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Theater and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Settings: Participants' Experiences in the Morning Star Theater Program in South Sudan

Shiphrah Mutungi Akandiinda
Antioch University - PhD Program in Leadership and Change

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THEATER AND PEACEBUILDING IN POST-CONFLICT SETTINGS:
PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES IN THE MORNING STAR THEATER PROGRAM IN
SOUTH SUDAN

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by

Shiphrah Mutungi Akandiinda

ORCID Scholar No. 0000-0003-0792-0136

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This dissertation, by Shiphrah Mutungi Akandiinda, has
been approved by the committee members signed below
who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of
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Dissertation Committee:

Laurien Alexandre, PhD, Chairperson

Donna Ladkin, PhD

David Anderson Hooker, PhD, JD, MDiv

ABSTRACT

THEATER AND PEACEBUILDING IN POST-CONFLICT SETTINGS:
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SOUTH SUDAN

Shiphrah Mutungi Akandiinda

Graduate School of Leadership and Change

Yellow Springs, OH

This dissertation explores the role of theater for peacebuilding in post-conflict settings through the analysis of experiences of participants in the Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding in South Sudan. Arts-based activities, including theater, have increasingly gained momentum as viable interventions for peacebuilding in post-conflict zones. Much of the existent research fails to capture the experiences of the theater participants themselves. Using narrative inquiry, this study interviewed 12 community members who participated in the Morning Star Forum Theater event. In particular, this study focused on how experiences of Morning Star Theater events impacted interpersonal growth and relationship-building, thus positively impacting peacebuilding processes. Participants collectively shared positive stories of building relationships with individuals from other conflict communities during and after the event. As well, the study findings illuminate experiences of ongoing peacebuilding efforts among these individuals, underscoring the potential role theater can play in building local capacities and facilitating meaningful engagement of local people in peacebuilding processes. The findings not only add participants' voices to the debate about the role of theater in peacebuilding in post-conflict settings but also inform us about the tool's potential in facilitating sustained meaningful engagement of the local population, which is a key aspect in achieving lasting peace. This

dissertation is available in open access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

Dedication

To you, my Mom, for your incredible resilience in the midst of many struggles that life threw at

you. I have achieved this beautiful dream because you did not give up. This is for you, Mukyala.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The present study explores the role of theater in peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. Specifically, the study collected and analyzed narratives of participants who were involved in Morning Star's Forum Theater for peacebuilding in South Sudan in 2019. Whereas arts-based activities including theater are increasingly gaining popularity as viable interventions for peacebuilding in post-conflict settings, there is a gap in the literature that fails to capture the experiences of individuals who participate in theater events. In particular, this study focused on how these experiences impacted interpersonal growth and relationship-building, hence positively impacting peacebuilding processes. Using narrative inquiry as the research methodology, the study collected and analyzed stories from 12 individuals who participated in the Morning Star Forum Theater events for peacebuilding at both State and national levels. The study findings serve to contribute to the current understanding about the role of theater in peacebuilding, while guiding peacebuilding practitioners on its usage.

This Chapter provides an overview of the study and its purpose, a brief introduction to the debate over the role of the arts and theater in peacebuilding, and the context of the current conflict in South Sudan. Within this context, the Morning Star Forum Theater event is described. In addition, the Chapter also discusses the intended significance of the study, related scholarship, and practice. The Chapter concludes with an outline of the succeeding Chapters.

Background to the Study

The use of the arts, including theater, in peacebuilding is increasingly attracting attention among practitioners and scholars alike (Shank & Schirch, 2008; Zelizer, 2003). The interest in the arts as a promising approach to peacebuilding comes at a time when peacebuilding is no longer seen as a mere cessation of hostilities but a comprehensive process that addresses the root

causes of the violence and the immediate impact, guarding against the occurrence of violence in future, and ultimately attaining human security (Lederach, 1997; Schirch, 2013; Sentama, 2009). The expanded understanding of peacebuilding and the search to attain human security (Lederach, 1997; Schirch, 2013) challenges peacebuilding practitioners' routines and requires them to incorporate equally diverse approaches to their efforts. In response, scholars have earmarked the arts as appropriate tools to address the diverse nature of peacebuilding (Shank & Schirch, 2008; Zelizer, 2003). Specific praise has been given to the use of theater for its role in promoting connections amongst different communities, even those experiencing severe conflicts (Akashoro et al., 2010).

