating foreign policy in this way: Industry is production, university is knowledge creation, and government is the interaction catalyst and enforcement. By combining these three elements a foundation for long-term sustainability can be established with systems in place for self-sustainability and eventually for scalability. As Haan (2017) found, “Economic growth on its own is not sufficient to promote gender equality” (p. 20). It must be paired with structural change at the policy level to ensure women’s rights are paramount.

Similarly OECD (2011) notes of governments in shaping their policy initiatives, “Working with allies and partners in both the public and private sectors is essential for successfully addressing and scaling up women’s economic opportunities” (p. 28). Collaboration among actors is essential for sustainable change to take place, as this dissertation will attempt to convey in the policy recommendation. This approach to policy formation will be further expanded in the literature review section.

Specific deficiencies in past research include lack of data on entrepreneurship training for women in post-conflict rural environments, lack of data in examining the role of social enterprise as it relates to policy for long-term sustainability, and the relationship between advancing women’s rights through entrepreneurship and business based initiatives. As Golla et al. (2011) note it is important to remember, “No single program can address all of the factors that contribute to women’s economic empowerment ... they should concentrate efforts on where they can make the most difference given their resources, timeframe, local conditions” (p. 5). Continued research at the local level with partners on the ground will provide a foundation for greater policy implementation at the macro level. This study will explore a particular local phenomenon that has not been examined prior. It will contribute to the growing research in this field. In addition to policy creation and implementation the significance of the study will be most useful for those seeking to understand approaches to peacebuilding, social enterprise as a tool of development, advancing women’s rights through cultural means, and examining the effectiveness of economic empowerment through the tools of microfinance, business training, and entrepreneurship. The outcomes of this study can be utilized and applied not only through policy proposals, but also as recommendations for social enterprise formation and implementation, approaches to advancing women’s rights and achieving gender parity, and offer

curriculum guidance for business and leadership training in post conflict situations involving women in rural communities.

Definition of Terms

It is important to establish meaning to the most common terms used throughout this study. These will be further developed in the literature review.

- *Empowerment*: Kabeer (1999) simply defines it as “the ability to make choices” (p. 436). Specifically for women’s economic empowerment these three things must occur: “(1) access to resources, including preconditions; (2) agency, including process; and (3) achievements, including outcomes” (Datta & Gailey, 2012, p. 571). “A woman is economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions” (Golla et al., 2011, p. 4). Furthermore Haan (2017) captures the type of empowerment identified throughout this dissertation as, “The economic aspect of empowerment and gender equality, acknowledging the inter-relationship with other aspects of empowerment, but also stressing that economic empowerment does not always move in tandem with equality in capabilities” (p. 3).
- *Social Enterprise*: Social enterprise is defined as a business model or an organizational model where social networks are utilized at the very core and are motivated by social transformation to build social capital (Roberts, 2010). Social enterprise taps into multiple types of capital. Capital is defined in four categories: human capital, cultural capital, social capital, and political capital (Mendenhall et al., 2013). It is as Thompson and Doherty (2006) write, “Social enterprises – defined simply – are organizations seeking business solutions to social problems” (p. 362).

- *Gender Equality*: United Nations Women sets forth a holistic definition – “Gender equality describes the concept that all human beings, both women and men, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices with-out the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favored equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male” (Women’s Empowerment Principles, 2010, p. 13).
- *Gender Equity*: Differentiating from the definition of gender equality, United Nations Women writes, “Gender equity means that women and men are treated fairly according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities” (Women’s Empowerment Principles, 2010, p. 13). It is the action or result of gender equality evident in a context.

Further concepts as they relate to the background of the research will be expanded upon and defined in the literature review.

Theoretical Framework

This study is phenomenological in its approach as it seeks to identify and understand the culture-sharing group of women in Northern Uganda who have started their own businesses as a result of the training program created by the organization, 31 Bits. 31 Bits is an artisan-based social enterprise that generates income through product sale. It is not organized through a nonprofit or faith based model, but rather through a sustainable development model that uses income generation to invest back into the community. The culture-sharing group of women at the

center of this study is part of a community of graduates in the rural town of Gulu. They have been part of this community for as little as five years and up to ten years. They were employed for their training period of five years through a fair trade artisan-based approach where they made jewelry and were paid a stable income each month for their work while having the opportunity to participate in holistic training for the purpose of creating their own business in their community and becoming fully self-sustainable. These women maintain connection to their community of graduates through follow-up mentorship and gatherings. Phenomenology was chosen because of its holistic approach to the subject matter and the possibilities for further research and advocacy within the shared dimensions of the problem statement. It will create a framework for examining the phenomenon in a way that will attempt to offer application to women-led business initiatives in post-conflict and developing nation situations.

The theoretical design will be rooted in a transformative worldview framework while making use of feminist theory. Creswell (2013) writes of the transformative framework in, “That knowledge is not neutral and it reflects the power and social relationships within society, and thus the purpose of knowledge construction is to aid people to improve society” (p. 25; see also Mertens, 2003). Furthermore Creswell (2014) writes, “A transformative worldview holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression at whatever levels it occurs” (p. 9; see also Mertens, 2010). Haan (2017) shows how these connect with the role of women, “The emphasis on economic empowerment, also, has potentially transformative effects, as it defines how women *participate* in growth processes, and are not merely seen as *benefiting* from growth” (p. 2). Social enterprise creates a space for an amplified role of followers in collaborative and transformational leadership, which is ideal for women in development and peacebuilding. In describing transformational leadership Burns

(1978) writes, “The genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motivations” (p. 19). In this way it is parallel to the concept of social enterprise by focusing on the role of both leaders and followers in collaboration toward end-values, which include equality (Burns 1978).

It is difficult to separate personal experience from feminist theory, as experience is the key to knowing and personal identity is at the core of feminism (Kolmar & Barkowski, 2010). It is therefore important to understand the role of the collective in feminist theory and the significance of visibility (Kabeer, 1999). As Creswell (2013) notes, “Feminist research approaches center on and make problematic women’s diverse situations and the institutions that frame those situations” (p. 29). This dissertation will describe the essence of women’s shared experience and need for economic empowerment. Creswell (2014) writes for feminist theory, “Research topics may include policy issues related to realizing social justice for women in specific contexts or knowledge about oppressive situations for women” (p. 64; see also Olesen, 2000). The goal of this phenomenological research approach is to inform policy formation and address gender inequality. Feminist theory scholars are concerned with issues in the field as well as how gender shapes the global, political, and economic domains. These concepts will be further expanded upon in the literature review.

Research Questions

The central research question this study seeks to answer is how women’s economic empowerment gives meaning to experiencing leadership and sustainable peace development as a tool of policy formation. The research will focus on exploratory questions with the intent to describe and interpret a shared common experience for the women who completed the business-training program. The literature review will establish the linkages between peacebuilding, gender

equality, artisan-based or fair trade business, social enterprise and foreign policy. Collaboration is at the center of research inquiry, identified as a key component of a transformative theoretical research design approach (Creswell, 2014).

Stemming from this foundation, further guiding questions will also be examined as research progresses:

- When women are economically empowered how is greater sustainable peace and development in their community experienced and felt from the perspective of those women?
- When women are economically empowered how do they experience a greater level of both formal and informal leadership opportunities in their community?
- How can governments partner with entrepreneurship and social enterprise initiatives to achieve greater long-term sustainability?
- What impact does women's economic empowerment have on an individual, family, and community?

These questions will be examined and built upon through the foundation of the literature review and will shape the research framework and methodology for designing and implementing the data gathering process.

Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of the study will include the relationship of the researcher with the organization, 31 Bits, and the relationship of the program director to the women as the coordinator of the interviews. The researcher has been involved as a supporter and employee of the work done in Uganda through product sales and administration. The program director will have known the women the longest as their main point of contact from the beginning of their

time with 31 Bits. This will both potentially limit and enhance the way questions are answered in the interview process because of familiarity. Data will be limited to the depth and details of experience shared by the women interviewed. Availability and willingness during the interview period process in Gulu, Uganda will determine who is included. Any follow up or clarifying interviews with participants will also be limited to availability. Other limitations could stem from self-selection of participants, self-identification of failure and success, history or time frame of the experience, and potential miscommunication with participants occurring naturally due to language barriers, cultural norms, and other unforeseen circumstances. Any follow up data will be limited to the availability and communication of the staff on the ground in Uganda through email and WhatsApp (<https://www.whatsapp.com/>).

Delimitations will be set in the parameters of the research. The interviews will take place in 2020 and will include women who have graduated from the business-training program facilitated by the organization, 31 Bits. Only those women who have gone through the training program of this NGO will be included in the data. This is limited to a certain community of women who have experienced the same phenomenon of the training program over the period of ten years. The outcome of the program is the creation of a business. Diversity in types of business will be a priority in obtaining the sample of participants in order to offer a more broad and relatable experience. Most businesses will be rural in nature due to the agricultural community of Gulu where the women are located.

Assumptions

The researcher will assume a role in the study as a personal stakeholder with experience in the field of study as both a student and practitioner. Researcher bias will be assumed and acknowledged in the interview and data gathering process as someone with prior knowledge of

the training program to provide further validity to the study. Researcher bias will also be assumed as someone who has invested time and relationships in the success of the training program. Other assumptions include the cultural privilege that allows women in Uganda to even dream of owning and operating their own business. Systems in place allow women to explore these options legally even though barriers do exist. Additionally it is assumed that the women involved will have been impacted in some way by the war because of the community they reside in. Historical context pertaining to the war in Northern Uganda will be developed further in the literature review.

Organization of Study

This research study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the topic of focus including sections on the Background of the Study, Problem and Purpose Statements, Importance of the Study, Theoretical Framework, Research Questions, Limitations/Delimitations, Assumptions, and Organization of the Study. Chapter 2 provides a foundation for the research through a literature review. It will establish the linkages between peacebuilding, international development, gender equality, leadership, artisan-based business, social enterprise and policy. Chapter 3 describes the research design through the research framework and methodology. Chapter 4 presents the result and findings of the study through the data gathering process. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the dissertation study with a discussion of the key findings and conclusion including policy implications and areas for future research.

Chapter Summary

In conclusion chapter 1 provided a research overview of the dissertation situating the research within the greater problem and need for further research. The qualitative research approach will utilize the phenomenology framework by gathering data through an interview

process with the aim of measuring the results of a business-training program through a social enterprise. Chapter 1 provided the overall lens through which the research will be examined including the larger research questions within the field that it hopes to answer in part.

Furthermore it attempted to show the transformative context of the business training that has taken place through the social enterprise as a way of advancing women's leadership and rights.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to identify and understand the role of economically empowering women in peace and development work as a tool of foreign policy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction and Organization of Chapter

The central research question this study seeks to answer is how women's economic empowerment plays a role in sustainable peace development, as a tool of policy formation. The literature review will establish the linkages between peacebuilding, international development, gender equality, leadership, artisan-based business, social enterprise and foreign policy from a United States perspective. Ambepitiya (2016) records, "Women's development is directly related to the nation's development" (p. 162). The literature review will first outline the historical background and context regarding women's economic empowerment within peace and development work, specifically noting the recent history and culture in Uganda, Africa. It will then be organized by the following sections: Social Enterprise and Development, Building Peace in Northern Uganda through Women and Business, Empowering Women through the Artisan Industry, and Policy Approaches and Implications.

Context of the Study

It is important to understand the tension that exists between women and peace. Lather (1991) outlines feminist research with, "Gender as a basic organizing principle that shapes the conditions ... the aim of this ideological research is to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position" (Creswell, 2013, p. 29). As Sjoberg (2010) notes, "Feminists have argued that a more peaceful world is possible only where women realize their full potential in an environment of equal opportunities" (p. 169). Associating women with peace primarily casts them most often as victims and builds upon, "The gendered assumption that men make war, women make peace" (Sjoberg, 2010, p. 154). Yet it is undeniable that women bring a perspective to peace that is unique from men.

“Women, like men, are victims of and actors in armed conflict. However, there are more women who are involved actively in building peace than in destroying lives” (Porter, 2007, p. 15). It is equally important to realize the nuanced role women play in conflict and peace when approaching development work in post-conflict situations (Sylvester, 2001). Porter (2007) addresses this by arguing, “That although not all women are natural peacemakers, the social roles of women for nurturing interpersonal relationships often make them effective peacebuilders, typically in informal rather than formal ways” (Gizelis, 2011, p. 525). Caprioli (2000) writes, “Women’s relative pacifism may be a result of women seeing moral dilemmas in terms of conflicting responsibilities rather than competing rights, and of their valuing community and connectedness over autonomy and individuation” (p. 53). She concludes, “Foreign policy goals to ensure peace, therefore, should concentrate more on supporting organizations aimed at improving the status of women” (Caprioli, 2000, p. 64). Yet the ensuing tension between women and peace must be understood in any type of peace work since, “This kind of feminization of peace, in turn, reinforces the masculinity of war” (Cohn, 2012, p. 175). Not all men cause war and not all women build peace. There are nuances with both. Applying a gender lens is the foundation of this dissertation and literature review.

Women are in a unique position to build peace because of their personal experiences in times of conflict (Schnabel & Tabyshalie, 2012). Hunt and Posa (2001) found that, “Women are often the most powerful voices for moderation in times of conflict” (p. 38). Furthermore, Chinkin and Charlesworth (2006) write, “It is possible that conflict will have empowered women and opened up new opportunities that did not previously exist. In such a context, women become interested in the goal of social transformation rather than restored dependence and subordination” (p. 941). Hunt and Posa (2001) contend women use their common identity as

“family nurturers” to bring stability to their communities: “Since women know their communities, they can predict the acceptance of peace initiatives, as well as broker agreements in their own neighborhoods” (p. 41). This gives women a particular advantage in playing a role in the peacemaking process since, as Afshar (2003) notes, “When women themselves take charge of their own identity, they often celebrate motherhood as a harbinger of peace, an experience that could bridge the gap between women across wide religious and national divides” (p. 187). Speaking on the social roles women play in their societies, Marshall and Hayward (2011) write, women, “Can be pivotal even in the most political settings and should thus not be discounted as insignificant elements in the process of building peace” (p. 14). Women play a role distinctive of men since they are seen as less threatening and “have less psychological distance to reach across a conflict line” (Hunt & Posa, 2011, p. 41). Marshall and Hayward (2011) have found, “Women have demonstrated their abilities to achieve common ground and work effectively to better their communities in instances where men have failed” (p. 7). Similarly Gizelis (2011) writes of peacebuilding, “Existing studies on social networks have found that gender-mixed networks tend to perform better in terms of collaboration and conflict management” (p. 525).

Specifically for post-conflict systems in Africa a feminist ethics of peacebuilding as outlined by Isike (2017) was created over time as, “Women’s power became based on the centrality of their economic role in relation to men, and men’s general belief in the sacredness of women as mothers” (p. 352). This gave women an inclination toward peacebuilding roles as the narrative of matriarchal leadership was already embedded in society. Isike (2017) describes it as a, “Feminist ethic care, based on motherhood and women’s sacredness that was appropriated by pre-colonial African women to wage peace and maintain societal harmony” (p. 353). Kikooma (2011) writes of Uganda, “Although the Ugandan government has offered strong leadership in

promoting women's rights—something the feminist groups admit—economic factors and the lack of supporting infrastructure continue to prevent women from achieving gender parity” (p. 574). Furthermore Marshall and Hayward (2011) write, “Scholars and practitioners alike understand that peacebuilding efforts are more likely to be sustainable if they include women generally, and that focusing on women deepens and broadens the narrower and more traditional view of peace work” (p. 6). Further, Oosterom (2011) found in Uganda, “The post-conflict period can offer new opportunities for women to participate in, and practice, citizenship” (p. 397). The women of this study are from the Acholi tribe in which all, “Experienced a brutal war and long-term displacement” (Oosterom, 2011, p. 397).

As most post-conflict situations are occurring in the developing world, one of the major issues in the peace process is the notion of a rescue narrative. This narrative assumes the rescuer has all the answers and does not leave room for listening, partnership, or holistic analysis of the problem. Well-meaning governments and organizations from the developed world approach peacebuilding as a project that often disenfranchises and disempowers the people they are trying to help. DN (2005) writes, “One of the most demeaning things about poverty that women often mention is that of having to depend on handouts from others” (p. 276). Therefore women must be empowered to contribute to their economic situations rather than becoming dependent on the help of outsiders. Beneria (2001) agrees, “Poverty eradication programs must emphasize the need to generate decent jobs without which these programs will continue to be ineffective” (p. 49). Unemployment globally is pointed to as a major contributor to conflict and a barrier of development. It has been proven that women's economic sustainability is a crucial component of rebuilding society in post-conflict situations (United Nations, 2018). Which is why, “Women's equal access to and control over economic and financial resources is critical for the achievement

of gender equality and empowerment of women and for equitable and sustainable economic growth and development” (United Nations, 2018, p. v). One way women can achieve greater economic empowerment is through fair trade artisan-based partnerships that create opportunities to sell their craft on a larger scale. Minney (2011) writes, “Fair Trade is a strategy for poverty alleviation, economic empowerment and sustainable development. Its purpose is to create opportunities for producers who have been economically disadvantaged or marginalized by the conventional trading system” (p. 145). Artisan-based business is an example of an avenue for women to reach new levels of economic sustainability, which can lead to greater opportunities for leadership and peace development. One case study with IKEA in India “organizes artisans in small producer groups of self-help groups, equipping them with the necessary skills, tools, and machinery to improve their craft and increase their income. Artisans are co-owners and shareholders in the company” (Fordham et al., 2017, p. 73).

A sense of empowerment and self-sustainability for women is central in contributing to greater gender equality in post-conflict situations. Deo (2016) writes, “Women workers feel empowered by having their own jobs and are able to wrest greater control over their lives from their families” (p. 111). Women are given more decision-making power in their households as a result of their economic empowerment. This creates a positive effect not only in family life but also in the community as a whole. Fonjong (2001) records, “Women have to be involved in family decisions that affect their lives, those of their children and the management of family income” (p. 231). Razavi (2001) found in a study, “The ability to earn a wage, had made a difference in how women were perceived and treated, as well as their feelings of self-worth” (p. 36). Furthermore through the work of the United Nations Buvinic, Furst-Nichols and Pryor (2016) found, “Jobs increase women’s earnings, help boost their self-esteem and bargaining

power at home, and delay early marriage and pregnancy” (p. 2). It is significant to note this need for economically empowering women because of the unique benefit it brings to their families and communities. Deo (2006) writes, “The money from women’s jobs is more likely to be put toward the basic needs of households than money paid to men” (p. 110). Additionally, Richards and Gelleny (2007) write, “Compared to men, women tend to save more of their earnings” (p. 859). UN Women reports, “Women represent 70 % of the world’s poor” (Women’s Empowerment Principles, 2010, p. 12). The research on women’s economic empowerment shows the importance of investing in women to play a larger role in the global economy.

Overall women are still lagging in comparison to men within the global economy. Fordham et al. (2017) write, “The global gender wage gap is at 24 %, and women continue to bear the disproportionate burden of unpaid work and informal work” (p. 36). In contrast to men, women have a greater economic impact on future generations in their family lines. The United Nations (2018) reports, “Studies over an extended period have built up a robust body of evidence to show that women’s access to resources, including education, paid work, credit, land, technology and other productive assets, have a far stronger impact on child survival, welfare and education than similar resources in men’s hands” (p. 7). A holistic understanding to sustainable conflict resolution then must include an economic component. Yet it is important to also wrestle with what Chant (2014) terms as the “feminization of poverty” which can be damaging to women when, “Not only do women end-up as the duty-bearers for household poverty alleviation but men’s exclusion can effectively excuse and/or alienate them from obligations” (p. 304). One approach to economic empowerment and poverty alleviation is the concept of social enterprise. Like peacebuilding, social enterprise utilizes collaboration at its core by bringing together

different actors and creating space for new leaders. It is an ideal ally for women in giving them an opportunity to rise in the larger economy.

Social Enterprise and Development

Social enterprises are on the rise, yet can fail to remain sustainable long term in part due to lack of data and research over time, but also, “Due to lack of resources, infrastructure and adequate policies” (Maguirre et al., 2016, p. 168). Throughout this dissertation, social enterprise is defined within what is classified as small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Social enterprise is defined as a business model or an organizational model where social networks are being utilized at the very core. It is as Lyon and Humbert (2012) write, “The term social enterprise is relatively new, being first mentioned in the 1970s, but rising to prominence in the late 1990s. The Social Enterprise Coalition (SEC) Survey uses a broad definition of ‘businesses that are trading for social and environmental purposes. Rather than maximizing private profit, their main aim is to generate profit to further their social and environmental goals” (p. 832). Yet even more specifically, Di, Haugh and Tracey (2010) found, “Social enterprises seek to attain a particular social objective or set of objectives through the sale of products and/or services, and in doing so aim to achieve financial sustainability independent of government and other donors” (p. 682). Gormley (2012) affirms this more narrow definition of social enterprise as, “An organization or venture that achieves its primary social or environmental mission using business methods ... [Furthermore] the social needs addressed by social enterprises and the business models they use are as diverse as human ingenuity” (p. 10). Social enterprise is built upon the foundation of community by connecting people in ways they were not able to connect prior.

Social enterprises especially aim to add value through their work. Di et al. (2010) write, “The aim of creating social value is a defining characteristic of social enterprises” (p. 695).

Nicolas and Rubio (2016) affirm of social enterprise, “The creation of social value is intrinsic to its mission” (p. 56). Weaver (2019) writes, “As institutions that strive to address social problems, social enterprises seek to create positive changes within the lives of their beneficiaries” (p. 4). Social enterprises can operate in the informal economy, bringing added value for women with the potential to scale into the formal economy. Bonny and Rajendran (2013) found, “Systems of cooperation, collaboration and networking that transcend formal entrepreneurial organizations prevailed in these groups” (p. 64). Social enterprises can also operate in place of social policy or to achieve policy initiatives as Gawell (2013) found, “Social enterprises often appear to provide services on behalf or in lieu of public efforts” (p. 257). He goes on to address the bridging role they play: “Efficient public decision-making, on the one hand, and participatory collaborative governance, on the other hand, are both part of the context that social entrepreneurship and social enterprises currently are embedded in” (Gawell, 2013, p. 258). Lyon and Humbert (2012) write, “In terms of social enterprises’ impact on local economies, qualitative studies show a wide range of potential social, environmental as well as economic benefits”, including peace dividends through stabilization (p. 833).

Haugh and Talwar (2016) frame it this way: “It is a processual perspective that extends entrepreneurship beyond the creation of wealth to include action that brings “about new economic, social, institutional and cultural environments” (p. 644). Asfiah, Anshori and Mawardi (2018) define social enterprise as marked by autonomy/agency and sustainability. Maguirre et al. (2016) write, “Social entrepreneurship focuses on finding sustainable solutions to problems of neglected positive externalities while adopting a logic of empowerment, which is somehow opposite to the search for control of self-interested actors, such as corporations and commercial entrepreneurs” (p. 166). They go on to define it as, “The nature of social enterprises

has two elements: a social objective and a long-term solution oriented to social needs ... at the implementation level, social enterprises are characterized by two elements: social innovation and scalability ... the expected impacts of social enterprises: value creation and sustainability ” (Maguirre et al., 2016, p. 167-8). Value creation is defined as, “Identifiable and measurable economic benefits that the group received through the activities adopted by them” (Bonny & Rajendran, 2013, p. 61). Social enterprise has a goal of, “Focusing explicitly on creating sustainable solutions that create social value through its economic activity” (Nicolas & Rubio, 2016, p. 57).

Qualitative and quantitative studies on social enterprise development have aided in building a research foundation for further work. They offer potential policy implications for both business and development work. Urban (2015) writes of a study in South Africa as creating a potential role for government, "In fostering a culture of social enterprise by raising awareness of social enterprises through education and through disseminating information and providing resources to promote social entrepreneurship" (p. 173). There is a theme within the literature that addresses the concern for long-term sustainability. "Research findings provide the empirical evidence for the much cited claim that the 'need to build a sustainable organization' among NGOs has led to the adoption of 'entrepreneurial and business-like strategies that are aimed at achieving greater financial stability'" (Khienf & Dahles, 2015, p. 234). Most social enterprises work with demographics that have a strong will to succeed through economic increase. As Khienf and Dahles (2015) write of a study in Cambodia, "A common perception found among the leaders of social entrepreneurial NGOs in our sample is that their organizations were not created to seek donor money but Commercialization in the Non-Profit Sector to be self-sufficient and sustainable through income generation" (p. 235). A case study in India found, “The personal

accounts of sister members reveal that this collective form of entrepreneurship has empowered them in three ways: economic security, development of entrepreneurial behavior, and increased contributions to the family” (Datta & Gailey, 2012, p. 569).

Other themes include those of self-reliance and self-sustainability while aiming to measure it effectively through quantitative metrics. For Khienf and Dahles (2015), "The findings provide support of existing literature arguing that commercialization results in NGOs redefining their mission, balancing between social and economic value creation. This does not imply that NGOs find a balance between mission and market easily. Instead, missions may fall" (p. 235). This creates a space for further development of social enterprise indicators in quantitative studies. For Urban (2015), "In order for a social initiative to have a social impact/reach, innovativeness, the ability to be expandable/ replicable and remain sustainable, social entrepreneurs must perceive themselves as capable and have the requisite skills and competencies" (p. 165). Each study approaches the measurement of social enterprise in a unique way. Maguirre et al. (2016) affirms, “Research concerning social enterprises has been documented primarily through case studies and grounded theory” (p. 169). Is it possible then to streamline these studies for a sustainable model or will the takeaways be unique to their demographic? This dissertation seeks to answer the question in part as it relates to policy recommendations.

Women play a significant role in economic development, particularly in what has been understood as the informal economy and unpaid labor of the household. Social enterprise then becomes a natural ally for women (Nicolas & Rubio, 2016). Chant (2014), writes, “In the spirit of effecting ‘better integration’ and to move towards policy initiatives which might better support poverty alleviation and female empowerment, one major challenge is to eradicate the

persistent blind spot, whereby unpaid reproductive labor is deemed to be of no economic value or 'naturalized' as 'women's work', is regarded as infinite, and is taken for granted" (p. 310). Even still it is important to make space for women in the formal economy. Karakire Guma (2015) notes, "It is well recognized that poverty and gender discrimination cannot be mitigated without active participation of women in the economic mainstream" (p. 305). Ambepitiya (2016) writes, "Women's entrepreneurial activities are not only a means for economic survival, but they also have positive social repercussions for the women themselves and their social environment" (p. 162). In her research she found, "40 % of enterprises in developing countries are owned and run by women" (p. 162). Social enterprises are ideal for women in developing nations as Ezmieralda, Anis and Muninggar (2013) found, "One specific factor that attracted the attention of some researchers studying on line women entrepreneurship is the need for flexibility in balancing family and work" (p. 79). It also doesn't require women to be limited by lack of qualifications or education, as a formal job position would necessitate.

One key factor in determining the success of social enterprise is sustainability. As Ambepitiya (2016) notes, "Reducing poverty, quality enhancing and production of useful goods and services are the objectives of a sustainable economy" (p. 164). Women face unique challenges in economic development. Karakire Guma (2015) found, "The persistent lack of social capital and ability to save greatly frustrate women's entrepreneurial growth in developing countries" (p. 308). Social capital is gained through social connections and relationships that enable greater production and access to resources (Rooks, Klyver & Sserwanga, 2016). This can also be gained through utilizing social media to build social enterprise (Ezmieralda et al., 2013). Datta and Gailey (2012) found, "Social entrepreneurship ventures combine financial success with social value creation, offering a new way of thinking for all sectors of society" (p. 583).

Karakire Guma (2015) goes on to note, “Specific finance problems for women entrepreneurs include: lack of collateral, no credit record, assets registered in husband’s name, inability to qualify for loans due to stringent criteria applied by banks, and lack of business and management experience” (p. 308). This was a theme throughout the literature as one of the major challenges to women entrepreneurs (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Lourenco et al., 2014). It was affirmed in the W-GDP (2019) policy initiative that outlines, “There is a roughly \$300 billion credit gap for women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises (“SMEs”) globally” (Pillar 2). Likewise Fordham et al. (2017) record, “In an assessment of 140 countries, research by the International Finance Corporation found that the annual credit gap for female business owners is roughly \$287 billion, which constitutes 30 % of the total credit gap for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) globally” (p. 54). Yet even when women gain access to credits and loans Chant (2014) found, “That many women’s loans end-up invested in assets that are primarily controlled by husbands” (p. 305). It is also important to note the role of providing banking training and access to women. Buvinic et al. (2016) advocate, “Savings interventions increase women’s business earnings. Women seek saving vehicles, and use personal savings to invest in their business” (p. 3). Furthermore, the OECD (2011) found, “To graduate women’s income-generating activities from survival level into strong and viable businesses, women need access to the full range of credit, banking and financial services and facilities, essential to fully develop their productive assets, their land and their businesses” (p. 12). Fordham et al. (2017) found part of the solution in, “Successfully addressing these challenges will require the intentional alignment of public policy, regulation, and investment to significantly expand financial access to women” (p. 53).

Weaver (2019) conducted a study showing, “That as social business interventions, social enterprises have one or more overarching strategies for creating positive social change and

engage in specific activities to carry out the strategy” (p. 4). Overall Weaver (2019) found, “Despite the diversity of their work, social enterprises share a common desire to create positive social change by addressing social problems faced by diverse groups in society, which corroborates conceptual research that suggests social enterprise is a tool for addressing social problems and poverty” (p. 19). Gizelis (2011) writes, “The role of women in conflict resolution and their relevance to post-conflict reconstruction is likely to be more notable at the local level rather than the national level” (p. 525). It is important to note this theme throughout the literature that success will be determined at the local level and will be subject to the environment in which a policy is implemented. While this is true it does not discount the larger impact it can have for women’s rights and leadership development. Haugh and Talwar (2016) affirm, “Increasing female involvement in entrepreneurial activity has been associated with the improved status of women, enhanced family and community well-being and broader societal gains” (p. 643). Asfiah et al. (2018) note, “Women entrepreneurs account for up to a third of all businesses operating in the formal economy worldwide” (p. 4). Sarfaraz, Faghih and Majd (2014) write, “According to the GEM Women’s Report 2012, an estimated 126 million women were starting or running new businesses and an estimated 98 million were running established businesses ... Sub-Saharan Africa shows the highest rate of female entrepreneurship (27 %)” (p. 2).

The relationship between women and social enterprise is nuanced due to cultural, religious, and gender inequality norms in certain societies. Haugh and Talwar (2016) address this tension in their work. They define empowerment as, “The processes through which women who ‘have been denied the ability to make strategic choices acquire such ability” (p. 646). They go on to say, “Direct evidence of empowerment rests on the extent to which resources and agency have altered prevailing inequalities” (Haugh & Talwar, 2016, p. 647). It is also important to note the

risk in alienating men and potentially undermining masculine identity in patriarchal cultures (Haugh & Talwar, 2016). Langowitz and Minniti (2007) found in their data collection of individuals in 17 countries that overall women have a less positive view of entrepreneurship than men, which affects motivation. In the end they concluded, “Perceiving the existence of opportunities, self-confidence in one’s own entrepreneurial skills, and knowing other entrepreneurs are crucial characteristics of women who are involved in starting a business” (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007, p. 357). One case study in Mexico found by economically empowering women it changed the cultural norms surrounding gender inequality. Maguirre et al. (2016) write of the outcome of the case study, “Women are no longer afraid of cultural constraints to participate in economic and political activities” (p. 181). This social enterprise case study also saw increased numbers of women in formal and informal leadership positions. “Increasing control of their source of income has improved women’s willingness to participate in political and managerial decision-making, inspiring more women in the community to work at the organization” (Maguirre et al., 2016, p. 184). Evaluation mechanisms in place have shown greater economic growth overall to the community when women are economically empowered and given greater leadership agency.

Additionally Lyon and Humbert (2012) found, “Social enterprises appear to provide a more egalitarian environment for women’s involvement in governance compared to the private sector. They can therefore be considered an important potential arena within local economies providing an alternative space for governance that challenges inequality” (p. 841). There is growing research that indicates social enterprise is a better indicator of development work and long-term sustainability for women in leading them and the communities they inhabit out of poverty (Fotheringham, & Saunders, 2014; Nicolas & Rubio, 2016). When women are given an

opportunity for economic empowerment and self-sustainability through social enterprise, they become an integral part of creating social value. As Roberts (2010) notes of reconciliation in post-conflict situations, “Requires the regeneration of social capital to rebuild community relations” (p. 7). It can also create a foundation for positive peace to thrive. Yoosuf and Premaratne (2017) found in their case study, “Since poverty and economic marginalization are a major cause of conflict, creating better economic conditions ... contributes to mitigating the causes of conflict” (p. 45). Social enterprise as an economic development model offers a viable solution for sustainable conflict resolution and the empowerment of women in their roles as both followers and leaders throughout the peacebuilding process.

Building Peace in Northern Uganda through Women and Business

The United Nations (2018) writes of the current state of Uganda, “Despite historic legacies of political upheavals and violent conflicts, Uganda has enjoyed relative peace and stability since 2006, with the reinstatement of multi-party democracy, a strong constitution that protects women’s human rights, and an end to conflict in Northern Uganda” (p. 7). Women are becoming leaders of their homes in rural Northern Uganda. Kikooma (2011) writes of Uganda, “Tadria (1987) noted that a woman’s worth is measured first in terms of what she can offer to family survival” (p. 574). Typically women in Uganda are relegated to rural positions in the farming industry. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2007), women make up 80 % of the workforce in producing food and 60-70 % of the workforce in the agriculture overall, with land ownership at 5-7 % (Kikooma, 2011; Lourenco et al., 2014; Nyanzi, Whitworth, Nyanzi & Wolff, 2005). The OECD (2011) found, “Closing the gender gap in agricultural inputs alone could lift 100-150 million people out of hunger” (p. 11). Furthermore in Uganda, “According to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD, 1999:40), female-headed

households constitute 29 %” (Ikoja-Odongo, 2002, p. 40). Lourenco et al. (2014) write, “At the same time, despite owning land or producing substantial amounts of produce, many remain either just above the poverty line or ‘stagnant’; that is, they see minimal or no growth in their activities” (p. 383). In regards to entrepreneurship women have risen through post conflict opportunities in Uganda. Kikooma (2012) notes, “Despite quantitative measurement of the contributions of female micro-entrepreneurs to the GDP being slow in coming, the trading and services sectors (especially food and beverages, textiles, retail trade, pottery), which have led to the high rate of economic growth in the informal economy, are areas of female dominance” (p. 17). Policy initiatives for women in Uganda have created a path for greater gender parity yet are still lacking in infrastructure as Kikooma (2012) records, “Whereas women in Uganda now have the instruments for their political empowerment (enshrined in the 1995 constitution), women’s economic power has not been boosted with similar positive policies and actions” (p. 19). Generalizations can be made for women in Uganda, yet it is important to note, “It’s still largely the case that local gender ideologies shape women’s economic opportunities in Uganda” (Kikooma, 2012, p. 21). Ambepitiya (2016) writes, “In Africa, women run businesses mainly support them to feed their families. Social issues such as domestic violence and prostitution also can be eradicated if women can become financially independent” (p. 172). Katungi, Edmeades and Smale (2008) further expand on this environment in their work.

In Northern Uganda specifically, Chigudu (2016) writes, “Domestic violence, disputes over land and inequitable divisions of labor are presented as some of the social changes that have taken place after the war” (p. 28). Displacement caused men to abdicate responsibility and placed the burden of family survival on women (Appleton, 1996). An ongoing issue with Western influence is as Oosterom (2011) records, “Messages about gender equality seemed to have led to

suspicion among men that women would take over power rather than gain equal power” (p. 401). The key to success in the region has been found in what Chigudu (2016) writes of women, “Restoring Acholi values to create a more ‘harmonious and peaceful’ communal existence. The women thus connected and adapted ideas from elsewhere to their specific contexts, allowing them to contest power and patriarchal institutions in innovative but culturally alert ways” (p. 34). Men were particularly affected as Oosterom (2011) records, “It was a common complaint among Acholi men that the war made them ‘lose their masculinity’” because they could no longer protect or provide for their families (p. 400). Yet women were given new opportunities through the aftermath of war because they could, “Improve their bargaining position in the household by earning an income” (Oosterom, 2011, p. 400). Men on the other hand were primarily negatively affected postwar. “This caused various social and psychological problems, such as alcoholism, suicide attempts, and engaging in violence” (Oosterom, 2011, p. 400). Violence against women is still common in Uganda despite the Domestic Violence Act legislation passed in 2010 (FIDH, 2012). The U.S. Embassy in Uganda (2017) reports, “According to the Demographic Health Survey in 2011, 56 % of Ugandan women experience physical violence. And according to last year’s survey, 22 % experience sexual violence. Furthermore, gender-based violence goes beyond physical and sexual abuse” (Malac, 2017, p. 1).

Women in Uganda have a unique narrative woven through the history of the nation. Karakire Guma (2015) writes, “Rogue regimes have severely handicapped women in terms of their participation in business activities, often through persistent and systemic prejudice, discriminatory laws and policies, and financial constraints, as well as social-cultural, educational, and legislative neglect” (p. 306). The post-war period of rebuilding in Uganda has been defined by the resilience of their women. “Their strategies to ensure the livelihood of their families, the

numerous activities they carry out in order to survive, the caring for neighbors and relatives, demonstrate their strengths. Their agency is a double-edged sword, however. While their continuous strength and agency helps them to survive, it also means they carry the heavy burden of ensuring survival” (Oosterom, 2011, p. 402). The war created a shift in women’s rights that is interpreted by some as negative, as Oosterom (2011) writes, “The change in gendered roles - brought about by the conflict and life in the camps, and which transferred many responsibilities from men to women, has seemingly become entrenched” (p. 404). Nyanzi et al. (2005) echo this sentiment, “The most common interpretation of empowerment has been 'power over', implying a zero-sum model in which empowerment of women comes at the expense of men” (p. 14). Men no longer find purpose or meaning in their community because they do not have access to what previously defined them as men: protection and provision. “One woman expressed this very powerfully: ‘As long as there is no peace in our homes, the war is not over’” (Oosterom, 2011, p. 404).

Nyanzi et al. (2005) found, “Economic dependence on men has been identified as a key structural factor at the root of women's vulnerability to poverty, sexual violence, unwanted childbirth, sexually transmitted infections, and a range of other negative outcomes” (p. 13). Yet simply providing women with income created a role reversal without additional support. In the study conducted by Nyanzi et al. (2005) with women in Southern Uganda, “Women expressed a sense of pride and independence from having a private source of income. In nearly every in-depth interview and focus group discussion, women across all sites expressed frustration over partners who did not contribute towards basic family needs” (p. 17). Unfortunately Nyanzi et al. (2005) found, “In the Ugandan context, women's entry into paid employment over the last three decades has been more a response to economic decline and diminishing contribution of men's

formal sector wages to household income rather than any wholesale ideological shift in women's status in society” (p. 21). Women often do not have the choice whether they work or not because they must survive, even without the support of a partner. Nyanzi et al. (2005) write, “A degree of economic self- reliance may underlie the stated willingness of some market women to abandon partners rather than tolerate lack of support or infidelity” (p. 22). Ultimately it came down to cultural norms as, “Access to the symbols of male power: money, mobility, and public assertiveness, does not give women the same power as men in either economic or sexual domains” (Nyanzi et al., 2005, p. 22). The United Nations (2018) writes of this, “There are deep-rooted cultural and traditional practices that discriminate against women and girls and customary practices in many parts of Uganda that discriminate in cases of succession and inheritance that limit women’s access to land, finances and property” (p. 8). Furthermore Haan (2017) found in connection to the work of Fernandez (2014), “Restrictions on women’s rights to inheritance and property and legal impediments to undertaking economic activities have been shown to be associated with gender gaps in labor force participation” (p. 9).

It is important to describe the cultural significance and historical moment for women in their shared experience. Ikoja-Odongo (2002) writes of Uganda, “Women's surge into entrepreneurship and activism dates from 1971 when a military dictatorship took over political power from a democratically elected government. It is a unique account that may not be the same with other African countries ... a veritable explosion of Uganda African entrepreneurship was born out of the need to survive amidst chaos” (p. 42). The post conflict era of Uganda contributed to the growth of the informal economy of the nation, which favored women. This is defined by Ikoja-Odongo (2002) as, “The informal sector of Uganda constitutes a business sector with tiny units involving very small sums of money for a majority of people” (p. 56). Similarly

the informal economy in Uganda is defined by Karakire Guma (2015) as referring, “To unregistered, unregulated, and untaxed businesses, including service enterprises, production activities, and street vendor sales” (p. 307). Karakire Guma (2015) goes on to say, “In many countries, including Uganda, women entrepreneurs who have engaged in informal business activities have significantly contributed to poverty reduction, mobilization of entrepreneurial initiatives, autonomy, and accelerating the achievement of wider socio-economic objectives” (p. 305). Yet the informal economy can be problematic as Chant (2014) found, “Informal employment, in turn, has traditionally been equated with own-account income-generating activities, unpaid family labor and subcontracted outwork, which are now broadly referred to under the term ‘vulnerable employment’ introduced by the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2011)” (p. 306).

There is a need for training in order for women to move out of this informal sector and thrive financially. “UWEAL (1999) recognizes that training for women is necessary because much of the business training in Uganda has been technical training for employment (job seekers), not technical training for business creation. According to this organization, training for job seeking and job creation need to be combined, because the market demands a product/service with both skills from the entrepreneur” (Ikoja-Odongo, 2002, p. 57). Training should therefore be holistic in its approach. Ikoja-Odongo (2002) goes on to say the solution lies in,

Government in cooperation with NGOs and the private sector should: provide outreach programs to inform low- income women of opportunities for market and technology access...The starting point should be to disseminate information about successful women entrepreneurs in both traditional and non- traditional economic activities and the skills

necessary to achieve success; to facilitate networking and the exchange of information.

They should also develop programs for training and retraining. (p. 59)

Additionally Agyire-Tettey, Ackah and Asuman (2018) found, “The promotion of female participation in non-farm employment has been identified as essential to women empowerment as well as an anti-poverty strategy” (p. 1609). Training in leadership for women is critical to success as Langowitz and Minniti (2007) analyzed 17 countries concluding, “That a strong positive and significant correlation between self-confidence, opportunity perception, and the likelihood of starting a new business” (p. 357).

Overall in Uganda, it has been shown that women define success not only economically but also by non-economic factors as well (Katongole, Wilber & Kawere, 2013). Katongole et al. (2013) write, “To the female entrepreneurs, success is about having a less stressful enterprise which provides independence, work flexibility and time to balance family responsibilities” (p. 167). This holistic approach to success must be woven into the design of training and development work. They go on to write, “The most outstanding achievement cited by women entrepreneurs was their ability to sustain their families by buying food, paying rent and clothing for their children” (Katongole et al., 2013, p. 172). “In the Ugandan cultural setting it is often the case that a woman entrepreneur would regard herself successful if she managed to look after her family, built a house and bought a piece of land for herself” (Katongole et al., 2013, p. 173). Karakire Guma (2015) found, “The greatest barrier facing women entrepreneurs in Uganda is access to finance, mostly because of requirements for collateral” (p. 311). Furthermore, “Women lack training in business skills, theory, and practice and this therefore limits their progress in comparison with men” (Karakire Guma, 2015, p. 313). In interviews with Ugandan entrepreneurial women Karakire Guma (2015) found, “It was clear that a considerable financial

contribution to household income by married women did not necessarily translate into socio-political autonomy in conjugal families. As such, the woman's financial independence did not directly, or necessarily, translate into power for the woman in the home" (p. 316). The United Nations (2018) is specifically working on this in Uganda through agriculture programs aimed at women for the purpose of wealth creation (Appleton, Hoddinott & Krishan, 1999).