Despite the increasing interest and use of theater in peacebuilding efforts as cited by numerous scholars (Akashoro et al., 2010; Reich, 2012; Shank & Schirch, 2008; Zelizer, 2003), insufficient research exists on the ways in which participation in these events influences interpersonal relationships at the community level, which is a core element of peacebuilding in post-conflict zones. Zelizer (2003) stated, for instance, that the arts, including theater, are "essential components of peacebuilding work in societies experiencing severe conflicts" (p. 62); he cites his experience in Bosnia where the arts, including theater, were used in peacebuilding processes. However, Zelizer does not explain how these processes impacted relationships between and among the individuals who participated in theater events. Akashoro et al. (2010) argued that theater presents a practical way of bringing people together to share ideas of common interests, and in conflict settings, peace is a major common interest. While bringing people together to share common interests is ultimately a key step in peacebuilding, it is not enough to simply indicate improvement in interpersonal relationships. Akashoro et al. (2010) asserted that peacebuilding requires new approaches to achieve its comprehensive goals and suggest that

theater presents a great potential in that direction. The apparent potential of theater is drawn from its stimulating nature as an activity and as a methodology. As Litwak (2019) posited:

> Theater is a vibrant and valuable tool for sparking dialogue and inspiring action around challenging social topics. Audiences who are engaged in the process of the performance beyond the standard role of passive spectator are more likely to be motivated to deliverable endeavors post performance. (p. 275)

The studies mentioned above are examples of the current debate over the essential role theater can play in peacebuilding and will be explored more fully in Chapter II. The incorporation of theater in peacebuilding is aligned with the need to provide comprehensive tools that meet the demands of the comprehensive processes (Schirch, 2013).

Essentially, peacebuilding efforts must by necessity address the root causes and the impact of the conflict while targeting a variety of issues across various societal domains, among which one is the relationship-building domain (Sentama, 2009). Post-conflict peacebuilding interventions need to address the range of Sentama's (2009) four inter-related spheres (security, economic, political, and reconciliation) and by their nature influence multiple dimensions (personal, structural, cultural, and interpersonal) in each society. While these four domains are categorized differently, Lederach et al. (2007) argued that they are intricately linked; thus a positive shift in one most likely influences the others.

Although all the dimensions (personal, structural, cultural, and interpersonal) are key in addressing conflicts, Lederach (1995) claimed that the domain of relationship-building has been neglected, yet it is at the center of the conflict itself and therefore must be core to the solution. Hence, the present study focused primarily on the interpersonal dimension, which emphasizes the "causes and the effects of war-related hostility through the repair/restoration and/or transformation of damaged relationships. It refers to people who have direct face-to-face contact; and when conflict escalates, communication patterns change, stereotypes are created,

polarization increases, and trust decreases" (Sentama, 2009, p. 25). While theater has been applauded as a viable approach for peacebuilding in general (Akashoro et al., 2010; Reich, 2012; Shank & Schirch, 2008; Zelizer, 2003), little of the literature illuminates the ways in which theater-based activities actually impact interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the current study was to explore if participating in a theater event for peacebuilding influenced growth and the nature of relationships fostered during and after the events in post-conflict South Sudan.

Conflicts in South Sudan

Since the current study is primarily focused on work that took place in South Sudan, it is important to provide a brief history of conflicts in that country. Kumsa (2017), traces the origins of South Sudan conflicts, especially the 2013 incidents back to the Colonial Era (1898–1956), which promoted unequal systems and unequal power structures between different states in Sudan. The conflict was deeply rooted in the history of the region, particularly the movement to replace Christianity with Islam and to replace Indigenous Africans with Arabs in the North Africa region. When Sudan attained its independence from Britain and Egypt in 1956, government officials, whose majority were from the north, inherited the discriminatory attitudes towards southerners by promoting "alienating strategies by which the government sought to intimidate southerners into passive people" (Kumsa, 2017, p. 16). These strategies showed up in many forms, including the exclusion of southerners from active participation in the governing of the country. The allocation of only four leadership posts to South Sudan, out of the 800 that were previously held by the colonial powers, resulted in the violent conflict of August 1955, which marked the beginning of the Southern Sudanese struggle against the northern domination and oppression. As noted by Kumsa (2017), the "northern leaders were to replace the British colonizers in the perception of the southern people" (p. 516).