Background of the phenomenological study in Northern Uganda. 31 Bits is an example of social enterprise that brings a fresh perspective to peace and development work. The organization started when the founder, "Traveled to Uganda in the summer of 2007 to volunteer. She began working with women at an after-school program and quickly learned about the hardships they faced after years of conflict in the region" (Rosen, 2015, p. 1). The women in this community already knew how to create beautiful jewelry but had trouble selling it in their communities, so she took the jewelry back home to sell and quickly realized she had a market. "The experience shared ... was that, while opportunities for increased trade were clearly articulated, women could not easily take advantage of the potential benefits because of challenges and constraints they face" (Maleko, 2007, p. 22). As OECD (2011) records, "The World Bank Action Plan (2006) Gender Equality as Smart Economics argues that economic empowerment is about making markets work for women and empowering women to compete in markets" (p. 22). Studies have found there is a correlation between gender gaps and increase in income in labor markets (Arora, 2012; Cuberes & Teigner, 2014). The women 31 Bits employs are considered entrepreneurs and specialists in their crafts. They are never referred to as victims, as Mohanty (2010) warns against. This is often a challenge with Western organizations as, "Humanitarian assistance often works to define women, girls, and gender relations in a [displaced] camp in homogenous ways as vulnerable and as victims" (Cohn, 2012, p. 90). Gawell

(2013) further addresses this tension in the conclusion of his research in stating, “The study indicates that the question of representation and social entrepreneurship as a channel for peoples’ own representation and/or beneficiaries’ dependency on entrepreneurs requires further analysis” (p. 263). Rather 31 Bits aims to bring economic stability to over 100 women who have gone through the training program in Gulu, Northern Uganda. The organization provides the women life skills programs that enable them to envision a successful future and prevent them from depending solely on the organization itself. As Buvinic et al. (2016) found through the work of the United Nations, “The impact of business training may be improved by increasing the quality and duration of the training” (p. 3).

In this way, it is not relief or rescue work but rather sustainable development through economic empowerment. Women become leaders in their communities because of the knowledge transfer and income generation. 31 Bits purchases the jewelry directly from the beneficiaries at fair-trade prices. To maintain transparency with their beneficiaries, they negotiate a fair price for each piece, factoring the complexity, materials, and time involved in the making. They purchase a set amount of jewelry from each beneficiary each month so they know exactly how much they will be earning. This monthly wage enables them to provide housing, food, and healthcare for themselves and their families, and even gives them a chance to save for future business endeavors. They also provide training programs leading up to graduation. As Rosen (2015) goes on to say of 31 Bits, “Programs provide participants the skills they need to support their families and communities, allowing the company to empower women to be self-sufficient” (p. 1). The programs entail finance training, community group development, AIDS and health education, vocational training, and English and literacy lessons. They write, “We purchase jewelry from each woman on a monthly basis, providing them with an immediate,

consistent, and fair income. Each piece of jewelry is handmade using 100 % recycled paper and other local materials ... We are committed to working with each woman until she has graduated from our program and attained a sustainable means of income within her own community” (31 Bits, 2018. p. 5). Each fashion season 31 Bits launches a new jewelry collection complete with new colors, designs, and concepts, thus validating its status as a fashion-forward company. Their mission statement is “Using fashion and design to empower women to rise above poverty” and they have been doing this effectively in Northern Uganda for over ten years, beginning shortly after the formal peace process started in the region (31 Bits, 2018, p. 5).

The formal peace process in Northern Uganda began in 2006. “Responding to the absence of women in the peace process, non-governmental and community-based organizations collaborated to form the Uganda Women’s Coalition for Peace (UWCP)” (Nabukeera-Musoke, 2009, p. 122). They were successful in part at mobilizing women and enabling them to find their voices in the peace process. These women are able to contribute to the formal peace process because of economic sustainability programs that allow them to find their own sense of peace and security in their families and communities. Organizations and businesses such as 31 Bits play a part in the informal peace process by empowering women to be self-sustainable. “In contrast with the pre-war period, a high number of women-headed households are now found in the two districts and, even in marriages, women are often the primary source of family income. In this sense, they are at the forefront of the region’s economic recovery” (Changing Fortunes, 2010, p. 4). The International Alert (2010) report conducted in Uganda found that “women have taken on an expanded level of responsibility in household management, including decision making, as their economic influence has grown” (p. 26). When women are economically empowered their societies are better able to reach gender equality and achieve positive peace.

As Ahikire, Madand and Ampaire (2012) write of Uganda, “The findings show a very high involvement of women in family decision making, showing a high level of empowerment” (p. 7).

Some may argue this type of work can potentially reinforce pre-war gender roles since the jewelry making craft trade is almost exclusively female. Additionally, it is argued the idea of fashion as a feminine industry may actually keep women out of the masculine areas of society.

The main counterargument in response to this rationale points back to the economic sustainability programs that organizations like 31 Bits seek to create for the women involved. “Women have socially been excluded from development worldwide and more so in developing countries like Uganda” (Mategeko, 2011, p. 818). Many of these women use the money they earn to create their own small businesses, begin agriculture initiatives, and pursue their non-feminine interests in society. “Economic growth is most likely to have a positive impact on women’s empowerment when it is mediated by explicit policies promoting women’s education, employment, human rights and bargaining power” (United Nations, 2018, p. 85). This organization acts as a launching pad and enables women to become stakeholders in their families and communities. The policy of the U.S. in H.R. 2484, the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, helps pave the way for greater government support in laying a new foundation of peace and in promoting freedom for social enterprise to thrive. As Porter (2007) writes, “Women’s peacebuilding activities revolve around processes that contribute to the healing of relationships and meeting everyday needs” (p. 33). These women may have been forced, “To return to their ‘normal place’ in the community” but organizations like 31 Bits allow them to “rethink and reshape gender stereotypes and hierarchies” (Sjoberg, 2010, p. 162). By bringing in an income, women are forging new roles in their society and have greater opportunity to let their voices be heard and contribute to overall development and peace. Furthermore Lourenco et al. (2014)

write, “Many studies note the role of female entrepreneurship to tackle issues of poverty reduction, economic development and development of nations” (p. 387).

The SPELIT model offers a framework for understanding and addressing each component of this phenomenon from a Social, Political, Economic, Legal, Intercultural, and Technological standpoint (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2007). The Social component explained the post conflict situation and the community structure of the culture-sharing group of women. The Political component took into account the formal peace process at work. The Economic component showed economic leverage and sustainable income development to include women as power players in their community. The Legal component included setting up a banking system, providing low interest loans, and ensuring long-term success for the women involved. The Intercultural component is captured in the awareness of the cultural barriers, including gender norms, at play in bringing change. And finally the Technological component can be seen through accommodating the learning curve for the women through the training program and addressing needs as they arise. Building on the social and economic components of this phenomenon it is important to understand the fashion industry as the foundation for the work of 31 Bits. The next section will explore the linkage between the artisan industry as a natural ally for women.

Empowering Women through the Artisan Industry

Today consumers of the fashion industry are more concerned with a holistic framework of the production, trade, and marketing behind the goods they purchase. As noted in Increase Demand for Ethical Shopping (2012), “More consumers are now demanding ethical goods, putting pressure on firms to alter their product lines and reconsider their production processes” (p. 23). Additionally, Richards and Gelleny (2007) found, “The liberalization of trade has long

been considered a founding pillar of the economic globalization process, and [their] study produced reliable evidence that trade globalization has a generally positive influence on women's status. In fact, trade was found to be associated with increased women's status during the globalization era" (p. 871). The work of Wamboye and Seguino (2015) confirm this further. Women in post-conflict situations have the means to contribute to this sector but often lack the connections, leaving a gap for outside organizations and businesses to step in and do what governments are often unable to accomplish. "Women's labor is a resource for capital, as documented in the very large literature on women and development and gender and economic policy, detailing research on the working lives of poor women, especially women in non-Northern countries, makes clear" (Acker, 2004, p. 33).

Involving more women in the production side of the fashion industry will greatly benefit the local economy and meet the needs of the women involved and their families. This contributes to peacebuilding as Porter (2007) argues, "Peace has to be grounded in the immediacy of fulfilling ordinary daily needs" (p. 118). Giving women jobs and enabling them to create businesses by working with their skill sets and providing necessary training, helps to rebuild the economies of the post conflict situations. Culturally, many women in rural areas where poverty is most prevalent are skilled in hand artistry passed down through generations. "Hand skills mean the most economically marginalized people in rural areas can earn a decent living without leaving their families to migrate to cities in search of work" (Minney, 2011, p. 128). These skills offer an artisan-based approach to the creation of goods in the fashion industry, particularly in the jewelry making business. Conversely one study found that even though this is true more training was needed. Haugh and Talwar (2016) write, "Although the women in the rural villages learn sewing and handicraft skills from an early age, their skills are difficult to commercialize as

the quality of handicrafts was not high enough for sale on the open market” (p. 649). This must be considered when empowering women through the artisan industry. In specifically addressing the issue of connecting women’s economic empowerment to the fashion industry, McRobbie (1997) writes of fashion as, “An almost wholly feminized industry... it is and has been a female sphere of production and consumption. For this reason alone fashion is a feminist issue” (p. 84).

Feminist work has alluded to the reinforcement of gender norms in promoting craftwork among women and the way in which it can be disempowering. This argument is based more on a handout or relief model rather than an economic sustainability model. As Hutchens (2010) contends, “Fair Trade’s ‘charity’ approach to the craft sector ... reinforces traditional gender hierarchies” (p. 453). She goes on to write,

As development scholars suggest, development initiatives that encourage women to make traditional crafts not only romanticize the ‘other’ and notions of exoticism and authenticity, but more especially buttress gendered responsibilities by reinforcing the idea of women as keepers of tradition, who are illiterate, unemployed, confined to the private sphere and bear full domestic responsibilities. (Hutchens, 2010, p. 455)

Issues of this nature are adequately addressed by organizations such as 31 Bits that take a holistic approach to using jewelry making as a greater tool of not only economic sustainability but also overall increased livelihood for the women involved in their programs and a means to an end. As Hutchens (2010) points out, “The shift away from a charity model would also emphasize more utilitarian and marketable crafts and a participatory rather than paternalistic approach to producer–trader relations” (p. 463). Gender norms are questioned when women are economically empowered to provide for themselves.

The Ugandan women producing the jewelry are able to tell their stories and share their firsthand experiences through compelling pictures and videos on the 31 Bits website and promotional material that further connect the buyers to the makers. Each woman involved in the economic empowerment program is featured on the website with a picture and a brief biography and story of how the partnership has improved her life. They are featured as part of the 31 Bits core team and as the artisans further invalidating any notion of victimhood. This empowers women on both ends as the purchaser is given the power to influence and change the life of the producer. It is as Banet-Weiser (2012) notes, “Contemporary brand culture is not as concerned with individual shoppers (though the importance of the moment of commodity purchase should not be underestimated), as it is with cultivating authentic relationships with consumers and communities that work to further extend and build upon the brand” (p. 138). The use of story allows women whose paths would not normally cross to instantly feel a connection. Furthermore, when fashion is involved, they can be connected and mutually empowered at a deeper level through the material reminder of their connection. Minney (2011) captures this sentiment in saying, “She is thousands of miles away from you and me, but that distance is reduced to nothing when we’re wearing the fabric she just weaved with her own hands”, or in the case of 31 Bits the beads she just created with her own hands (p. 71). Enloe (2010) would affirm that the use of narrative is an intentional way of exploring feminine discourse, especially in post-conflict situations.

Positive peace requires the active economic empowerment of women in a post-conflict society. It gives women greater negotiating power in pre-war hierarchical relationships further undermining pre-war norms, and paves the way for reaching greater gender parity. Economic empowerment contributes to the peace process in an informal manner, as women become

stabilizers in their homes and communities. This can be achieved through what is thought of as traditional women's work, such as jewelry making, because it acts as a launching pad to gender equality. Western organizations that hope to contribute to the peace process through economic empowerment are most valuable when they allow the women to reach self-sustainability and do not rely on using handouts as a relief method. 31 Bits is a viable example of an organization that understands the tension between women and peace but also realizes the potential that economically empowering women creates for sustainable peace. By partnering with organizations such as these and creating open market legislation that enables them to thrive, governments can play a role in economically empowering women as a tool of foreign policy and development.

Policy Approaches and Implications

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, created in 2000, was "the first resolution adopted by the Security Council to recognize the crucial role of women in restoring and maintaining peace and security" (U.S. National Action Plan, 2011, p. 11). Leatherman (2007) writes, "It recognizes for the first time the role of women in conflict--not as victims, but as actors in the prevention and resolution of conflict and in equal participation in peacebuilding and decision-making" (p. 53). Chinkin and Charlesworth (2006) note the resolution, "Endorses two separate policies in the design and implementation of post-conflict reconstruction: 'gender balance' in participation throughout all processes for decision making, policy making and operationalizing measures for post-conflict peace-building; and 'gender mainstreaming' in the formulation of all peace-building policies, practices and law and in their implementation" (p. 939). They argue that although international laws are important for including women in peacebuilding, it is often difficult to see them fully implemented. Chinkin

and Charlesworth (2006) go on to write, “The use of international law should be informed by an awareness of its shortcomings with respect to women and a willingness to take measures to redress them” (p. 943). Even still, “Documents like SCR 1325 provide the political clout and international attention needed to push the women, peace and security agenda forward” (WIPNET, 2012). It can be more impactful when international law is localized into a nation-state’s foreign policy.

Furthermore Ambepitiya (2016) found in her empirical research for policy in developing nations there is a, “Need to further consider avenues to build capacity of women in relation to business development, including their capability to become productive and innovative entrepreneurs while accepting their contribution to the national economy “ (p. 176). Concurrently Asfiah et al. (2018) write, “The long-term objectives of the development programs for women should aim to raise their economic and social status in order to bring them into the mainstream of national life and development” (p. 4). Datta and Gailey (2012) concluded from their research, “Policy makers should work toward creating an enabling legal and political environment that encourages women’s access to resources to launch and grow new businesses while protecting the organizations they launch from family or political manipulations” (p. 583). Lyon and Humbert (2012) affirm, “Research has related women’s involvement in governance to financial measures such as profitability and value in the U.K. or the U.S.” (p. 834). It is also important to address the assumption of the type of government and the policy that can be implemented for success. Gawell (2013) captures this in his research in writing, “From the entrepreneurship and enterprise perspective, the role of actively delivering valuable services is combined with arguments conveying beliefs of market solution and assumptions of the innovative force of entrepreneurship” (p. 263). Market solutions alone cannot bring sustained peace, but rather the

collaboration of actors involving policy, research, and enterprise will help create a foundation for sustainable development and peace to thrive. This theme is reiterated throughout the literature and is addressed through this dissertation by continually advocating for a collaborative approach among actors. A market solution alone will not necessarily bring perpetual peace. Collaboration among actors is key to success for sustainable peace, especially involving the role of policy.

Additionally some research has shown it is important to separate women's rights policy with human rights policy in certain nations, such as in Uganda. Chigudu (2016) found, "Conflated human rights and local gender-based initiatives with the gay rights movement and then lumped them together as a form of neo-imperialism" imposes a cultural value from the west ultimately seeking to undermine men (p. 33). Furthermore in Uganda Agyire-Tettey et al. (2018) write, "For policy purposes, knowledge of the nature and sources of gender gaps in enterprise performance will enable governments and policy makers to design gender-sensitive policies to boost the performance of female-owned firms and promote female entrepreneurship" (p. 1610). In the Agyire-Tettey et al. (2018) quantitative study including women in Uganda they set forth a policy recommendation:

The study recommends the design of affirmative policies that favor female-owned enterprises, as well as providing direct financial assistance to female entrepreneurs. The creation of a special entrepreneurial fund targeting female entrepreneurs operating small- and medium-scale enterprises in these countries, low-earned firms... Provision of training prior to the launching of the business is critical because evidence suggests that early intervention is more effective relative to providing the training when the business is in operation. (p. 1624)

This may be a better approach to women's rights instead of pairing it with an overall human rights agenda. In a qualitative study conducted by Karakire Guma (2015) of women entrepreneurs in Uganda it was noted the positive role government played in favorable policy. He writes, "Uganda's policy frame- work demonstrates a strong commitment towards reducing gender inequalities, evident in the 1995 Constitution and platforms such as the National Gender Policy, the National Development Plan (NDP), the Land Act, the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), and the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development (MoLSD)" (p. 317). Yet even still it is important not to remove the human rights policy agenda entirely. Lourenco et al. (2014) found, "Africa is by far the poorest inhabited continent; despite nearly three decades of development, it is now poorer than it was 25 years ago" (p. 384).

One critique in policy surrounding women's economic empowerment is echoed when Chant (2014) writes, "Struggles for gender equality as a basic human right are prone to becoming eclipsed by an agenda of economic efficiency dominated by expectations of what the World Bank (2002) has coined the 'returns' and 'pay-offs' from investing in women" (p. 304). She goes on to write,

While stimulating enterprise, through microfinance and other initiatives such as education and vocational training, might be regarded as an individually oriented and capacity-building approach to 'female empowerment' and poverty alleviation, we must recognize that women are already stretched in multiple directions through diverse burdens of paid and unpaid work, and that by piling more of the onus of exiting poverty on the shoulders of women alone the prospects of their becoming truly "empowered" are substantially undermined. (Chant, 2014, p. 309)

This is an important nuance to consider in framing policy for women. It is also significant to state what Langowitz and Minniti (2007) gathered in their data from 17 countries: “While policy can alter an individual’s incentives, the cultural factors that mold perceptions and risk profiles depend on the specific history of the place” (p. 358). It has been shown through the influence and role of social enterprise initiatives that movements are formed and policies adapted. Gawell (2013) writes,

There are other examples, such as civil rights movements, labor movements, feminist initiatives, etc., that in analogy with the global justice movement have aimed to change the system, only later being recognized as creating value according to a newer system’s valuation criteria. This more radical innovative aspect that these initiatives at least aim for is more in line with Schumpeter’s (1934) view on entrepreneurship in which established orders are changed. (p. 263)

Shaw and Hartmann (2019) most recently addressed women’s economic empowerment through the Institute for Women’s Policy Research. They found the following eight policies to be most effective within the United States for both promoting women’s rights and driving economic growth:

1. Cut Poverty in Half by Ensuring Equal Pay
2. Address Sexual Harassment and Assault on the Job
3. Ensure Equal Access to High-Quality Jobs
4. Improve Access to Paid Family Leave, Paid Sick Days, and Child Care
5. Support Female Entrepreneurs
6. Restore and Preserve the Social Safety Net
7. Expand and Protect Social Security and Medicare

8. Support Labor Unions. (Shaw & Hartmann, 2019, p. 1)

For the purpose of this study the focus will be on the fifth policy recommendation while understanding the other seven are useful in the holistic approach to women's rights. Shaw and Hartmann (2019) write, "Entrepreneurship and business ownership can bring women increased control over their work lives and greater financial opportunity and security" (p. 4). The way in which this policy can be implemented can take various approaches. The following sections explore possible approaches to creating economic opportunities for women in developing nations.

Transnational advocacy network policy approach. The power primarily held within international organizations is shifting toward a network policy framework of power that makes room for corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and academic institutions. Still it is important to understand and partner with international governmental organizations that have established boundaries for global governance and international law foundations. Weiss, Forsythe and Coate (2004) define the United Nations as, "Refers more to a framework, a stage, or an institutional setting than to an organization with the capacity for independent action" (p. 197). Part of the primary role the UN plays is in further defining and upholding human rights. The greatest challenge for human rights is in leadership, for growth in progress and sustainable success. Weiss and Wilkinson (2018) write, "A major problem with all of this international assistance ... is that no one really has been in charge" (p. 187). Member states form multilateral treaties that are accepted as international norms. In order for these treaties to be implemented there must be definite leadership. Leadership can be established through one person or several persons within an agency. But it can also be established through the power of transnational advocacy networks. As Weiss and Wilkinson (2018) write, "There is no institutionalized lead

agency for the UN in armed conflict, or in peace” (p. 189). This is part of the problem that arises with international governmental organizations. There is limited implementation power because leadership is decentralized and dispersed.

This is why there is power in a network policy framework as the concept of a transnational advocacy network can be utilized from a global leadership perspective. It is first identified as a term and defined by Keck and Sikkink (1998) as, “A transnational advocacy network includes those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services” (p. 2). The combination of corporations, NGOs, and governments working together builds the framework for successfully empowering women economically. Keck and Sikkink (1998) note one of the keys to success for transnational advocacy campaigns is a, “Common frame of meaning” (p. 7). The power and art of storytelling is part of the success of this framework. Keck and Sikkink (1998) write, “Non-state actors gain influence by serving as alternate sources of information. Information flows in advocacy networks provide not only facts but testimony – stories told by people whose lives have been affected” (p. 19). The interconnectedness is made possible by the transnational network that is joined together through the process of globalization. As Haan (2017) notes, “Globalization can be associated with diffusion of ideas and norms. Gray, Kittilson and Sandholtz (2006) show that international conventions and membership, alongside trade and investment help improve women’s conditions” (p. 19). Some studies also note the negative impact of globalization on discrimination towards women (Black & Brainerd, 2004).