According to Kumsa (2017), "the refusal of the Southerners to be ruled by their Northern neighbors unleashed the first Sudan war" (p. 513) between 1955 and 1972, which was stopped through the signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement in the same year (1972). The Addis Ababa agreement accorded South Sudan autonomous authority to govern its affairs, but as a state in Sudan. However, "this agreement was gradually weakened by the central government and eliminated in 1982" (Kumsa, 2017, p. 518). The two regions (South and North) remained under intense tensions related to differences of ideas and preferences in governance structures and religion among others. As Kumsa (2017) disclosed, the central government decisions to divide the South into three states, plus the imposition of Islamic law on the whole country, were never welcomed by southerners.

The disagreements between the North and the South led to the emergence of rebel groups in the South in 1983, among which was "the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) as a political organization and its military wing—the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) under the command of John Garang" (Kumsa, 2017, p. 519). The formation of SPLM set in motion Sudan's second bloody conflict from 1983 to 2005, which brought about a cessation of conflicts with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The 2005 CPA provided among others "acceptance of the right for self-determination for South Sudan, separation of the state and religion, power sharing … and endorsed in the interim period between July 2005 and 2011" (Kumsa, 2017, p. 521), when South Sudan finally secured its independence.

Even after its independence in 2011, South Sudan has been characterized by some of the worst violent conflicts in the world, especially the violent conflicts of 2013 and 2016 (Blanchard, 2016). As suggested by Bayeh (2014), the conflict among southerners themselves was present before the country secured its independence in 2011 especially between the leadership of the

SPLM party. However, during the country's fight for independence, efforts were focused on the conflict between the North and South, virtually ignoring other issues accompanying the prolonged conflicts, such as disagreements across rival ethnic groups (Bayer, 2014; Nyadera, 2018). While there were fundamental issues between the North and South, other issues that may have led to mistrust among these groups were not addressed, and no efforts were made to examine the community, personal, and interpersonal relationships between the various ethnicities within the South (Nyadera, 2018).

Moreover, South Sudan is a country in which there are estimated to be more than 60 distinct ethnic communities. Within these 60 ethnic groups, the majority are the Dinkas (36%) and the Nuers (about 16%), while the remaining 48% is comprised of many diverse groups, including but not limited to Azande, Bari, Shilluk, Toposa, Otuho, Luo, Moru, Murle, Kakwa, Kuku, Mandari, Didinga, Ndogo, Bviri, Lndi, Anuak, Bongo, Langi, Dungotona, Acholi, Baka, Fertit, Madi, Belanda, and many more (UNESCO, 2018). The listing is based on the approximate size from the largest to smallest (Sawe, 2017). Figure 1.1 provides extra clarity in terms of estimated numbers in percentages.

Figure 1.1

Approximate Percentages of Ethnic Groups of South Sudan
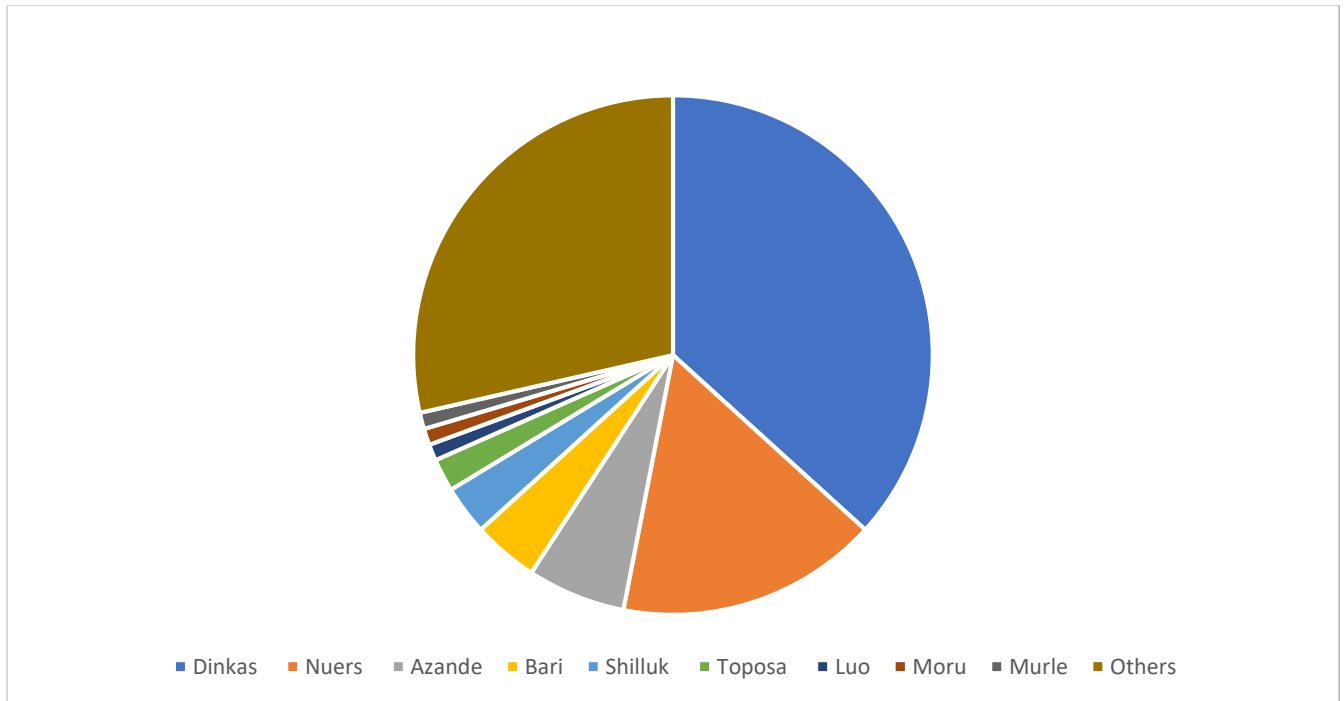
Clearly, the Dinkas and the Nuers are more in numbers, which accords these particular groups

mass followings to advance their interests, some of which may perpetuate conflicts. In addition

to the approximate percentages, South Sudanese ethnic groups tend to settle in specific

geographical locations, as can be viewed in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2

Map of the Ethnic Groups of South Sudan

Note: CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0)

The geographical representation on the map in Figure 1.2 is not intended to promote the narrative

of territorial ownership but simply to show the rich diversity of South Sudan. Undoubtedly, some

regions are inhabited by diverse ethnic groups; notably such as Central Equatoria, which houses

the capital of South Sudan. Moreover, it is important to note that not all groups are represented

on the map. Only the main groups in a region appear.

Literature (Bayer, 2014; Nyadera, 2018) suggests that ethnic rivalry in South Sudan

existed even during pre-independence but was never addressed because the focus was almost

exclusively on independence from the North. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)

was formed by an ethnically diverse group, although the Nuer and the Dinka were the majority.

Even during the early stages of forming the SPLM, a history of confrontation existed that was "viewed through an ethnic lens that pitted the Nuers against the Dinkas" (Nyadera, 2018, p. 69), a view that transformed and continues to characterize the South Sudan conflicts. Bayeh (2014) noted that:

> The political division within SPLM is not a post-independence phenomenon. SPLM was divided into two rival parties in 1991 as Machar, together with other officers, departed from the then commander-in-chief, John Garang, a Bor Dinka … The internally fragmented South Sudanese collaborated in fighting against the common enemy, the North. Later … the interethnic conflict between Nuer and Dinka began to revive following power struggle of their respective leaders, and thereby resuming their previously existing hostilities. (p. 290)

While the Dinkas and Nuers constitute the majority of the country's population, the tendency to negotiate power and leadership roles through their respective tribal lens gave rise to similar claims by other tribes, thus making an impossible demand for equal representation of all ethnic groups (Nyadera, 2018). Nyadera (2018) observed that "competition for political power and differing ideologies among local leaders create a scenario where communities regroup within their ethnic cocoons in order to advance their cause" (p. 69).