In order to measure success of transnational advocacy networks, Keck and Sikkink (1998) identify the following types of influence these organizations have in that they can:

(1) Issue creation and agenda setting; (2) influence on discursive positions of states and international organizations; (3) influence on institutional procedures; (4) influence on policy change in ‘target actors’ which may be states, international organizations like the World Bank, or private actors like the Nestle Corporation; and (5) influence on state behavior (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 25).

These influences are key to bringing about social change. Transnational advocacy networks, “Carry and re-frame ideas, insert them in policy debates, pressure for regime formation, and enforce existing international norms and rules, at the same time that they try to influence particular domestic political issues” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 199). Furthermore, they write this concept, “Is an important element in conceptualizing the changing nature of the international polity and particularly in understanding the interaction between societies and states in the formulation of international policies” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 216). Keck and Sikkink (1998) would argue they have a different kind of power known as soft power that is inherent in transnational advocacy networks, “Since they are not powerful in a traditional sense of the word, they must use the power of their information, ideas, and strategies to alter the information and value contexts within which states make policies” (p. 16). Soft power is defined as bringing influence and change as a global leader. Transnational advocacy networks operate most often through soft power, as collaboration among actors becomes the foundation for sustainable development and change.

Soft power policy approach. Policy can be shaped by what is defined as soft power, which can be utilized as well within the transnational advocacy network approach outlined previously. Soft power is difficult to concisely define, as it is applicable to many different aspects of power. The originator of the concept, Nye (2011), maintains credibility as one of the

key factors in the successful use of soft power. He identifies three sources of soft power from the perspective of a nation: “Its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority)” (Nye, 2011, p. 84). He persuasively outlines the behaviors and models of the potential influence of soft power. His analysis is broad and allows for a variety of soft power measurements. He notes that the government is not always the primary agent in soft power and the target is not always aimed at changing policy. Leaders, in the way they influence, can use soft power in varying capacities. There are many actors to consider in the analysis of soft power. “Narratives became the currency of soft power” (Nye, 2008, p. 104). Mattern (2005) defines soft power as, “The ability to achieve desired outcomes through attraction rather than coercion” (p. 98). She offers a model of soft power that operates primarily by the communication of narrative. Narrative is used to set the culture and provide a framework of understanding. The power of storytelling as a means of soft power will be utilized in this dissertation. It has the capability to influence hearts and minds in nontraditional approaches. Nye (2008) makes soft power tangible by putting it into the framework of a nation-state’s use of diplomacy by highlighting three specific “circles” of focus: “daily communications”, “strategic communication”, and “development of lasting relationships with key individuals” (p. 105). These are the foundations of soft power. This narrative approach within soft power will be utilized through the data gathering and analysis of this dissertation.

Soft power as it relates to peacebuilding through this phenomenological study will be drawn upon as a theoretical tool for policy recommendation. Isike (2017) notes, “According to Joseph Nye, states mobilize this nonphysical, abstract, subjective, and often subtle attribute of power in three dimensions: culture (in places where it is attractive to others), political values

(when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)” (p. 351). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on peacebuilding among women may not be effective because they do not have legitimate hard power. Keck and Sikkink (1998) would argue they have a different kind of power known as soft power that is inherent in transnational advocacy networks, “Since they are not powerful in a traditional sense of the word, they must use the power of their information, ideas, and strategies to alter the information and value contexts within which states make policies” (p. 16). Hunt and Posa (2001) agree with the necessity for soft power entities that include women, like NGOs, as crucial in the peacebuilding process. “The concept of ‘inclusive security,’ a diverse, citizen-driven approach to global stability, emphasizes women’s agency, not their vulnerability” (Hunt & Posa, 2001, p. 38). This will be crucial to local success.

The basis of the policy recommendation in this dissertation is to build upon the foundation of H.R. 2484, the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 by allowing for creative means to interpreting this policy internationally. It also offers an example or model for policy formation around economically empowering women for building peace. The role of the U.S. State Department includes political, educational, public diplomacy, consular affairs, and management divisions within each embassy (Evans, 2017). By enabling the State Department to partner with organizations like the case study of the training program of 31 Bits through business grants or public diplomacy initiatives, greater peacebuilding can take place involving women. As former Congressman Ed Royce, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, (2017) noted, “Simply put, when women are at the negotiating table, peace is more likely. Compelling research shows that peace agreements are more likely to be reached – and to last – when women’s groups are genuinely involved” (p. 1). Furthermore the W-GDP Initiative calls upon

the work of USAID in implementing this policy. Case studies will continue to show through numbers and stories that implementation of policy favoring women's role in peacebuilding and development is crucial to the long term success of a nation. Further research connecting policy trends will be necessary in the future. Government entities should partner with academic institutions at a greater level to explore the implications of work in the field for best practices. Each actor has access to research from a unique necessary perspective. This will be further expanded in the Triple Helix model. The purpose of this dissertation's approach is to show how women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and business training plays a role in policy for sustainable development. Ultimately success will be determined at the local level as policy is implemented in a way that addresses the needs and context in the field.

Entrepreneurship policy approach. Building off the transnational advocacy network and soft power approaches to policy is entrepreneurship-based diplomacy. The World Bank (2016) puts a mandate for poverty eradication into the hands of the countries themselves through growing, investing, and insuring. There are three categories utilized in addressing the problem of poverty: rehabilitation, relief, or development (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). When creating policy around foreign aid, there must be consideration given to the category of entrepreneurship. As Koltai (2016) writes, "We know entrepreneurship creates jobs, and we also know employed people promote more stable societies. Scan the research and you'll find studies indicating that 50 % of young adults who join rebel movements do so because they can't find a job; that the likelihood of civil war jumps dramatically with small declines in economic growth" (p. 1). Foreign aid from the U.S. totals \$35 billion, which is one percent of the total federal budget (Koltai, 2016). Within that percentage, only one percent goes to promoting entrepreneurship (Koltai, 2016). Policy formation often lacks in innovation, as creativity is harder to evaluate and

measure especially in the short term. It is therefore important to incorporate through entrepreneurship-based initiatives. A recent case study in India found a need for government initiatives to create further networking through women's business organizations (Shastri, Shastri & Pareek 2019).

Entrepreneurship can be used as a tool of diplomacy, where foreign aid is utilized as an investment rather than an assistance handout. Diplomacy is defined as: "The art and practice of conducting negotiations between nations, a skill in handling affairs without arousing hostility" (Carayannis & Campbell, 2011, p. 331). Diplomacy through entrepreneurship is ideal in post conflict situations. As Slaughter (2016) argues, "The focus on job and wealth creation has become a 'talking point' upon which nearly all governments can agree – or at least find little with which to disagree" (p. 1). Overall it is a tool that develops an individual's capacity, connectivity, and capability (Slaughter 2016). Koltai and Muspratt (2016) go so far as to say, "Joblessness, not religious, cultural, or tribal strife, is, we believe, the root (though not the only) cause of the chaos that today challenges international security and American foreign policy" (p. 5). If that is true, then policy aimed at reducing poverty and promoting peacebuilding should always include entrepreneurship. Langley and Guittard (2012) write, "While there is much debate on the role of governments in supporting and encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation, there is little doubt that they should be at the table principally to ensure favorable policy environments, create supportive infrastructure and purposeful educational resources" (p. 2). Entrepreneurship and economic growth go hand in hand. Arshed, Chalmers and Matthews (2019) found, "Research suggests that the increased participation of women in entrepreneurship can play an important role in improving macroeconomic performance" (p. 553).

Creating a policy solution that addresses the problem of poverty from a development perspective should focus on entrepreneurship through both foreign aid and public diplomacy initiatives that promote citizen engagement at the local level. Although the effectiveness of entrepreneurship policy is still being evaluated and determined, government plays a defining role in setting the local success and long-term sustainability of entrepreneur-based development work (Audretsch & Link, 2012; Smallbone, 2016). As Smallbone (2016) writes that while, “Entrepreneurship results from the creativity, drive and skills of individuals, the actions of government and its policies are a key influence on the external environment in which entrepreneurship takes place (in some cases constraining it, in others facilitating it)” (p. 201). Corbett and Fikkert (2012) create three categories for addressing poverty: rehabilitation, relief, or development. They write, “The failure to distinguish among these situations is one of the most common reasons that poverty-alleviation efforts often do harm” (p. 99). Creating policy around entrepreneurship through the framework of diplomacy will take place primarily at the local level through relationship. Through the recommendations of this study, entrepreneurship will become the key to addressing the global social problem of poverty and a tool of U.S. diplomacy (Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, 2018). From an academic standpoint, entrepreneurship as diplomacy, “Operates according to an interactive rather than a linear academic model of innovation” (Etzkowitz, 2001, p. 293). This could also be viewed as social innovation that is defined as, “A novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individual” (Maguirre et al., 2016, p. 168). Innovation is a large part of entrepreneurship.

Specifically open innovation is a tool of transformational leadership, which is design thinking and collaboration among industries (Darwin & Chesbrough, 2017). In his seminal work Chesbrough (2003) defines open innovation as,

Combining internal and external ideas into architectures and systems whose requirements are defined by a business model. The business model utilizes both external and internal ideas to create value, while defining internal mechanisms to claim some portion of that value. Open innovation assumes that internal ideas can also be taken to market through external channels, outside the current businesses of the firm, to generate additional value (p. xxiv).

At the core of open innovation and entrepreneurship is collaboration and transformation. This will involve and require more than one actor or stakeholder. Svirina, Zabbarova and Oganisjana (2016) write of open innovation in social enterprise as, “Not only increas[ing] efficiency of research and development activities ... leads to higher efficiency in triple helix relationships, which operate in the public goods field and present the closest analogue of social entrepreneurs solving the problems of contemporary society in sustainable and profitable way” (p. 3). Triple Helix will be examined further in the next section. Entrepreneurship policy connects both with a transnational advocacy network approach involving collaboration among actors and soft power approach utilizing power in nontraditional ways.

Triple Helix policy approach. Another theory or concept that pivots off the idea behind the power of networks and collaboration is the Triple Helix model. It builds upon the foundation behind the transnational advocacy network approach, soft power as a tool, and entrepreneurship based policy in being utilized to inform policy and as a tool of global leadership. At the focal point of the Triple Helix model is the convergence of the individual into the greater whole. Even

still it takes into account the larger stakeholders at play and the long-term sustainability priority. Policy informed by the Triple Helix model takes place in three parts: at the academic level through research funding policy; at the industry level in trade, investment, and economic policy; and at the government level through diplomacy initiatives that promote collaborations among all actors (Etzkowitz, 2001). Etzkowitz with Leydesdorff (1997) were the first to introduce the concept of the Triple Helix model. Etzkowitz (2001) writes, “The Triple Helix thesis postulates that the interaction in university-industry-government is the key to improving the conditions for innovation in a knowledge-based society” (p. 295). He goes on to break it down, “Industry operates in the Triple Helix as the locus of production; government as the source of contractual relations that guarantee stable interactions and exchange; the university as a source of new knowledge and technology” (Etzkowitz, 2001, p. 295). The combination of these three sectors of society create a framework for sustainable change and development that often carries more power than international governmental organizations, such as the United Nations, can carry on their own (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000). The key marker of success is collaboration among actors to ensure implementation, sustained funding, and legal implications.

This model offers a viable structure for creating policy that utilizes soft power, innovation, and entrepreneurship in sustainable development. Additionally diplomacy is shared in nature, which makes it a likely partner for the Triple Helix model since the first step is collaboration (Etzkowitz, 2001). The policy formation can take place because, “Government is responsible for providing the rules of the game, but also makes available venture capital to help start new enterprises” (Etzkowitz, 2001, p. 309). It is imperative to the success of women-based development work in providing an environment for growth. Policy implications are numerous as the Triple Helix theory offers much room for potential diplomacy. Entrepreneurship policy on its

own is often ambiguous and can be ambivalent (Audretsch & Link, 2012). The Triple Helix model is broadly defined through a public policy lens in six parts:

1. The promotion of an entrepreneurship culture and more favorable attitudes towards entrepreneurship
2. The integration of entrepreneurship education in schools and at all levels of post-secondary education
3. A reduction in the barriers to entry, combined with proactive measures to make it easier for enterprises to enter the market
4. The provision of seed finance to facilitate business creation and subsequent development
5. The various types of start-up business support including mentoring programs, business incubators, designed essentially to increase the number of new businesses and nurture their early development
6. Tailored effects to increase the participation in business ownership of underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, women and young people.

(Lundstrom & Stevenson, 2006; Smallbone, 2016, p. 201)

Policy with the Triple Helix, “Occurs, first, as science or research funding policy, second, as an indirect policy in which government deputizes agents on its behalf, and, third, in the form of explicit public actions to encourage collaborations across institutional spheres and levels of government” (Etzkowitz, 2001, p. 313). Policy is best formed through the Triple Helix model in an indirect manner – which makes it a natural ally for diplomacy initiatives. Etzkowitz (2017) argues that the government is the central figure in the success of entrepreneurship, not the individual, both from a top-down to a bottom-up approach. He writes, “When bottom-up

initiatives are reinforced by top-down policies and programs, the most fruitful result is achieved” (p. 332). Etzkowitz (2017) offers six policy recommendations for utilizing the Triple Helix model. They are as follows:

1. Spread entrepreneurial education throughout the university
2. Develop network incubators and incubator firms
3. Incentivize regional actors to collaborate and cooperate
4. Create an array of venture capitals
5. Develop multiple knowledge bases
6. Create an entrepreneurial academic entity. (Etzkowitz, 2017, p.144)

There are many implications and approaches to be gleaned from his foundational work on this network for policy formation.

For policy makers at every level, this diplomacy can be termed as an innovation strategy (Ranga & Etzkowitz, 2013). The way it is carried out will depend on the specific situation within the diplomacy initiative, as the local implementation is key to long-term success. It has been recommended that this can happen through identification of innovation actors, mapping entrepreneurial trends, human resource improvement, stimulating technology and development, financial investment, and impact measurement in the long term (Ranga & Etzkowitz, 2013). These are examples and not the full list of policy implications. Rodrigues and Melo (2013) write of policy initiatives, “The major aim is not to create a new economic structure, but rather to help the existing productive fabric to become more innovative and competitive” (p. 1684). In moving toward policy there are three stages Etzkowitz (2001) identifies as imperative within the Triple Helix model: the creation of knowledge spaces, the creation of a consensus space, and the

creation of an innovation space. These three spaces allow the three core stakeholders to play key roles in each step of diplomacy and policy implementation.

One main critique of using the Triple Helix model in policy formation is the principle of competition that intensifies in innovation and can create a standardization effect (Rieu, 2014). Diversity must be a focus of innovation policy so as to avoid replicating projects in the same manner and therefore stifling entrepreneurship. Yet competition can also become a positive as Rieu (2014) argues, “To compete is also to collaborate: what is at stake is the productivity of these interactions in terms of discovery, innovation, and dissemination. The capacity of local or regional entities to respond to these interactions is a political matter, which the Triple Helix theory clarifies by providing a framework of negation and organization” (p. 12). There is an underlying “collaboration-competition duality” in entrepreneurship diplomacy that links it closely with economic and trade policy (Gilbert, Audretsch & McDougall, 2004; Leijten, 2017, p. 8). Policy success is realized in the implementation and long-term sustainability of the initiatives at the local ground level. By utilizing a Triple Helix informed policy approach, women-based entrepreneurship initiatives could have a greater foundation for success. Although the phenomenon of this dissertation based in Uganda does not include an explicit policy aspect in the data-gathering component of the training program, it offers insight into the collaboration of research and entrepreneurship. The policy aspect will be needed eventually for both financial investment and creating formal leadership opportunities through advancement of women’s rights to ensure long-term success in the region.

The Triple Helix model is one way to interpret the policy recommendation from the phenomenon of this dissertation. Research has shown it to be effective in theory and in implementation through case studies. One specific case study the researcher worked on in India

firsthand saw the successful implementation of an open innovation strategy paired with a Triple Helix approach for the creation of a smart village (Darwin & Chesbrough, 2017). Overall the focus within this study on the Triple Helix approach is meant to underscore the need for government and policy to be the foundation of success and the missing component of the work of 31 Bits. It is meant to be one solution, which may not always be the best solution for each situation. There is no specific data collection and analysis within the phenomenon of this study that will address the specific role of policy or government in Uganda with these women. Rather this part will be measured through informal leadership positions that the women now hold as a result of the training program. Furthermore the university branch of the Triple Helix does not need to be within the academic institutions of the country where the policy implementation is taking place.

In wrapping up the policy approaches and implications section overall, Chant (2014) found favorable economic policy for women was not enough, rather, “To more effectively address gender inequality while also alleviating poverty, policy interventions sensitive to women’s multiple, time-consuming responsibilities and obligations are paramount” (p. 298). Policy aimed at both increasing men’s responsibility in the household and women’s contribution outside the household will go hand in hand in long term sustainable success. Chant (2014) goes on to write, “Policies which aim to alleviate women’s poverty through capitalizing on essentialist gender stereotypes and burdening them further, need to address the household and familial regimes which perpetuate gendered divisions of labor and power, and to question the wisdom of the continued exclusion of men” (p. 310). Regardless of the specific policy proposal, it is important to address the interconnectedness of economically empowering women to development, social capital, peacebuilding, and gender equality. In his case study based in

Sweden, Gawell (2013) found, “Within policy discussions and the discourse on social entrepreneurship as well as social enterprises, there are arguments raised that these types of ventures signal a movement away from a dependency of public grants for individuals and for organizations...However, this analysis also reveals an increased dependence of market conditions, which are to a large extent set by public policies and the implementation of these policies” (p. 263). Policy therefore plays a defining role in creating a foundation for sustainability to thrive. The type of policy will be determined by the needs assessment on the ground at the local level. For women’s economic empowerment a combination of policy informed by a transnational advocacy network approach, a soft power approach, entrepreneurship-based approach, and a Triple Helix framework approach will create a foundation for long term sustainable success.

Chapter Summary

The literature review provided a foundation for the research. It explored the context of the study in feminist theory through the gender lens of understanding women’s rights. It provided a background on the work of social enterprise globally by looking at local case studies on the ground and research patterns among entrepreneurship. It addressed the overall situation in post conflict Uganda and what it means culturally, socially, and economically for women moving forward. It explored the role of the fashion industry through fair trade artisan business, which is a growing market trend. And finally it represented policy implications and potential recommendations for economically empowering women and sustainable peace development through collaboration of actors.

Chapter 2 presented an overview of the literature. It established the linkages between peacebuilding, international development, gender equality, leadership, artisan-based business,

social enterprise and foreign policy from a United States perspective with the foundation of international rule of law as a guide. Chapter 2 was organized in the following sections: Social Enterprise and Development, Building Peace in Northern Uganda through Women and Business, Empowering Women through the Artisan Industry, and Policy Approaches and Implications. Chapter 3 will describe the research framework and methodology of the study including further detail of the research overview.

Chapter 3: Research Framework and Methodology

Introduction and Organization of Chapter

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to identify and understand the role of economically empowering women in peace and development work as a tool of foreign policy. It describes the common meaning of the lived experiences of women in the town of Gulu in Northern Uganda who have completed holistic entrepreneurship training and created their own businesses in their communities. Creswell (2013) writes of the term lived experiences as, “Used in phenomenological studies to emphasize the importance of individual experiences of people as conscious human beings (Moustakas, 1994)” (p. 285). Research shows when women are economically empowered, it brings positive and lasting change to a community (Buvinic et al., 2016; Golla et al., 2011; United Nations, 2018; Women’s Empowerment Principles, 2010). This dissertation observed commonalities in the outcome of training in developing women as leaders in the community of Gulu in Northern Uganda. It describes meaning through the shared experiences of the women who have gone through the same training program in the span of ten years.

Throughout this study and forthcoming research the success of the economic empowerment of women as a policy initiative is defined by measuring leadership development, measuring experience of sustained peace through overall wellbeing, and measuring income generation improved from the start of the training to the end of the training program. It took into account the capacity for self-sustainability while understanding possible outside uncontrollable factors. Additionally it identified and attempted to validate the role of social enterprise as a means to economic self-sustainability while offering a model for implementing entrepreneurship initiatives focused on women in leadership. It describes the problem and purpose of

entrepreneurship and peacebuilding as it relates to gender parity in policy and leadership. There is a current gap in literature measuring the sustainability and effectiveness of social enterprise as a tool of development. This study was designed to explore the collective lived experiences of women who completed a business-training program in Northern Uganda through a social enterprise. It identified the common experiences of the phenomenon established through the creation of the non-governmental organization (NGO) 31 Bits operating as a social enterprise.

The central research question this study seeks to answer is how women's economic empowerment gives meaning to experiencing leadership and sustainable peace development as a tool of policy formation. The research focused on exploratory questions with the intent to describe and interpret a shared common experience for the women who completed the business-training program. The literature review established the linkages between peacebuilding, gender equality, artisan-based or fair trade business, social enterprise and foreign policy. Collaboration is at the center of research inquiry, identified as a key component of a transformative theoretical research design approach (Creswell, 2014). Stemming from this foundation, further guiding questions were examined through the data gathering process:

- When women are economically empowered how is greater sustainable peace and development in their community experienced and felt from the perspective of those women?
- When women are economically empowered how do they experience a greater level of both formal and informal leadership opportunities in their community?
- How can governments partner with entrepreneurship and social enterprise initiatives to achieve greater long-term sustainability?

- What impact does women's economic empowerment have on an individual, family, and community?

Chapter 3 develops the research methodology creating the framework to build upon these research questions. This chapter is organized by the following sections: Research Methodology and Rationale; Setting; Population, Sample, and Sample Procedures; Human Subject Considerations; Instrumentation; Data Collection Procedures; Data Management and Analysis; and Positionality.