The ethnic divisions among the Dinkas and the Nuers surfaced right from the beginning, when the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) was established in 1983 under the charismatic guidance of the late John Garang aiming at achieving a New Sudan. As such, the SPLM was an ethnically diverse organization. Nyadera (2018) argued that:

> Within that diversity, the Nuer and the Dinka were the majority by virtue of the sizes of their populations. They [Dinkas and Nuers] occupied polar positions within the organization's hierarchy … As the liberation quest was on its course, the SPLM grappled with various challenges, ranging from organizational, internal and leadership to financial and ideological challenges. Finding solutions to these challenges became an uphill task for the SPLM leadership since these challenges were ethicized—mainly as attempts by the dominant ethnic groups to find solutions that favored their side. Thus, in the absence of a functioning united leadership, cracks emerged within the SPLM and signs of forthcoming splits began showing right from its inception ... These divisions paved the way towards the subsequent rivalries that rocked SPLM from within. (pp. 69–70)

In 2013, just after two years of independence, a disagreement between the country's president (a Dinka) and his then vice-president (a Nuer) erupted, sinking the nation into a bloody war that continues to the present (late 2021). The disagreement between the two leaders of the young and fragile nation sent their respective loyal forces into a brutal conflict that has left millions of people dead or internally displaced, while others fled the country. According to Nyadera (2018):

> Ethnicity has remained an important variable in South Sudan's politics … ethnic mobilizations based on historical rivalries and attachments explain the composition of the warring parties in South Sudan. Strong ethnic loyalty combined with a political system that allows winners to dominate government positions and get a larger share of the national cake causes political stakes to be heightened to the extent of violence. (p. 71)

The conflict in South Sudan continues to manifest through ethnic divides with each tribe, especially the Dinkas and the Nuers, accusing "the other" (Shulika & Okeke-Uzodike, 2013). These endless cycles of violence continue to erode the country's potential for peace, with each community being alienated, de-humanizing "the other," and seeing "the other" as the enemy. As is the case with many post-conflict settings, South Sudan has received a variety of peacebuilding initiatives to address this ongoing conflict (Bennet et al., 2010; SaferWorld, 2019). Morning Star Forum Theater represents one of those initiatives and serves as the basis for this study.

The Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding

In order to understand the Morning Star Forum Theater events, it is first of all important to explain the broader Morning Star Trauma Awareness and Peacebuilding initiative, from which the Forum Theater events grew. Briefly, the Morning Star Trauma Awareness and Peacebuilding initiative was implemented as a part of the Viable Support to Transition and Stability (VISTAS) project, a conflict mitigation effort funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in South Sudan from 2013 to 2019. The VISTAS project, with the Morning Star initiative as a part, was funded under a contract between Architecture, Engineering,

Consulting, Operations, and Maintenance (AECOM), a global infrastructure firm, and USAID. The Morning Star Program was country-wide in scope because its service was relevant to all of South Sudan and operated in more than ten locations. The Morning Star Program concluded in 2019 after the funding for the VISTAS project ended.

The goal of the Morning Star Program was to raise awareness about the traumagenic effects of long-term conflicts in the various communities within South Sudan and "provide practical tools to foster healing, reconnect communities, and lay a foundation for reconciliation" (Morning Star Strategy, 2015, p. 1). Through raising awareness about trauma and reconnecting communities, the hope was that warring communities would acquire knowledge and skills that could foster positive communal and interpersonal relationships, thus bridging communal divides and paving the way for re-connections.

The Morning Star Program had a unique methodology based on the Strategies of Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) curriculum, which is a peacebuilding curriculum designed by the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding (CJP) at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Harrisonburg, Virginia, United States of America (USA). The STAR curriculum was developed in response to the events of September 11, 2001 in the USA to promote the understanding of the relationship between trauma and conflicts. STAR derives its strength from an interdisciplinary approach that includes trauma and resilience studies, restorative justice, conflict transformation, human security, and spirituality (EMU, 2011) as shown in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3