Research Methodology and Rationale

Research for this study is rooted in the lived experience of the group of women who have started their own businesses through the training program of the organization 31 Bits. This phenomenological study describes the common essence of women's economic empowerment for the purpose of leadership and sustainable development. As Creswell (2013) notes, "The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence" (p. 76). Data was collected through in-person interviews with the goal to obtain between 15-30, dependent on willingness and availability. The art of storytelling was employed through the end result of the interview process of collecting and refining data. The design overview pulled in themes of peace and development work, policy formation, and social entrepreneurship through the lens of gender equality. The study was limited to the setting within the organization of 31 Bits, but offers a model for further work in this area.

Data was gathered for the purpose of this research through a semi-structured interview format. Interviews with questions prepared in advance and which are semi-structured include open-ended questions (Creswell, 2014). This led to most but not all questions being answered by

each participant through building off certain key questions asked in a greater storytelling or narrative approach. Core demographic statistics were also gathered within the data. This qualitative approach to data gathering is rooted in a transformative approach with phenomenological design as Creswell (2014) writes, “The researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of the participants” (p. 19). Furthermore the end result of the data gathering for phenomenological study as defined by Creswell (2013) is, “A composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals. The description consists of ‘what’ they experienced and ‘how’ they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994)” (p. 76). With a transformative framework, “The research contains an action agenda for reform that may change lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher’s life” (Creswell, 2014, p. 9). The goal of this dissertation is advocacy based for the purpose of policy recommendation.

The concept of andragogy, which is adult learning that incorporates individual experience, is an integral approach utilized in the research methodology through the training component of the phenomenon. Andragogy typically happens outside the classroom through a nontraditional learning lens. As Knowles, Holton III and Swanson (2015) note, “Andragogy works best in practice when it is adapted to fit the uniqueness of the learners and the learning situation” (p. 5). Knowles et al. (2015) define education, “As an activity undertaken or initiated by one or more agents that is designed to effect changes in the knowledge, skill, and attitudes of individuals, groups, or communities” (p. 11). They define learning, “As the process of gaining knowledge and expertise” (Knowles et al., 2015, p. 17). Learning occurs through doing, as is the case with the entrepreneurship training. Without action and application, the learner cannot internalize new knowledge and it becomes short-lived. Tyler (1949) writes, “Education is an

active process. It involves the active efforts of the learner himself [or herself]. In general, the learner learns only those things which he [or she] does” (p. 11). Knowles et al. (2015) echo this ideology, “People tend to feel committed to a decision or activity in direct proportion to their participation in or influence on its planning and decision making” (p. 58). Education and learning are lifelong pursuits that can happen daily on an individual level. This concept aligns with a transformative approach as outlined by Biech (2014) where, “The aim is to make the learning experience reflect real-world experiences, enabling learners to transfer what they learn more efficiently and effectively to their jobs” (p. 191). Success is realized when participants become, “Initiators of their own behavior change, rather than being passive recipients of content” (Biech, 2014, p. 512).

The individual learner is encouraged to find her place in the bigger picture and assess the role she can play in bringing positive change. Tyler (1949) writes of this particular purpose for learning and whether it should be to prepare the learner to fit into society as it is presently or to give the necessary tools to transform a society in a positive meaningful way. The latter is part of an andragogical approach developed by Freire with the intention of societal growth (Knowles et al., 2015). “From his view, the aim of education is to help participants put knowledge into practice and that the outcome of education is societal transformation” (Knowles et al., 2015, p. 83). It goes hand in hand with the transformative theoretical framework of this dissertation. This concept can be utilized in advocating for individuals to find their place in the larger whole, which is often done through narrative or storytelling that connects people in ways they were not able to connect before. Each voice and experience is necessary in bringing perspective and growth to the learning design process. It is also through active learning that training will be most valuable. As Harasim (2012) notes, “Active learning means encouraging students to participate

and act, such as conduct a real experiment, rather than passive learning (listening to a lecture, reading a book)” (p. 69). It is based on the notion that everything is interconnected at some level. It prioritizes the individual and her unique ability to problem-solve and how her experiences shape them. The individual constructs meaning along the way by interpreting and interacting with the environment. This learning theory works best in a collaborative setting, as experience is more meaningful when shared. Kolb (1984) writes of learning as, “The process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). Collaboration is a key component of transformative theoretical based research.

Setting

The study took place in person in Gulu, Northern Uganda through an interview process. Each interview lasted between thirty minutes to one hour. The setting was a rural town where most residents live an agricultural based life. Interviews took place at the businesses or homes of those women who have graduated from the 31 Bits training program. Interviews of women still employed with 31 Bits took place at the 31 Bits headquarters in the village where they work and receive training. Participants decided ahead of time where the interviews took place at a time and location most convenient for them during the weeklong interview process. The interviews were in a private setting with only the translator, founder of the organization, and the researcher present. A description of shared lived experiences was compiled through the data gathering progression. Additionally data collected at the beginning of interviews was also utilized including information regarding age, marital status, number of children, type of business, number of employees, and mentorship of others. Data from interviews was further analyzed to show thematic patterns and provide relevant data points to further enhance the research questions.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedures

The population interviewed were women who have graduated from the business-training program through the work of 31 Bits during a ten-year period from 2009-2019. The procedure began with a request for participation of the over 100 women graduates through the alumni network. A WhatsApp group message was created as a tool for outreach by the organization as all participants had access to mobile phones. With the limited dates and times of availability for interviews, it was expected there would be approximately a sample size of 15-30 respondents. The 31 Bits Ugandan staff aided facilitation of the in-person interviews on the ground in Gulu. There was no stipulation to be chosen for an interview apart from being willing to share their stories. The requirement was simply to have been a graduate of the 31 Bits training program and to be available during the time frame. The researcher, with the help of the program director, conducted as many interviews as availability and time permitted, limiting it to 30 participants. Participants had already developed a relationship with the program director and maintain a relationship as she continues to act as a mentor even after they have graduated on a quarterly visit basis. It was assumed that the women involved would have been impacted in some way by the war because of the community they reside in. They are considered leaders in their communities because they have graduated from the business training development program of 31 Bits. All of these women have already established at least one business in their community with employees and some were mentoring others, as data will show through the interview process in the next chapter.

Human Subject Considerations

Permissions were given to the researcher through the 31 Bits founders, having established a relationship for five years prior to the research. Participants gave their consent to interviews

through the confidentiality already established in the alumni network of the 31 Bits training. The Ugandan program director on the ground in Gulu acted as facilitator to explain the consent, with accompanying form requiring signature. Those interviewed knowingly agreed to have their information utilized in an anonymous manner. With the purpose of the study being advocacy based, participants know that information gathered will serve a greater purpose in foreign policy and social enterprise development to further enhance the strength of the training program. Participants were made aware of this initially and agreed to the anonymous publication of the data through this dissertation collected in their interviews by consent, with approval given through the GPS IRB Board (Creswell, 2014).

Participants were asked to commit to an in-person interview as part of their graduation follow-up procedures previously established in the alumni network community of the 31 Bits program. If for any reason the participant felt uncomfortable during the interview process, the interview ended, recording was deleted, and data was not used from that specific interview. However, this did not happen during the interview process. There were no foreseen negative issues that occurred since the interviews were conducted and facilitated under the safety and covering of the 31 Bits organization with the program leader who had formed a personal relationship with each graduate. Each participant was comfortable and secure. These interviews were a routine part of the community and have been something each participant had already experienced prior to the researcher visit. Risks were no more than minimal because there was a direct partnership with the program director for each in-person interview. She was the main point of contact for any necessary interview follow up. Measures were also in place to alleviate any unforeseen or potential risk during the interview process.

The program director on the ground in Uganda also offered to share the findings if desired with the participants interviewed once the dissertation is completed whether verbally or virtually. Data gathered was securely managed and protected on the private password-protected laptop computer of the researcher through interview notes taken exclusively electronically. The demographic data was then transferred into an excel sheet and further organized by theme managed within the results for the purpose of showing the shared experience of the participants. Interview participants in the study understood their rights for voluntary participation as outlined by Creswell (2014):

- Confidentiality guarantee for participants
- Participation can be withdrawn at any time of the study
- Interviewees have the option to see the results of the final study
- Understanding of the known minimal risks associated with the data collection
- Overall purpose of the research made known.

Instrumentation

Primary instrumentation was through in-person interviews. As Creswell (2013) notes, “For a phenomenological study, the process of collecting information involves primarily in-depth interviews ... the important point is to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it” (p. 161). The researcher transcribed interviews. Possible follow up data collection or interviews were not utilized to gather more data. Credibility and validity stemmed from the genuine and authentic lived experiences of participants. Potential threats to validity were examined both internally and externally as data was collected from experiential research. These could have stemmed from self-selection of participants, self-identification of failure and success, history or time frame of the experience, and potential

miscommunication with participants occurring naturally due to language barriers, cultural norms, and other unforeseen circumstances. Yet, authenticity was accounted for through the help of the program director in the interview process.

Descriptive questions were asked in addition to information gathered during the interview including age, marital status, number of children, what year each participant finished the program, and what type of business was created. As Creswell (2013) writes of the interview process, “These questions are open-ended, general, and focused on understanding your central phenomenon in the study” (p. 163). These exploratory interview questions prepared in advance included the following:

1. What were you doing before beginning the training program? How were you affected by the war in Gulu?
2. What are you doing now that you finished the program?
3. What type of business did you create or do you hope to create as a result of the training program?
4. How do you make decisions with when to spend and save your money? Follow-up questions to this: Do you follow a financial plan made in the training program? Do you discuss with your partner or your family? Do you currently have money saved?
5. Do you see yourself as a leader? Follow-up questions to this: What does being a woman and a leader look like in your community? What positions and roles do women hold in your community? Do you hold any positions in your community? Do people come to you for advice? What advice would you give someone who is just starting the training program?

6. Considering where you are now, what was the most valuable part of the training program for you?
7. How do you see and experience peace on a daily basis? Follow-up questions to this: Do you feel more secure, safe, and stable after starting your business? Have you seen and experienced growth in your business and community?
8. What is your biggest dream? What brings you joy?

Data Collection Procedures

Participants were observed through the interview process, as well as detailed notes taken from the interview recordings. “A qualitative observation is when the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site” (Creswell, 2014, p. 190).

Significant themes and statements were gathered through the interview process as relating to the research questions. The primary facilitator was the program director, someone they have known throughout their training as their leader and mentor. She had conducted interviews with them prior for ongoing evaluation of the program. This enabled more transparency in the open-ended interview questions, which show as Creswell (2014) notes, “Individuals are interviewed at some length to determine how they have personally experienced” the phenomenon (p. 19). It also created a comfortable environment for the participants who have been interviewed prior in a similar manner with their program director.

Interview notes were streamlined and organized for the purpose of themes to show patterns and record demographic statistics responding to age, marital status, number of children, program end year, and type of business. All data was gathered in person on the ground in Uganda. There was no need to conduct follow up interviews to ask further or clarifying questions. Interview questions were asked in alignment with research questions to describe the

phenomenon. The data was unstructured and included field notes from the interviews and reflective notes after the interviews (Richards & Morse, 2013). Descriptions were gathered through observation which defined by Creswell (2013) includes, “Physical setting, participants, activities, interactions, conversations, and your own behaviors during the observation ... Observation is one of the key tools for collecting data in qualitative research” (p. 166). Interviews were at the home or business of the participant with some having the option of being interviewed at the 31 Bits headquarters.

Data Management and Analysis

Data was recorded through field notes, interview annotations, and observations. It was managed through themes to guide the analysis. This was accomplished through what Creswell (2014) identifies, “Researchers need to ‘winnow’ the data, a process of focusing on some of the data and disregarding other parts of it” (p. 195). Data was stored and organized in files on the researcher’s password protected laptop, including all interview notes and transcriptions. Interview results were managed through an excel spreadsheet with the ability to form graphs, charts, and tables to visually display data findings. The researcher is the only one with access to the data from the interview recordings.

Data was analyzed by theme through a process of thematic commonalities. Creswell (2013) writes, “Themes in qualitative research (also called categories) are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (p. 186). Each interview was approached from the unique perspective of the participant sharing her experience and her story. General themes formed from these interviews, observations, and notes. The end result of the data collection was as Creswell (2013) captures, “Description, analysis, and interpretation of the culture-sharing group” (p. 197). The goal in this study was to create a story-

telling environment with the data. Charts and visual tools were formed as necessary, “Looking for patterns of thought and behavior, and focusing in on key events that the ethnography can use to analyze an entire culture” (Creswell, 2013, p. 198). Data analysis was ongoing throughout the research as themes were formed. It is inferred that data analysis will help inform a sustainable model to be used in policy formation and social enterprise development, captured in the final chapter on future recommendations and implications of the study.

Positionality

The researcher assumed a role in the study as a personal stakeholder with experience in the field of study as both a student and practitioner. Creswell (2014) writes, “Qualitative research is interpretative research; the inquirer is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants” (p. 187). Researcher bias was assumed and acknowledged in the interview and data gathering process as someone with prior knowledge of the training program to provide further validity to the study. The researcher maintained reflectivity through the study (Creswell, 2013). Researcher trust was built with participants through the covering of the organization 31 Bits. She was introduced as someone who works with the women to help sell their products in the United States for the last five years. No prior relationship was made with any of the women asked to participate. Researcher positionality was also acknowledged as someone who had invested time and relationships with staff in the United States to help aid in the overall success of the training program. Any negative or discrepant information regarding the success of the training program was reported through the data findings as participants shared their stories (Creswell, 2014).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 has created the research framework and outlined the methodology including the research design and rationale, setting, sample, human subject considerations, instrumentation, data collection, management, and analysis. Through this approach the researcher described the phenomenon experienced by the group of women entrepreneurs in Gulu, Uganda who received training and continue to maintain connection to the community and mentorship network created through the training program. Chapter 4 presents the findings through the data gathering process and thematic organization of interview notes.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction and Organization of Chapter

The central research question this study seeks to answer is how women's economic empowerment gives meaning to experiencing leadership and sustainable peace development as a tool of policy formation. Interview data was organized within four themes connecting directly to the four corresponding sub research questions, and each individual interview question was assigned within a corresponding theme. This phenomenological study describes the common essence of women's economic empowerment for the purpose of leadership and sustainable development. It examines the entrepreneurship-training program of 31 Bits started in 2008 in Uganda with a sample size taken from over 100 graduates in the span of ten years from the start of the program to graduation year through an open-ended interview process of graduates sharing their experience.

The results within this chapter will be outlined by each theme: Entrepreneurship Success and Self-Sustainability, Leadership and Personal Development, Sustained Peace, and Gender Equality. Building off the central research question mentioned above, these four themes directly connect to the corresponding four research questions:

- When women are economically empowered how is greater sustainable peace and development in their community experienced and felt from the perspective of those women?
- When women are economically empowered how do they experience a greater level of both formal and informal leadership opportunities in their community?
- How can governments partner with entrepreneurship and social enterprise initiatives to achieve greater long-term sustainability?

- What impact does women's economic empowerment have on an individual, family, and community?

To answer these four research questions, these exploratory interview questions were asked to participating graduates of the program. Depending on participants' answers, further questions were asked or expanded upon in an open-ended interview format, leading to not all questions being answered by all participants. The result was a storytelling or narrative approach to gathering the data.

1. What were you doing before beginning the training program? How were you affected by the war in Gulu?
2. What are you doing now that you finished the program?
3. What type of business did you create or do you hope to create as a result of the training program?
4. How do you make decisions with when to spend and save your money? Follow-up questions to this: Do you follow a financial plan made in the training program? Do you discuss with your partner or your family? Do you currently have money saved?
5. Do you see yourself as a leader? Follow-up questions to this: What does being a woman and a leader look like in your community? What positions and roles do women hold in your community? Do you hold any positions in your community? Do people come to you for advice? What advice would you give someone who is just starting the training program?
6. Considering where you are now, what was the most valuable part of the training program for you?

7. How do you see and experience peace on a daily basis? Follow-up questions to this: Do you feel more secure, safe, and stable after starting your business? Have you seen and experienced growth in your business and community?
8. What is your biggest dream? What brings you joy?

Before going into each theme by research question, general data will be outlined to give a greater understanding of the range of participants. Demographic data will be summarized as follows including age, marital status, number of kids, graduation year, and type of business. In addition general data will also include a small quantitative leadership measurement through the number of employees each participant has working for her and the number of women who reported mentorship of others displaying leadership in action. Finally the next section will show similarities between the greatest dreams reported by each participant and how the training program gave them the opportunity to move beyond survival to thriving.

General Data

In qualitative research, a saturation point sets the number of participants necessary to be engaged in the study (Richards & Morse, 2013). Typically, saturation is reached when no new information surfaces from the interviews. Yet, each interview is valuable from a storytelling or narrative approach as each woman's experience is unique at some level. For the purposes of this phenomenological study 22 women graduates participated in the interview process as time and availability permitted. These graduates finished the program between a ten-year period, starting between 2009 and 2015 and graduating between 2014 and 2019. All participants had started at least one business during or after their time in the training program.

For demographic data, the following will be depicted in tables and figures to visually convey the range of participants: age, graduation year, marital status, number of kids, business

type, number of employees, mentorship of others, and greatest dream. This data was all self-reported from participants at the beginning of the interview.

Age of Participants. The age range of participants was between 23 to 54, with an average age of 34 and a median age of 31.

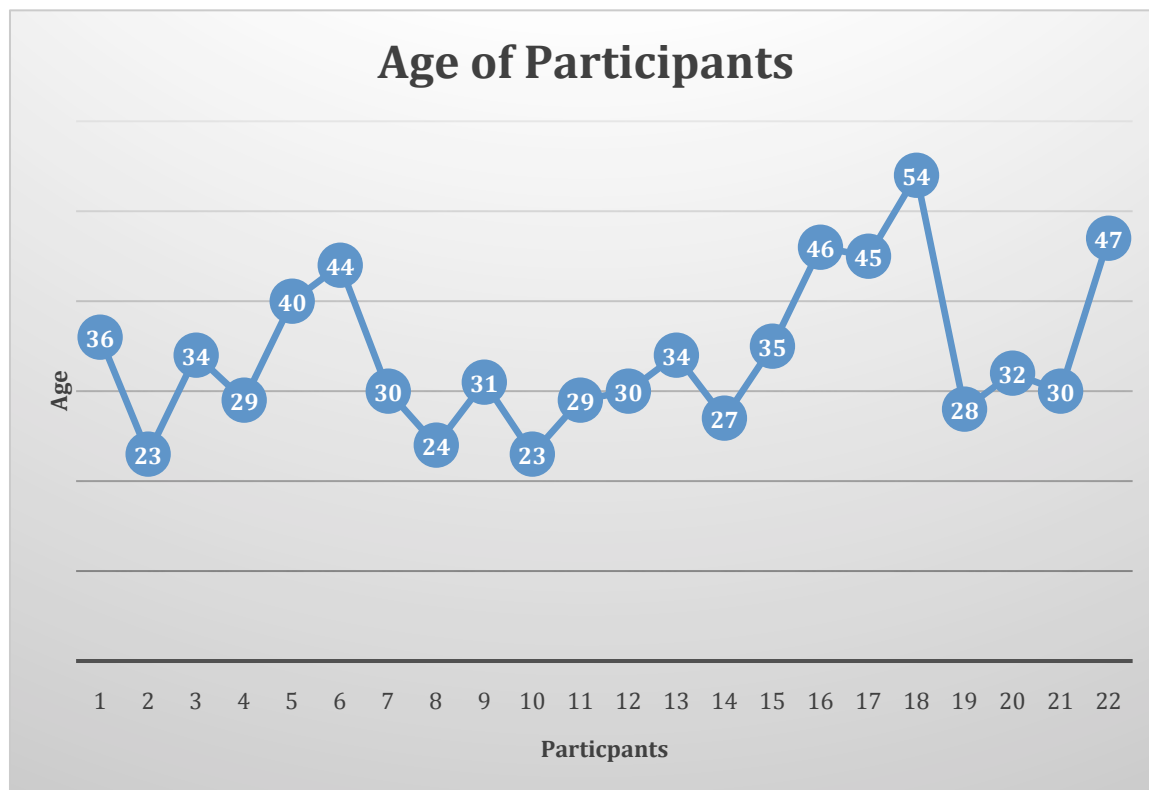


Figure 1. Age of participants.

Graduation year. Participants finished the training program and graduated between 2014 and 2019, with the majority graduating in 2017 and 2019. To further expound, participants would have started the program between 2009 and 2014, since the duration of the program lasted for five years for each participant.

Grad Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
# of Participants	1	3	3	6	3	6

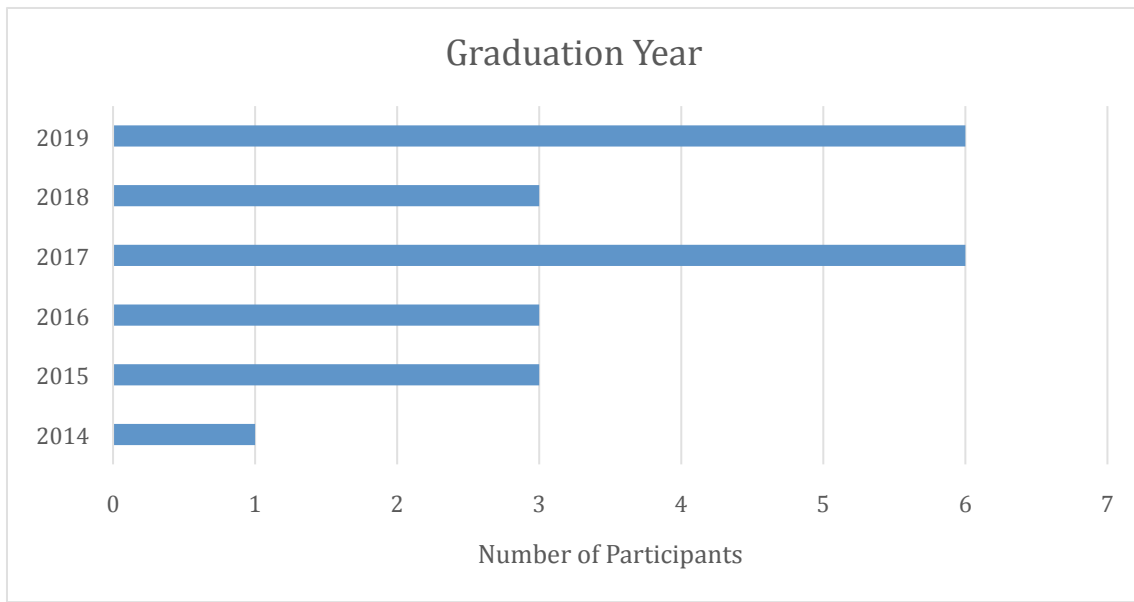


Figure 2. Graduation year.

Marital status. Participants were mostly married at 13 out of 22, with some separated (5 out of 22), single (2 out of 22) or widowed (2 out of 22).

Marital Status	Married	Separated	Single	Widowed
# of Participants	13	5	2	2

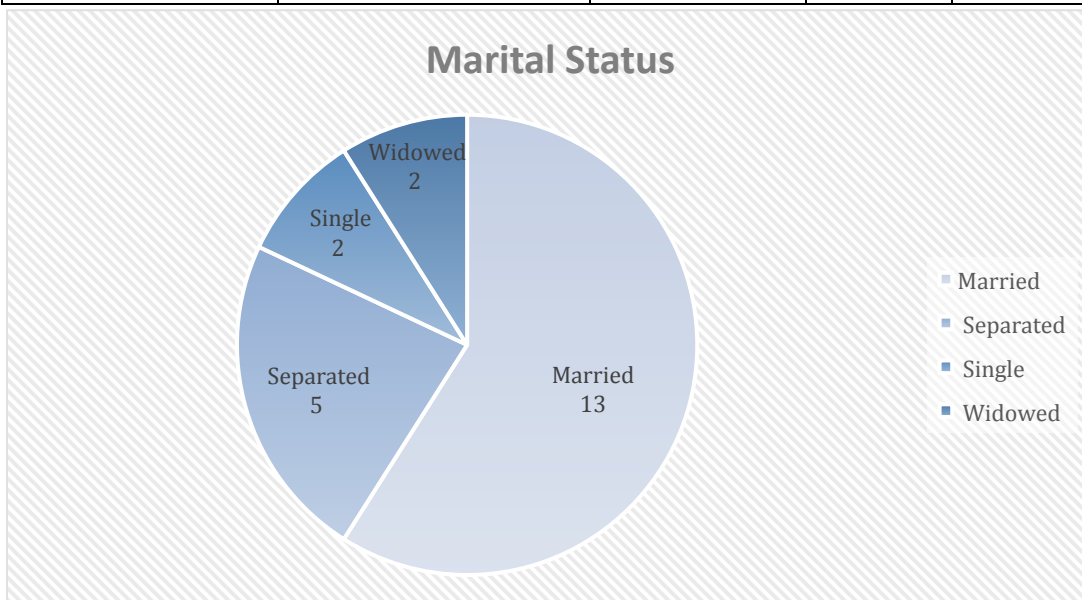


Figure 3. Marital status.

Number of kids. Participants had between 1 and 6 kids, with an average of 3.

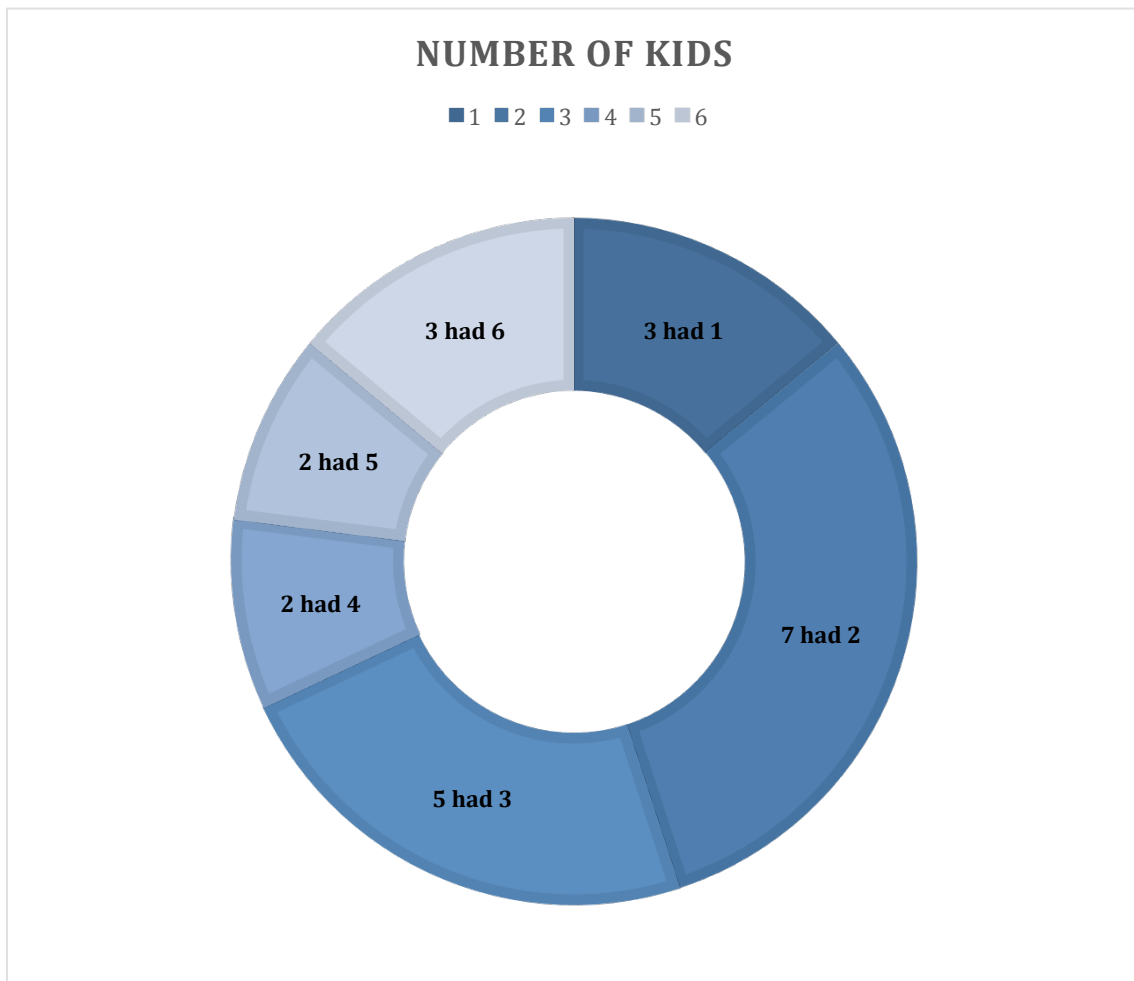


Figure 4. Number of kids.

Business type. Participants' businesses fit within eight categories: selling produce, farming, tailoring, owning a restaurant, owning a convenience shop, operating charcoal delivery, providing laundry service, and renting out their apartment building. The majority of businesses fell into the produce and farming categories, since the town they live in is an agricultural based rural village environment.

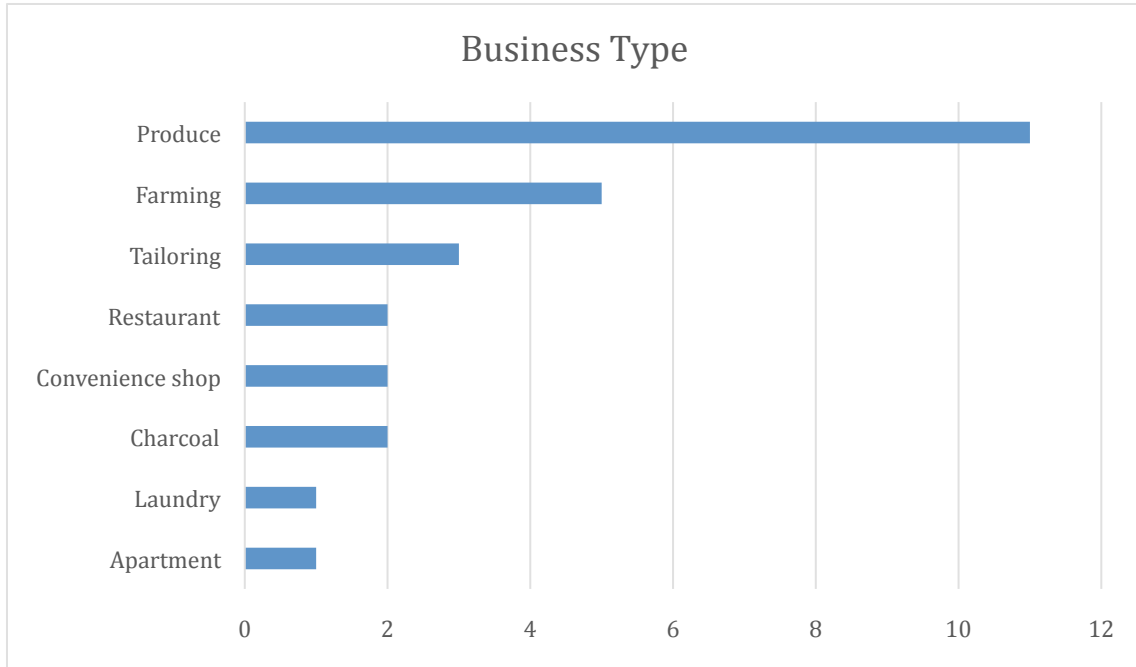


Figure 5. Business type.

Number of employees. Most participants were not at the stage in their business to hire employees, yet it was notable that out of the 22, 4 of them had between 1 and 4 employees.

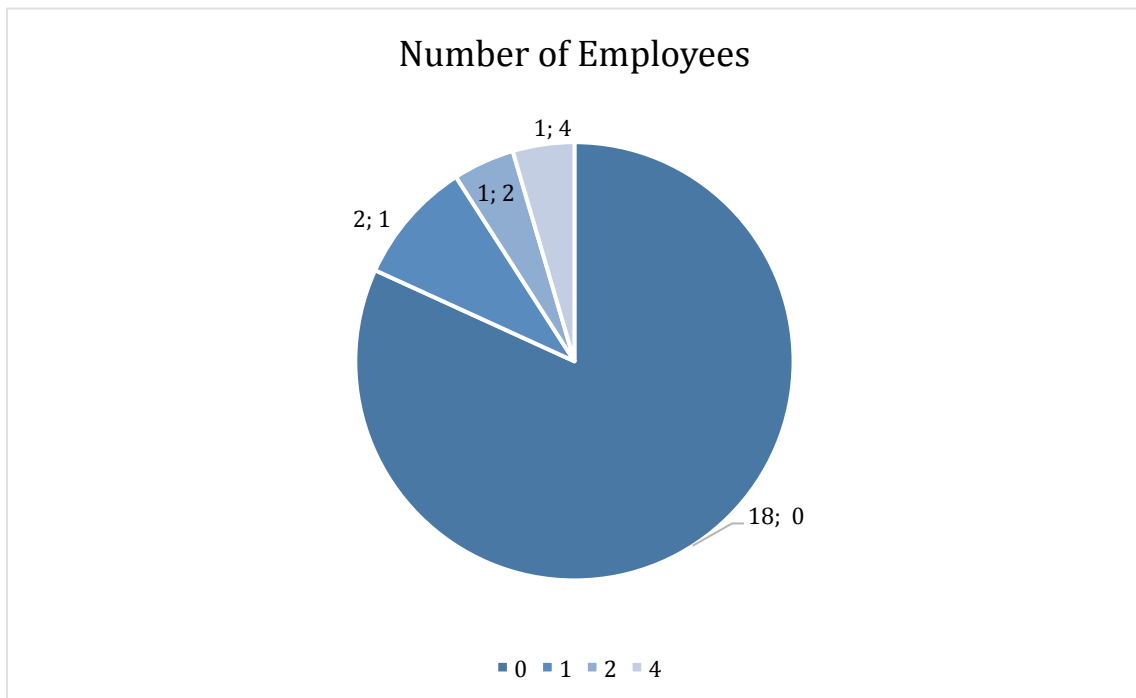


Figure 6. Number of employees.

Mentorship of others. Although most participants were not at the point in their business to hire employees, many still reported that they were mentoring others and/or people in their community came to them for business advice, 10 out of the 22 participants, almost half.

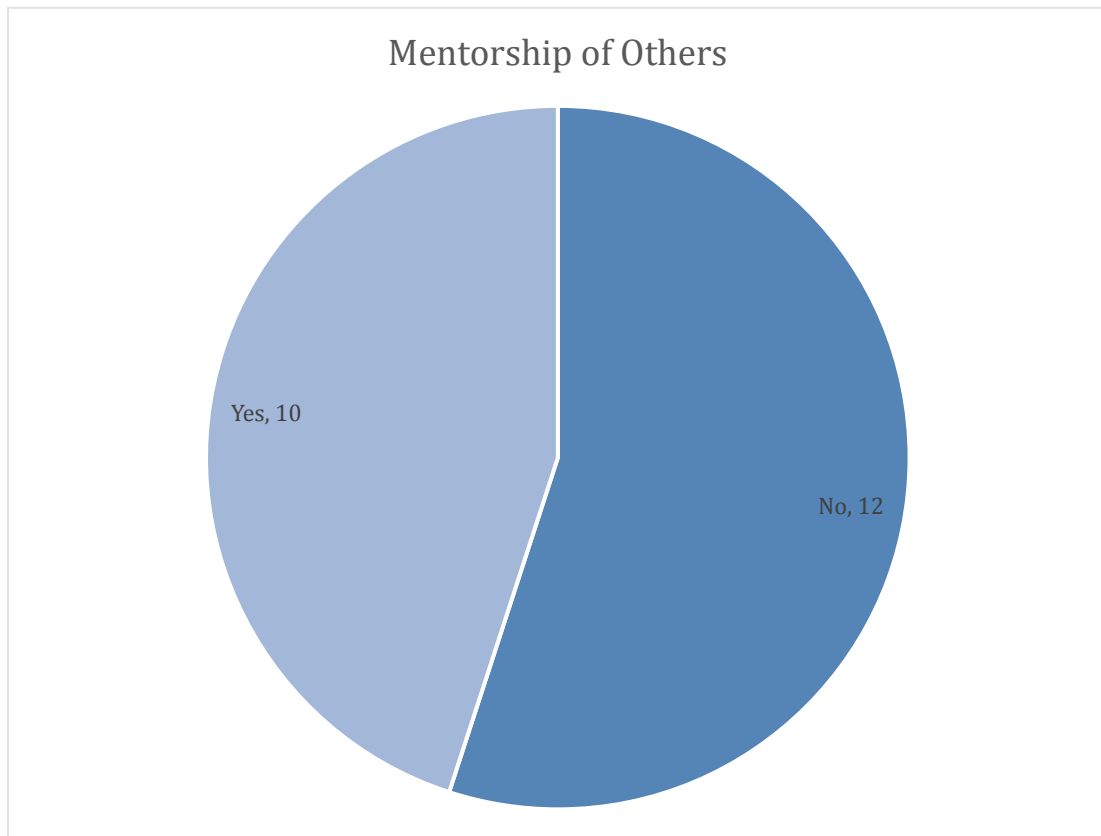


Figure 7. Mentorship of others.

Dream. At the end of each interview, participants were asked to share their greatest dreams. The majority dreamt of buying land to build a home, followed closely with growing their business and educating their children.

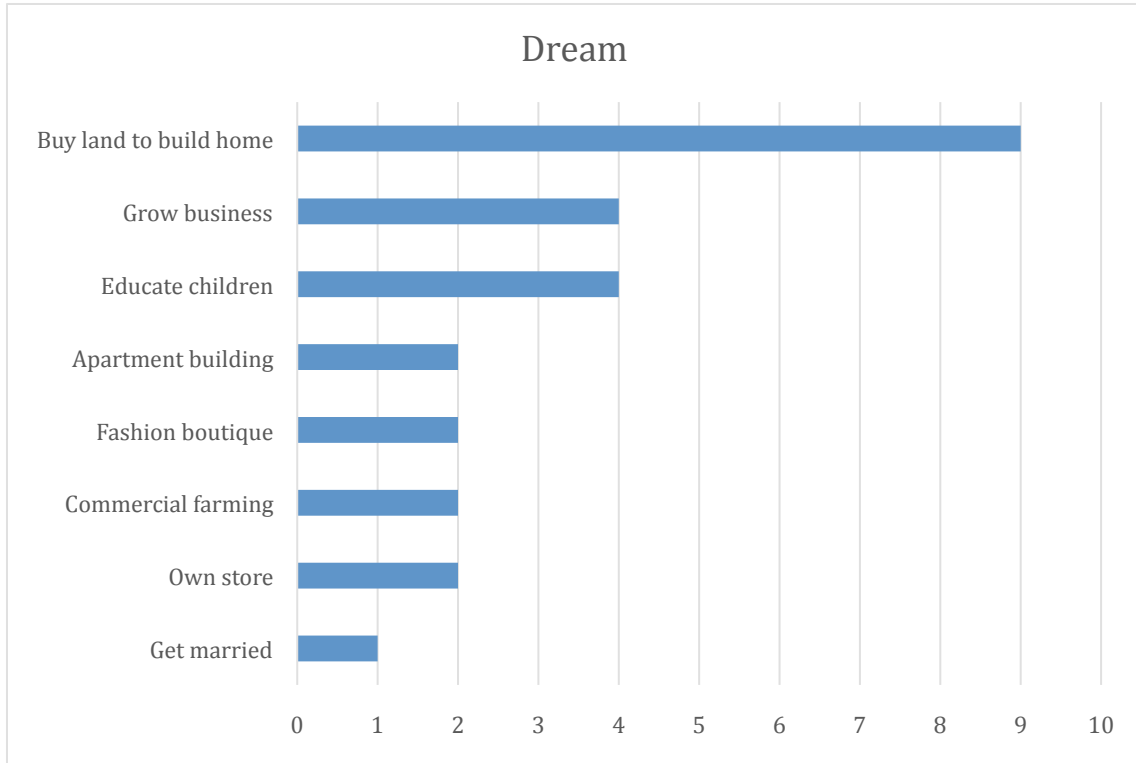


Figure 8. Dream.

Additionally participants were asked what brought them joy. For most participants it came down to being healthy both personally and for their family, having a sustained source of income, and a successful business.

Theme 1: Entrepreneurship Success and Self-Sustainability

Theme 1 on Entrepreneurship Success and Self-Sustainability connects with the research question: How can governments partner with entrepreneurship and social enterprise initiatives to achieve greater long-term sustainability? The following interview questions were included in this theme:

- What were you doing before beginning the training program?
- What are you doing now that you finished the program? What type of business did you create or do you hope to create as a result of the training program?
- How do you make decisions with when to spend and save your money?

- Do you make financial decisions on your own or discuss with your partner or your family?
- Do you currently have money saved?

Despite unforeseen financial challenges along the way, all participants said they had become fully self-sustainable after graduation and were still saving money. Most participants noted going from an unpredictable income to a steady income after graduating from the training program. P17 used the words “poor and confused” to describe life before the training program and “smart and strong” now that she graduated and started her business. P3 and P7, among many others, identified success as sending their kids to school and being able to take them to the hospital when they are sick. Along the same line P4 said she could now feed her kids more than one meal a day. P3 said as a result of the training program, she always pays her bills on time and walks into the market with confidence, but more importantly, she has a sense of belonging. Also it was noted numerous times how having extra income to purchase home items such as furniture and kitchen supplies signified another level of financial success never reached before going through the training program. P10 shared how she can now have guests over because her house feels like a home.

As a result of the entrepreneurship training participants are meeting needs in their community. P13 shared,

I looked at all the opportunities and saw that the biggest need in my neighborhood was to have a more convenient place to purchase everyday commodities like salt, soap, cooking oil, and feminine products. I’m busy with customers every day and have consistent hours so my customers can count on me. I get asked nearly everyday how I opened my business and became so successful. (P13)

Businesses created range from produce or agriculture based to more passion based businesses such as tailoring or fashion. The training program allowed participants to not only seek to meet a need in their community but to also dream beyond what they have seen prior, incorporating more of what they love. Some were more successful than others financially, but all were able to do something they had never done before.

Two indicators of entrepreneurship success and self-sustainability were measured by the need to hire employees and the foresight to have multiple sources of income. P1 was able to hire employees as a result of the training program, expanding her farm to become a commercial farm and provide food to sell in her village. She learned how to supplement her business by having multiple sources of income, in case of unforeseen circumstances. P8 and P18 also identified many sources of income because they had learned it is not sustainable for them to have just one with many family members depending on them. P20 shared how she has multiple streams of income from her apartment building to her chicken business. Her advice to others is to be faithful in the little things, “Don’t forget where you are coming from and where you are going” (P20). P17 said one of her biggest takeaways from the business training was learning how to engage customers. She noted, “I’ve learned about customer care and how to talk to customers and make them feel welcome, although sometimes I’m so busy I hardly have time to look up and greet them! (P17).” She now has one employee and aspires to become a landlady eventually. P19 echoed this aspect of the training as the customer care and communication components helped the most in her business success.

A few participants were able to start their businesses before even graduating. P6 was one of those who started her restaurant business a month before graduating. She now has two employees with flexibility to leave her restaurant when she needs to in the care of her employees.

The graduate network of the program supports her restaurant business by utilizing her for catering and events, as well as graduates frequently eating at her restaurant. She shared, “Because of 31 Bits, I’m a boss-lady now! 31 Bits has empowered me and now I can empower others” (P6). The key part of the financial training part of the program mentioned by most participants was learning how to save. This was pivotal to their success after graduation and their ability to become self-sustainable and resilient in adversity. P20 started saving during the program and shortly after purchased land where she built an apartment building and currently has four tenants renting rooms. P4 started a small business on the side while still in the training program selling charcoal for cooking, and is saving up money to open a clothing boutique. She said, “Fashion is always changing and as new styles come to Gulu, I want to make dresses and have a big selection of options for women’s fashion” (P4). The training program encouraged participants to continually dream.

Even after graduating, a few participants felt life was just as hard as when they began the training program because they have the same responsibility as before. P11 shared how it was harder after graduation because her consistent income was taken away and she was forced to figure out a business instead of just relying on a paycheck for making her monthly jewelry quota. Yet she held a positive approach, “31 Bits taught me about profit and loss, how to attain assets, and the knowledge I need to sustain the business. In five years, I hope to own my own, independent rice shop” (P11). More than providing income, the training program reinforced an inner sense of resilience for participants. P12 shared she will never struggle again because of the training and community she received. She now has hope and more confidence. Similarly P17 said she gained resilience through the program, “My faith has grown so much. Even today if I don’t have money I know tomorrow it will come.” P18 confided, “I feel I cannot be defeated in

any way, because of the skills I gained.” These underlying character traits forged through the training program contribute to the capability for self-sustainability and long-term entrepreneurship success.

Theme 2: Leadership and Personal Development

Theme 2 on Leadership and Personal Development connects with the research question: When women are economically empowered how do they experience a greater level of both formal and informal leadership opportunities in their community? The following interview questions were included in this theme:

- Do you see yourself as a leader?
- Do you hold any positions in your community?
- Do people come to you for advice?
- What advice would you give someone who is just starting the training program?
- What was the most valuable part of the program for you?

Multiple participants (P2, P7, P10, P16, P21) noted having gone through a failed business endeavor after graduating from the training program. Yet, because of the training they received and the network of support from the graduate program they were able to get back on their feet and start something again. This was due in part to the savings training part of the program. Initially, when participants shared about receiving their very first paycheck most of them never saw so much money at one time and in their excitement spent it all in one day. The program allowed them to make mistakes and showed them the value of saving and allocating to ensure every need was met for their families each month. P10 shared, “The training at 31Bits taught me how to manage every paycheck. I put some toward school fees, some toward food, and some into savings.” P18 knows she will never be the same again because of the training program. She has

more respect in her community and is seen as able to repay any loan, giving her financial standing among her peers.

A key theme throughout participants' interviews was an emphasis on the holistic component of the training program, including business and savings, social and relational skills, and health awareness. P17 shared how the training was fully maximized since while in the program they did not have to worry about their finances. They were given a consistent income they could rely on each month for the jewelry making assignments over the incubation period of the training program of five years. She shared, "Training and financial support at the same time are needed for success, not one without the other" (P17). The counseling participants received in addition to the financial training allowed them to thrive in every part of life. P4 who went through a divorce while in the program wants to be married again and apply what she has learned through the relationship counseling she received through the program. P13 noted the most valuable part of the training program besides the business entrepreneurial aspect was the relational counseling she received. She said she now knows how to handle conflict. P19 shared how the training program gave her the social skills to desire and cultivate community, to resolve conflict and communicate clearly with the confidence to solve her problems. It was important for participants to have a safe space to learn and make mistakes.

Even health training and awareness were mentioned often in interviews. P5 found out she was HIV positive because of the safe private testing the program allowed her to have, without the stigma of her community or village knowing. She now receives the treatment she needs along with a sustained sense of joy, hope, and strength. She said, "31 Bits has made us strong women" (P5). She went on to say:

I am very grateful for the health training and centers we partner with. That's how I discovered I was HIV positive. I almost died just from the shock of finding out, but here, I got counseling on how to take care of myself. I know however I die, it's not going to be HIV that kills me. I set a goal here to make sure I would never go back to the previous me. My husband left me, but I will keep going! The training at 31 Bits is invaluable. I've learned how to find work opportunities no matter what happens in my life. I used to not speak English and now I have so much confidence in speaking it. I've learned about hygiene, sanitation, how to maintain my home, how to get through different kinds of challenges. I've learned about managing my finances and starting a business. (P5)

Health both personally and for the entire family was mentioned numerous times by participants as a sign of success and security.

Many participants did not initially see themselves as leaders until further questions were asked and it was discovered they were in fact practicing leadership skills, some even mentoring others. The previous mentioned general data showed ten out of the 22 participants, almost half, reported they were mentoring others or being approached for advice in their communities. As one of the more successful graduates with employees, P6 mentors others in growing their businesses. P9 also mentors others and shares the knowledge she received through the program at her local community meetings. P13 who owns her own convenience shop in her village said she has become a leader because people come to her for business advice almost every day. She has a lot of respect in her community. Her advice, "I tell people, you first have to believe in yourself. Anyone can do it, but you need to first decide that you *can* do it (P13)." P17 shared how many women come to her for advice in business and cooking, even some men. P21 gives counsel to women and noted how she allows them to make their own decisions by not

micromanaging or trying to control them, something she learned through the community aspect of the training program. P22 shared how she is training others through her farming and tailoring businesses.

Many women come to P18 for business and mentorship advice. She shared that she is the main leader of her local savings community and she ensures money loaned out has a purpose. Her neighborhood has a community loan program where women contribute money and can borrow from when needed. P18 realized many of the women were spending the money without purpose, so she took the initiative to teach them how to make a better plan when they borrow money. They elected her to be an advisor for the group and resolve any conflict that comes up. This was the most outstanding formal leadership position held by a participant. Similarly one of the most financially successful graduates, P20, who rents out rooms in the apartment building she built on her land, shared how she leads the graduate support group of the training program offering business advice and mentoring to those who need it. She noted how the program gave her an identity and purpose.

Another leadership and personal development theme throughout the interview process was the increased value of education participants realized as a result of the training program. This in turn will affect generations to come as education is prioritized. Almost every participant mentioned education at some point in the interview, identifying success in part as the ability to send their kids to school. P18 confided, “I became very happy and started to look beautiful, because I had regular food and money saved to send my kids to school.” P9 shared she will always send her kids to school as a result of the training program. She said,

31 Bits has made me realize the importance of education, both for my children and me.

It’s the key to life. I’m thankful for 31 Bits training and I hope all the artisans understand

the importance of them. I now look at myself as a different woman. I have received knowledge, advice, and encouragement that I pass on to others in my community and my children. (P9)

P18 even noted her dream for her children is for them to be independent and for the girls to be educated even without a husband, “education first, marriage follows.” P7 shared how much it meant to her when her kids started to look like the other kids they dreamt of becoming. She described this manifesting as they attended school, they looked healthy, and they had proper uniforms.

Theme 3: Sustained Peace

Theme 3 on Sustained Peace connects with the research question: When women are economically empowered how is greater sustainable peace and development in their community experienced and felt from the perspective of those women? The following interview questions were included in this theme:

- How were you affected by the war in Gulu?
- How do you see and experience peace on a daily basis?
- Do you feel more secure, safe, and stable after starting your business?
- Have you seen and experienced growth in your business and community?

Many (P1, P2, P6, P18) participants noted they lost immediate family members as a result of the war. Others shared relational conflicts that created financial strain. P5 shared her husband ran away with the money she initially made when starting the training program. With resilience, she was able to start over and save again. P11 shared she was able to buy a motorbike for her husband with money saved, which is another source of income primarily for men in the village as a taxi service. He unfortunately became an alcoholic, left her, and took the motorbike

she bought for him. P21 also shared that her husband became an alcoholic and took the home she built forcing her to relocate with her children. She was able to start over and continue providing for her kids because she learned how to save. Safety and security were exhibited in the interviews through financial resilience and self-confidence. Most participants noted a shift in overall peace they experienced as a result of the training program. P12 shared, “31 Bits has given me the education and knowledge that I need to be successful. I can never be stranded because I now have the knowledge to always choose a better life. I am very confident now.” P10 shared how having a regular income brings her peace and motivates her to keep going.

One prevalent theme throughout the interview process was the concept of community as an outcome of the training program. This directly connects to experiencing a sense of peace. For women especially this community of support becoming like a family is a means of understanding and framing personal identity. Many participants noted how they felt isolated and alone in their need to survive daily before starting the training program. Yet, now that they have been part of the training program with each other, they have a built in community of support. This in turn determines how they experience peace on a daily basis. They feel more secure, safe, and stable not necessarily solely because of the financial result of the program, but because they know they do not have to struggle alone. P16 especially noted how this contributed to her sense of security and her health. P22 even shared how deep the community has become by saying, “You cannot run away from the 31 Bits family.” As a result of the community built through the training program, many women went on to start or become part of other savings group communities in their local area (P21). P16 said before the training program she was always lonely and never had the confidence to do something on her own like starting a business. Now she lives in a community and knows how to connect with the people around her. Sustained peace was

experienced and expressed throughout the interview process primarily as financial stability and community.

Theme 4: Gender Equality

Theme 4 on Gender Equality connects with the research question: What impact does women's economic empowerment have on an individual, family, and community? The following interview questions were included in this theme:

- Do you feel you have the same opportunities as men in your community?
- What does being a woman and a leader look like in your community?

Many participants reported being the sole income bringer in their families, even if they were married. This sometimes led to a gender role reversal that put the burden on women instead of creating a shared burden between men and women. Oftentimes it was because in these situations men were not able to find jobs. Women reported men just wanted an easier life, so they had no motivation for their families and some would even leave them. They had no purpose for their life because their identity was in their ability to provide. Consequently men would look for women who were successful in their business so they do not have to do anything. It was said to be a result of the war and was not always like this. It made it harder for men to retain land because they lost it in the war. Due to this gender shift, the training program developed a special outreach-training component just for men. It is the men-to-men program, where the women can bring the men in their lives for special trainings on things like communication, family budgeting, conflict resolution, partnering in business, and more. In a post conflict culture where women are often expected to be the breadwinner and caretaker for the family, many of the participants' husbands were able to join their wives in their business endeavors instead of feeling threatened by them, as a result of this part of the program.

Participants referenced this program numerous times in the interview process. The men-to-men program created an opportunity for further relational counseling for participants by inviting the men in their lives to receive financial training alongside them. This program began in 2012 with full implementation in 2013. This gave all participants the opportunity to be part of it to some extent before graduating. Many women took advantage of this opportunity to bring their fathers, husbands, and sons. A support group model is what gave the men an opportunity to partner in a greater capacity with their women. As a result of this part of the program, P8 and her husband now work together farming. They have an employee who sells their produce at the market. P11 is separated and desires to be married to an honest man who respects her so they can work together. She shared, "It's not harder to be a woman, a woman can never be defeated. Even if a woman doesn't make money, she will still figure out how to feed her family where a man will run away. She can't be stopped" (P11). Seeing men and women working together in their community inspired many of the participants to have relational goals for the same. Many of those who were married noted how important the training program had become in the continued success of their relationships with their spouses. P19 shared how her and her husband work together in her convenience shop. She said they both have a role and it allows them to have the flexibility to raise their kids better. They are even in a savings group together. She emphasized that marriage training and counseling are needed for overall success, but especially financially to make decisions together. Her husband went through the men-to-men training and learned how to save, take care of the family, and how to associate with people.

The concept of having a graduation ceremony was noted multiple times as a valuable and important part of the training program. Most if not all participants had never earned a degree of any kind or finished their entire schooling as kids. P7 said, "When people come into my home

and see the photo of me with a cap and gown from 31 Bits, they see that I've been educated. 31 Bits has changed my life and is my permanent family.” This was especially important to feeling a sense of gender equality. The graduation cap and gown are a symbol of success. P9 visualizes seeing her children in it one day. P19 shared how the graduation ceremony meant the most to her. It opened her eyes to all she could do and accomplish while giving her the confidence to continue moving forward. Most participants proudly displayed their graduation photos in a prominent place in their home or business. P7 shared the graduation ceremony was the happiest day of her life! She said, “I felt so skillful and important, like I accomplished something good!” (P7).

P13 shared how the training program gave her full confidence and self-respect to communicate, find power, and equality. She said, “The 31 Bits program gave me confidence. I look at myself differently and notice that I respond to difficult situations differently than other people in my community. I feel more power and authority when I speak and have good communication and conflict resolution with my husband” (P13). P18 shared what being an empowered woman looks like for her: “I’m continuing to strive to be a Proverbs 31 woman so I can be an example of a hard-working woman and raise up strong daughters. I want them to be independent and study for a job that can be their own, not dependent on a husband. I’m teaching my girls: Education first, then marriage!” She went on to share how men experienced a negative effect through loss of purpose because they do not have a proper job and consequently have become lazy. Most financial opportunities have been given to women. She believes men need more training and education to understand their role, alongside women. P20 noted how she is very respected in her community because of her evident financial success in building and operating her apartment building. She feels equal with men. Many participants shared how

working together as women helped contribute to their success. P11 shared how she works among a community of women who sell rice that they purchase for wholesale. Customers tend to be loyal to their suppliers, so the women are able to help each other with their businesses instead of being competitive with each other. Gender equality was experienced and expressed in many different ways throughout the interview process.

Chapter Summary

In conclusion the data has been shown through the organization of results within each of the four themes corresponding to the four research questions and individual interview questions: Entrepreneurship Success and Self-Sustainability, Leadership and Personal Development, Sustained Peace, and Gender Equality. These four themes will form the discussion of chapter 5. Additionally data was shown in a quantitative manner through graphs and tables to share demographic numbers regarding age, marital status, number of kids, graduation year, type of business, number of employees, mentorship of others, and biggest dreams for the 22 participant graduates in the study. This data creates a foundation for conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction and Organization of Chapter

Women fall behind men in economic development and leadership positions globally. There is a disconnect in the labor women do and the impact they have in decision making at the highest and lowest levels of society. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify and understand the role of economically empowering women in peace and development work as a tool of foreign policy. The data gathering process described the common meaning of the lived experiences of women in the town of Gulu in Northern Uganda who have completed holistic entrepreneurship training and created their own businesses in their communities. In this way, it is not relief or rescue work, but rather sustainable development through economic empowerment. Women became leaders in their communities because of the knowledge transfer and income generation through the program. This study contributes to the research that continues to show when women are economically empowered, it brings positive and lasting change to a community (Buvinic et al., 2016; Golla et al., 2011; United Nations, 2018; Women's Empowerment Principles, 2010).

This study is phenomenological in its approach as it seeks to identify and understand the culture-sharing group of women in Northern Uganda who have started their own businesses as a result of the training program created by the organization 31 Bits. Phenomenology was chosen because of its holistic approach to the subject matter and the possibilities for further research and advocacy within the shared dimensions of the problem statement. The data gathering process of the previous chapter created a framework for examining the phenomenon in a way that offers implications for shaping policy to address poverty and for women-led business initiatives in post-conflict and developing nation situations through the specific shared experience of women

who graduated from the 31 Bits program. It is rooted in a transformational leadership approach where success is realized when participants become, “Initiators of their own behavior change, rather than being passive recipients of content” (Biech, 2014, p. 512). Phenomenology with a transformative framework occurs when Creswell (2014) notes, “The research contains an action agenda for reform that may change lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher’s life” (p. 9). The goal is both personal and collective change for the participants involved.

Key findings are situated within the greater literature and background of the study, yet also offer new insight for the economic empowerment of women as it relates to entrepreneurship, sustainability, leadership, peace development, and gender equality. Haan (2017) shows how these connect with the role of women by noting, “The emphasis on economic empowerment, also, has potentially transformative effects, as it defines how women *participate* in growth processes, and are not merely seen as *benefiting* from growth” (p. 2). This creates a space for an amplified role of followers on their way to becoming leaders in collaborative and transformational leadership, which is ideal for women in development and peacebuilding. Furthermore education through training as active learning is the foundation of this study for the purpose of societal transformation. Discussion of key findings will expand upon these themes through the interpretation of the data gathered in this study.

Discussion of Key Findings

There are several key findings revealed through this phenomenological study. They confirm much of the existing research on women’s economic empowerment as well as provide insight into expanding further future research. Specifically findings affirm the overall theme of education, as in this case relating directly to business training education, with a positive association to gender parity and economic growth (Bandiera & Natraj, 2013; Klasen & Lamanna,

2009; Knowles, Lorgelly & Owen, 2002). The findings connect education through training correlating to leadership growth and potential. They also provide insight into the success of the business-training program in developing entrepreneurship that fosters long-term self-sustainability for women. Implications for policy and similar models will be explored in the section after study conclusions. Key findings will be shared within the four themes designed from the four sub research questions. At the end of each theme section there is a summarized sentence noting the primary findings.

Theme 1: Entrepreneurship success and self-sustainability. Theme 1 seeks to answer the research question: How can governments partner with entrepreneurship and social enterprise initiatives to achieve greater long-term sustainability?

Self-sustainability is at the core of the entrepreneurship-training program. The end goal of the program is for the creation of a business and the data showed all women reached this goal. Some encountered hardship along the way with failed businesses and partners stealing either money or homes. Yet they still reported having the tools to know how to start another business and the stamina of resilience as a byproduct of the training and community of support they received through the program. It is notable also that none of the women started a jewelry business, which was the means through which they were employed throughout the training program. Shaw and Hartmann (2019) write, “Entrepreneurship and business ownership can bring women increased control over their work lives and greater financial opportunity and security” (p. 4). Entrepreneurship training offers an outlet for women to gain agency and power in their communities, as well as become leaders. Two additional indicators of entrepreneurship success and self-sustainability were measured by the need to hire employees and the foresight to have

multiple sources of income. Although only four out of the 22 participants had hired employees, many more shared they had more than one source of income.

Most women reported the importance of the savings training in the 31 Bits program. This was pivotal to their success after graduation and their ability to become self-sustainable and resilient in adversity. Prior to starting the program most had never learned to save money or set aside money for the future or a specific goal. They relied on living from one paycheck to another for daily survival. By not only incorporating savings training but also providing a central safe banking system on site of the program, women were given the tools to succeed long term. It is important to note the role of providing banking training and access for women. Buvinic et al. (2016) advocate, “Savings interventions increase women’s business earnings. Women seek saving vehicles, and use personal savings to invest in their business” (p. 3). Furthermore, the OECD (2011) found, “To graduate women’s income-generating activities from survival level into strong and viable businesses, women need access to the full range of credit, banking and financial services and facilities, essential to fully develop their productive assets, their land and their businesses” (p. 12). Even after graduation, all participants in the study reported they had continued to save money and many were working towards specific goals such as purchasing land to build a home. It is important to understand the role self-sustainability plays in the long-term effects of the success of an entrepreneurship program.

Theme 1 key findings include: successful creation of businesses by all participants, successful savings trainings, the hiring of employees by some participants, and having multiple sources of income reported by some participants.

Theme 2: Leadership and personal development. Theme 2 seeks to answer the research question: When women are economically empowered how do they experience a greater level of both formal and informal leadership opportunities in their community?

Transformational leadership seeks to bring social change and agency to followers, which can be seen throughout this dissertation as economic empowerment. It is empowerment from a collaborative approach, as Porter (2013) writes, “Empowerment responds to difference, thrives on security, mobilizes insecure communities to deal with conflict and is transformative in creating practical changes, including women’s participation in decision-making across all levels of social, political, religious” (p. 10). This leadership approach amplifies the role of the follower as co-creator and collaborator. By creating opportunities for women to have access to resources to become financially self-sustainable as identified throughout this study, they are given transformative agency as followers on their way to becoming leaders. Moreover even with the end goal of creating a business, participants mentioned numerous times and in different ways how crucial their personal development was integrated throughout the program in a holistic manner allowing them to develop fully as leaders, not just as business owners. It was significant for participants to have a safe space to learn and make mistakes.

Many participants did not initially see themselves as leaders until further questions were asked and it was discovered they were practicing leadership skills evidenced by mentoring others. Overall, leadership ability stemmed from the self-confidence acquired through the training program and the application of training in creating a business. The previous mentioned general data in chapter four showed ten out of the 22 participants reported they were mentoring others or being approached for advice in their communities. Additionally a few participants shared they held formal leadership positions in the communities, especially through local savings

groups set up apart from the original program. Another leadership and personal development theme throughout the interview process was the increased value of education participants realized as a result of the training program. This in turn will affect generations to come as education is prioritized. Almost every participant mentioned education at some point in the interview, identifying success in part as the ability to send their kids to school.

Theme 2 key findings include: transformative agency gained through the training as followers on the way to becoming leaders, self-confidence gained through training and in practice through evidence of some who were mentoring others, and increased value on the role of education in their lives and their children.

Theme 3: Sustained peace. Theme 3 seeks to answer the research question: When women are economically empowered how is greater sustainable peace and development in their community experienced and felt from the perspective of those women?

Safety and security were exhibited among participants through financial resilience and self-confidence. Most noted a shift in overall peace they experienced as a result of the training program. As Roberts (2010) records, reconciliation in post-conflict situations, “Requires the regeneration of social capital to rebuild community relations” (p. 7). It can also create a foundation for positive peace to thrive. Yoosuf and Premaratne (2017) found in their case study, “Since poverty and economic marginalization are a major cause of conflict, creating better economic conditions ... contributes to mitigating the causes of conflict” (p. 45). Social enterprise as an economic development model offers a viable solution for sustainable conflict resolution and the empowerment of women in their roles as both followers and leaders throughout the peacebuilding process. By bringing in an income, women are forging new roles in their society and have greater opportunity to be heard, make decisions, and contribute to overall development

and peace. This connects to peacebuilding as Porter (2007) argues, “Peace has to be grounded in the immediacy of fulfilling ordinary daily needs” (p. 118). Giving women jobs and enabling them to create businesses by working with their skill sets and providing necessary training helps to rebuild the economies of post conflict situations. Yet it still does not address underlying domestic abuse prevalent in many cultural contexts. Women reported many instances of conflict by those closest to them as a result of their financial success.

One prevalent theme throughout the data gathering process was the concept of community as an outcome of the training program. This directly connects to experiencing a sense of peace. Many participants noted how they felt isolated and alone in their need to survive daily before starting the training program. Now that they have been part of the training program with each other, they have a built in community of support. This in turn determines how they experience peace on a daily basis. The family system of graduates that was created as a byproduct of the training became an important part of their personal identity as women. They feel more secure, safe, and stable not necessarily solely because of the financial result of the program, but because they know they do not have to struggle alone. Even after they graduate they remain connected to one another through graduate events and quarterly visits from the program director to ensure they have the support they need to flourish.

Theme 3 key findings include: peace was identified as financial stability, many participants still experienced conflict in the form of domestic abuse, and community played a crucial role in experiencing peace on a daily basis.

Theme 4: Gender equality. Theme 4 seeks to answer the research question: What impact does women’s economic empowerment have on an individual, family, and community?

Through the data collecting process an interesting gender dynamics were confirmed and discovered. Many participants reported being the sole income bringer in their families, even if they were married, which was consistent with the literature in this cultural context where women are often the primary breadwinners. This occasionally led to a gender role reversal that put the burden on women instead of creating a shared burden between men and women. It was reported by a few participants that men no longer had purpose or meaning in their community because they did not have access to what defines them as men in their culture: the ability to protect and provide. Displacement after the war caused men to abdicate responsibility and placed the burden of family survival on women, which shows a greater need for programs like this created specifically for women. As the data showed, many women reported their husbands had stolen from them or otherwise abused them in the course of their economic empowerment.

The study showed simply providing women with income could in some cases create a role reversal without the additional structural support to bring sustainable peace and change in the community by including men. It paralleled what the literature conveyed. Men were particularly affected after the war in Uganda as Oosterom (2011) records, “It was a common complaint among Acholi men that the war made them ‘lose their masculinity’” because they could no longer protect or provide for their families due to displacement (p. 400). Yet women were given new opportunities through the aftermath of war because they could, “Improve their bargaining position in the household by earning an income” (Oosterom, 2011, p. 400). Men on the other hand were primarily negatively affected postwar. “This caused various social and psychological problems, such as alcoholism, suicide attempts, and engaging in violence” (Oosterom, 2011, p. 400). Nyanzi et al. (2005) echo this sentiment, “The most common interpretation of empowerment has been ‘power over’, implying a zero-sum model in which

empowerment of women comes at the expense of men” (p. 14). Although this was not always the case, it is significant to understand in this context.

The post-war period of rebuilding in Uganda has been defined by the resilience of their women, further evidenced in the data gathering process of this study. Women often do not have the choice to not work because they must survive, even without the support of a partner. Yet, the training program realized the importance of including men early on in order to see lasting change. The development of the men-to-men program gave men the opportunity to partner with the women in their business endeavors. Additionally, the concept of having a graduation ceremony was noted multiple times as a valuable and important part of the training program. Most if not all participants had never earned a degree of any kind or finished their entire schooling as kids. This was especially important to feeling a sense of gender equality. The graduation cap and gown are a symbol of success. Many women shared how they prominently displayed their graduation photo in their home or business as a sign of ultimate achievement.

Theme 4 key findings include: women’s economic empowerment can isolate men, training including men was successful in some participants’ experiences, and the concept of a graduation ceremony was important in feeling gender equality for participants.

Study Conclusions

There are several conclusions to be made from this study as inferred beneath the surface from the key findings of the data gathering. The following interpretations have been analyzed from the synthesis of results and offer value in future recommendations. There are four main conclusions for the economic empowerment of women:

1. Community is essential in ensuring long-term sustainability.
2. Success is determined at the local and individual level.
3. Men need to be included to generate sustained peace.

4. Innovation based thinking should be incorporated in training.

Community is essential in ensuring long-term sustainability. Social enterprise is built upon the foundation of community by connecting people in ways they were not able to connect prior. The use of story and the encouragement to share in community creates a bonding connection point. In her foundational work on women in peacebuilding, Enloe (2010) affirms that the use of narrative is an intentional way of exploring feminine discourse, especially in post-conflict situations. Narrative has been woven throughout the data gathering process in chapter four and fostered a sense of greater connection for participants in their own-shared experiences. This study contributes to growing research that indicates social enterprise is a better tool of development work and long-term sustainability for women in leading them and the communities they inhabit out of poverty (Fotheringham, & Saunders, 2014; Nicolas & Rubio, 2016). When women are given an opportunity for economic empowerment and self-sustainability through social enterprise, they become an integral part of creating social value. Self-sustainability is crucial for long-term sustainability. One way to build this is through social capital, as evidenced through this study. Social capital is gained through social connections and relationships that enable greater production and access to resources (Rooks et al., 2016). This concept of community was a positive and fundamental byproduct of the program. One that initially may have not been a goal of the program itself. It continues to be an important part of shaping a woman's personal identity by situating herself within a family community of support. Women use their common identity as family nurturers to bring stability to their communities as Hunt and Posa (2001) found, "They can predict the acceptance of peace initiatives, as well as broker agreements in their own neighborhoods" (p. 41). It is inferred that participants would not have

been as successful without the community of support surrounding them during the training program and after graduation.

Success is determined at the local and individual level. The local level and individual person should be taken into account in the design of programs combining women's economic empowerment and peace development. It is important to note this theme throughout the study and the literature review that success will be determined at the local level and will be subject to the environment in which a policy is implemented. The study confirmed what the literature showed regarding success. Overall in Uganda it has been shown that women define success not only economically but also by non-economic factors as well (Katongole et al., 2013). This is particularly true of women who often identify success through the lens of family or community, instead of just individual success. Success for participants was most noted through the education of their kids, their personal health and the health of their family, having a safe and secure home, and even the capacity to dream. It was a shift in merely surviving to thriving. Training incorporated these values and continues to play a role in the long-term sustainability of participants. It was important for participants to have a consistent income for the incubation period of five years before going out on their own to start their businesses. For future programs this pertinent information informing the design of the program could be found by conducting a needs assessment before programs begin or learning along the way by enabling open communication from participants and listening by program designers and leaders. It is also something that is built into the theory of open innovation, as mentioned in the literature review.

Men need to be included to generate sustained peace. By bringing a training program to economically empower women, men sometimes experience a trade-off, which can create a shift in power from the hands of men to the hands of women. This shift in power places a greater

burden on women in their responsibilities to their families and communities. Empowerment becomes power over men instead of women gaining equal power to become a shared power between men and women, thus inhibiting the advancement of peace in their homes and community (Nyanzi et al., 2005). One way to avoid this is to include men in more of the training, as this study indicated. Although the study offered a way to address this through the men-to-men program it did not successfully avoid all instances of gender inequality or domestic abuse from the experience of participants after graduation. Further analysis could be done to show how this connects deeper by correlating which women participants had men who took part in the training and which did not. All participants were given the opportunity at some point to take part in the men-to-men program after it began in 2012. A more in depth analysis would need to be conducted to show this correlation. Greater gender inequalities need to be addressed through comprehensive policies and community initiatives to address gender norms. Financial sustainability did not automatically create an environment for gender equality.

In order for success to be holistically realized in this study, women and men needed to go through some aspects of the training program together for mutual empowerment and to know how to support each other. With the introduction of supplemental training for men who were the husbands, fathers, and brothers of the women in the training program there was greater indication of long-term financial independence and stability. By focusing solely on women's economic empowerment many initiatives can fail to bring lasting change because they inadvertently excuse or alienate men from responsibility or obligation and oftentimes undermine masculine identity or cultural values. A successful approach includes both women and men working together and realizing the role of both in development and peacebuilding. It is therefore important to note the risk in developing economic empowerment programs for women in alienating men and

potentially undermining masculine identity in patriarchal cultures (Haugh & Talwar, 2016). Sometimes it is a risk worth taking.

Innovation based thinking should be incorporated in training. Perhaps the most interesting and surprising conclusion is how the ability to think creatively outside of the box seemed to be an indicator of greater success overall. Although this was not built into the training program, it would be useful to implement in future training programs. More guidance is needed in deciding what type of business to pursue. Women can be taught how to think differently and given the tools to think beyond what they have known or have seen. Agyire-Tettey et al. (2018) found, “The promotion of female participation in non-farm employment has been identified as essential to women empowerment as well as an anti-poverty strategy” (p. 1609). This sentiment was not echoed often in the literature nor a direct outcome of data gathering, but rather a deeper observation from the researcher. The graduates who saw greatest financial stability and overall success were those that invested in businesses that produce passive income, such as an apartment building or restaurant with employees, instead of the more agricultural based businesses that are already in abundance. Perhaps greater business or marketing training could be implemented on a level most applicable to ensure longer-term success.

In connection to the culture-sharing group of women in rural Uganda of this study, the United Nations (2018) reports only 12.8 % of agricultural land in the world is owned by women, yet agricultural based employment accounts for a third of women’s employment globally. Furthermore, according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2007) women make up 80 % of the workforce in producing food and 60-70 % of the workforce in the agriculture overall, with land ownership at 5-7 % (Kikooma, 2011; Lourenco et al., 2014; Nyanzi et al., 2005). It was therefore important to see how many women owned land as a result of graduating from this training

program. Even those who did not yet own land reported it was their goal to own land and to build a permanent home. The program instilled this value in them and gave them the savings training to set aside money to make this a reality. Even still there seemed to be a noticeable difference in the struggles of those who chose agriculture-based business from those who chose other forms of business in the community.

Many women who reproduced the agriculture-based businesses they have always known in their community experienced greater uncertainty and failed businesses due to both the instability of the industry dependent on weather conditions but also the already heavily saturated market. The researcher visited many of these businesses and found they were set up next to identical businesses in the marketplace, meaning there was no product differentiation. Although customer loyalty is built into the culture, these women could reach greater levels in their businesses with more marketing training as well as creative innovation based strategies for setting up their businesses. Innovation is a large part of entrepreneurship and what differentiates it from microfinance. Specifically open innovation is a tool of transformational leadership, which is design thinking and collaboration among many actors (Darwin & Chesbrough, 2017). Training that incorporates out of the box thinking for business design and differentiation would be useful for greater long-term sustainability.

Implications of the Study

Both policies on the macro level and communities of support on the micro level are needed for long-term sustainable growth and development to take place. This dissertation observed commonalities in the outcome of training in developing women as leaders in the community of Gulu in Northern Uganda. It is the convergence of policy, education, and business that creates a foundation for sustainable long-term success to take place. Market solutions alone cannot bring sustained peace, but rather the collaboration of actors involving policy, research,

and enterprise will help create a foundation for sustainable development and peace to thrive. Additionally charity models alone are not sufficient for addressing the larger societal problems of poverty, conflict, and gender equality but rather a sustainable development model is needed. These themes are reiterated throughout the literature, shown in the data gathering, and are addressed throughout this dissertation by continually advocating for a collaborative approach among actors. Ultimately success will be determined at the local level as policy is implemented in a way that addresses the needs and context in the field. It is also important to understand the role only policy can play in creating an environment and a foundation for both business success and gender equality to thrive. This section will outline the policy recommendation based on the key findings and conclusions of this study.

Continued research at the local level with partners on the ground will provide a foundation for greater policy implementation at the macro level. This study explored a particular local phenomenon that has not been examined prior with the culture sharing group of women who graduated from the entrepreneurship training program of 31 Bits. It contributes to the growing research in this field. In addition to policy creation and implementation the significance of the study is most useful for those seeking to understand approaches to peacebuilding, social enterprise as a tool of development, advancing women's rights through cultural means, and examining the effectiveness of economic empowerment through the tools of microfinance, business training, and entrepreneurship. It is important also in the larger growing literature on the feminization of peace through a policy lens. The outcomes of this study can be utilized and applied not only through policy proposals, but also as recommendations for social enterprise formation and implementation, approaches to advancing women's rights and achieving gender

parity, and in offering curriculum guidance for business and leadership training in post conflict situations involving women in rural communities.

Policy developed through entrepreneurship in rebuilding an economy is ideal in post conflict situations. As Slaughter (2016) argues, “The focus on job and wealth creation has become a ‘talking point’ upon which nearly all governments can agree – or at least find little with which to disagree” (p. 1). Overall entrepreneurship is a tool that develops an individual’s capacity, connectivity, and capability (Slaughter 2016). Koltai and Muspratt (2016) go so far as to say, “Joblessness, not religious, cultural, or tribal strife, is, we believe, the root (though not the only) cause of the chaos that today challenges international security and American foreign policy.” If that is true, then policy aimed at reducing poverty and promoting peacebuilding should always include entrepreneurship, as this study shows, especially in regards to women specific training. Langley and Guittard (2012) write, “While there is much debate on the role of governments in supporting and encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation, there is little doubt that they should be at the table principally to ensure favorable policy environments, create supportive infrastructure and purposeful educational resources” (p. 2). Through the recommendation of this study, entrepreneurship is one of the keys to addressing the global social problem of poverty, ensuring peacebuilding, and advancing women’s rights. It is also an underlying theme of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This study contributes to the greater work of the United Nations in key areas. Two noteworthy targets within the fifth goal on gender equality of the SDGs address both leadership and economic empowerment: “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life” and “Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as

access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws” (United Nations, 2019, p. 5). Creating opportunities for women working globally in the informal sector will be the key to reaching the SDGs because it connects clearly to many of the other goals (Fordham et al., 2017). This study also supports the first SDG of ending poverty through both financial assistance and social support. It centers on promoting policy based on development strategies of investment that favor the poor. Finally it connects to goals eight and nine in providing sustainable economic growth through job creation and building resilient infrastructure through innovation. These are core components of this study and contribute to the 2030 global goals set forth by the United Nations in sustainable development.

Policy aimed at both increasing men’s responsibility in the household and women’s contribution outside the household will go hand-in-hand in long-term sustainable success. Chant (2014) notes, “Policies which aim to alleviate women’s poverty through capitalizing on essentialist gender stereotypes and burdening them further, need to address the household and familial regimes which perpetuate gendered divisions of labor and power, and to question the wisdom of the continued exclusion of men” (p. 310). The type of policy will be determined by the needs assessment on the ground at the local level and co-collaboration with participants. Regardless of the specific policy proposal, it is important to address the interconnectedness of economically empowering women to development, social capital, peacebuilding, and gender equality. Global leadership is the foundation for this study, as evidenced by pointing back to the work of the United Nations on a macro level. Leadership opportunities for women can be advanced through increased consideration on policy surrounding women’s rights. Haan (2017) writes, “The World Values Survey suggests that an increase in women’s share of employment

over time, and economic growth can lead to the weakening of restrictive gender stereotypes and gender norms” (p. 19). This transformative change in gender norms is an underlying goal of the work of this dissertation. It would be useful to apply the conclusions of this study to shaping peace and development policy for including women alongside men in the valuable role they play in peacebuilding and leadership.

From an advocacy perspective there are several implications for shaping policy that can be concluded from the results of this study in partnership with organizations on the ground. First as mentioned prior, it is important to consider policy that favors women but not in a way that ostracizes men. Women must be given the same basic human rights as men legally in owning land, operating a business, and holding leadership positions. Women should also be encouraged to seek leadership positions through the implementation of quotas when necessary, especially when it involves gaining a seat at the peace-negotiating table in post conflict situations. Policy that focuses on the collective community surrounding the individual it seeks to impact will be most effective. Policy can ensure greater long-term success by building in opportunities to work together. This can be seen through financial regulations that reward giving to others, co-collaborations in business, and other community based practices. Policy that takes into account the underlying causes to cycles of poverty will help in the long run to create long-term sustainability. This can be realized through innovative-based policies that incorporate creative thinking aspects aimed at introducing new ideas and never before seen practices in those communities where it is harder to break cycles of poverty. It is important for policy and training to reflect new narratives and not replicate what participants have always known and seen around them.

Those seeking to do similar work in the entrepreneurship training of women will find this study valuable. It is a model that can be replicated in a similar context. A holistic approach is crucial to the design of business training, to include all components of a woman's success. These include relational counseling, a savings plan, health awareness, and the safety and security of a community to learn and make mistakes, among others from the key findings. It is also helpful to keep in mind the design of training to reflect the conclusions made in this dissertation adequately addressing the community approach, a needs assessment at the local level, including men in some part, and incorporating innovation based design thinking in teaching entrepreneurship and creating businesses. Positive peace requires the active economic empowerment of women in a post-conflict society. It gives women greater negotiating and decision making power in pre-war hierarchical relationships further undermining pre-war norms, and paves the way for reaching greater gender parity.

Economic empowerment contributes to the peace process in an informal manner, as women become stabilizers in their homes and communities. Organizations that hope to contribute to the peace process through economic empowerment are most valuable when they allow women to reach self-sustainability and do not rely on using handouts as a relief method, which is embedded in the charity model. Additionally, organizations that provide microfinance will find it interesting how many participants in this study were able to become self-sustainable because they had an incubation period lasting five years including consistent and stable income as employees to focus on their own personal development and leadership skills before going out and starting their own businesses. By partnering with organizations on the ground such as these and creating open market legislation that enables them to thrive, governments can play a role in economically empowering women as a tool of foreign policy and development.

Study Limitations

Only those women who have gone through the training program of 31 Bits were included in the data. Additionally, only those who were available and willing to participate during the limited interview process were included as part of the sample size. This has been limited to a certain community of women who have experienced the same phenomenon of the training program over the period of ten years with the end goal of self-sustainability through the creation of a business. It also may be more focused on those who experienced a certain measure of success due to their own self-selection to be part of the study. The study has therefore been limited to a small population of women in a specific context and region of the world. The reason for both the successes and failures of the program could be due to many outside factors including existing cultural norms, open market policies already in place, women's rights laws allowing for ownership of business and land, gender norms and inequalities, and general societal structures already established. All data was self-reported by participants in the interview process. This may have limited or enhanced their own overall personal success determined by their own self-perception.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study contributes to the field of peacebuilding, social enterprise as a tool of development, advancing women's rights through cultural means, and examining the effectiveness of economic empowerment through the tools of microfinance, business training, and entrepreneurship; under the umbrella of policy and leadership. The study overall could be improved upon if replicated by creating a greater measurement or indicator of sustained peace. It proved to be challenging to fully grasp the connection between economic empowerment and peace on a larger scale apart from individual lived experience due to limitations within the interview data gathering approach and process. Perhaps this could be measured in a more

comprehensive way through a different data gathering approach including greater mechanisms of measurement and comparison. It would be useful to situate it within an examination of the larger role of similar initiatives and faith based organizations in the region to understand how peace has progressed in the last ten years through external markers. Additionally it would be useful to explore certain phenomena in a deeper way. For instance, it would be helpful to look further at why some women were mentoring others while others were not, why some businesses failed and others did not, and why some women were able to partner with the men in their lives and others were abused by them. Was this due to the way women interpreted their power, due to outside factors, or was it the type of business they chose? Some conclusions can be inferred from the data but it would require a greater depth of data gathering and correlation inference to know more fully.

Moreover, future studies would be beneficial to continue exploring the way success is determined at the local level with other similar entrepreneurship training programs for women in developing nations. It would be helpful to compare and examine these phenomenon or case studies through the lens of a policy initiative or mandate, as a tool of evaluation. It is also recommended further types of business training be compared in the future to determine best practices with social enterprise initiatives centered on entrepreneurship, while taking into account what works in one context may not work the same way in another context. It would be useful to compare a similar training approach with a shorter incubation period, less than five years, to determine best practices in the length of a program. There are other certain stipulations that can be met for comparison. For instance, in a similar post-conflict situation as the context of this study, would a microfinance program experience the same type of success as this holistic community based training program? What deeper role does community post graduation play in

the long-term sustainability of an individual? Is there a way to streamline a program to be used in similar situations?

There are many ways to build off this study that would be valuable for future research in the growing field. Overall, the model can be replicated predicated upon policy preconditions that allow for women to own a business and land protecting their overall basic human rights as well as an open market economy that can support an entrepreneurship initiative. It is important for these basic policy conditions to be met before beginning a program in similar nature.

Furthermore, the incubation period of five years was a primary indicator of success because it afforded participants the consistent income needed to eventually build a business and develop leadership skills to become fully self-sustainable, especially in the face of unforeseen challenges. Most programs take a two-year approach, but through the recommendation of this study a longer training period will create a greater foundation for sustainability. Finally, it is important to include the role of men alongside women in a replicated model in order for success to be fully realized.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation advocated for the role of social enterprise in building sustainable peace by giving women agency and power in their communities. It is the convergence of policy, education, and business that creates a foundation for sustainable long-term sustainability to take place. The central research question this study answered is how women's economic empowerment gives meaning to experiencing leadership and sustainable peace development. It presented policy implications and recommendations for economically empowering women and sustainable peace development through collaboration of actors. The women participants who graduated from the business-training program of 31 Bits in Uganda

have become leaders and peacebuilders in their communities. They have experienced transformation in the process and reached new levels both personally and collectively as women paving the way for the next generation. Their stories of struggles and successes are woven throughout this dissertation.

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APPENDIX A

GPS IRB Approval Notice

Protocol # 19-03-1023



Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: February 24, 2020

Protocol Investigator Name: Lisa Maracine

Protocol #: 19-03-1023

Project Title: Economically Empowering Women as Foreign Policy: A Phenomenological Study on Building Peace in Northern Uganda through Social Enterprise

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Lisa Maracine:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research