STAR Multi-disciplinary Framework (Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual) Framework
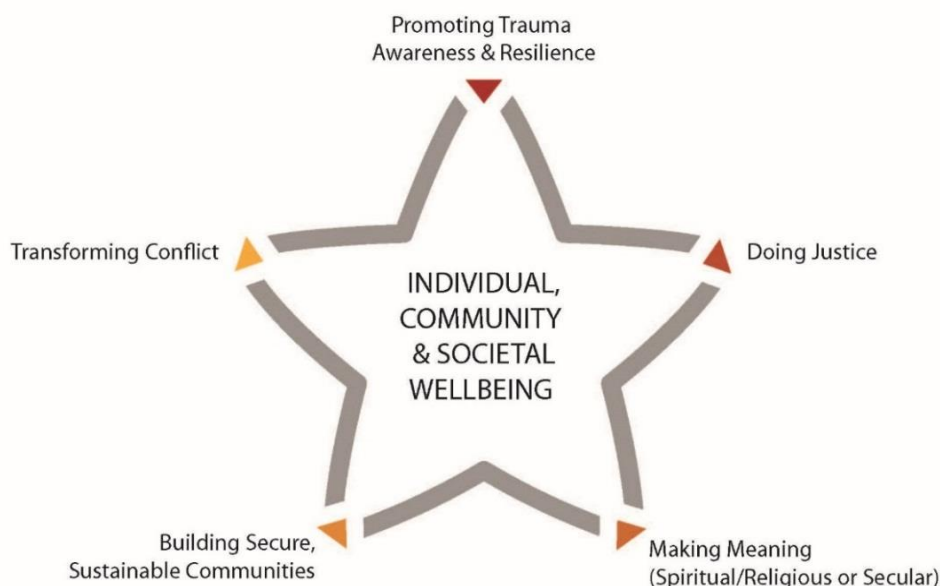
Note: Copyright © by EMU (2011), used with permission.

The STAR framework derives its strengths from a variety disciplines, whose focus is on individual, community, and societal wellbeing. Although STAR is not the focus of the present study, here is a brief explanation of each of the different parts of the star.

At one point of STAR is the trauma awareness and resilience building element, which aims to provide the relevant information about the subject of trauma and how to get over trauma. Next is the conflict transformation element, which promotes peace leadership that not only solves the conflicts but transforms them for better wellbeing. Then, the spiritual and meaning making element enables individuals and communities to understand the impact of conflicts on beliefs and narratives and helps them to discover narratives that are a hindrance to peace. The fourth part of the star promotes justice and works with individuals to explore the kinds of justice

practices that promote unity rather than divisions. The fifth part recognizes the need for secure and sustainable communities through improved livelihoods for building resilience. All five elements of the STAR curriculum are fundamentally needed to facilitate lasting peace.

STAR works with individuals, organizations (e.g., governmental, non-governmental, and faith-based), and communities, who in turn apply the acquired knowledge and skills to various challenges, with most of these efforts directed towards peacebuilding. Thousands of individuals in more than 60 countries have received STAR training (EMU, 2011). In some countries, STAR has been applied in its original form, while in others, major adaptations have been made. In South Sudan, STAR was initially used in its traditional form and with minor modifications since 2006, immediately after the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). However, after the 2013 violence, which erupted between the forces loyal to the president and his then vice-president, STAR was re-introduced to South Sudan through Morning Star, and a substantial modification of the original STAR curriculum was done.

It is important to clarify that STAR and Morning Star should not be confused with each other. That they share the word 'star' is coincidental. As stated, STAR is an acronym of Strategies of Trauma Awareness and Resilience developed and implemented by EMU, while Morning Star is a name of the specific trauma awareness and peacebuilding program in South Sudan. The name Morning Star was proposed by a group of stakeholders trying to identify a unifying symbol in a divided society. In fact, the Morning Star Program's slogan is "New Life New Hope" (Morning Star, 2015), thus alluding to a new light and a new start for all. Therefore, the fact that the Morning Star Program bears the word *star,* the same acronym for EMU's STAR, is simply coincidental. The relationship between the two programs is that the Morning Star Program adapted the original STAR curriculum in its work in South Sudan.

From STAR to Morning Star

Wyeth (2011) posits the importance of strategic interventions tailored to a country's specific situations. From 2013 onwards, deliberate efforts were made to adapt the STAR curriculum and make it more suitable to the South Sudan communities (Forcier Consulting, 2016), leading to the creation of the Morning Star Program. In fact, an evaluation conducted of the Morning Star Program found that one of its main contributions was the relevance and appropriateness of the curriculum (Forcier Consulting, 2016). Although the STAR curriculum in its standard traditional form is strong, it was developed for the US-based population. Considering the uniqueness of and distinctions between the two countries, adapting the curriculum made it far more relevant to the South Sudan populations.

To begin with, STAR is presented using words and illustrations. Since most of the illustrations in the original STAR were Western in nature, the Morning Star leadership engaged South Sudanese artists to create illustrations that accompany the narrative content in its new curriculum. The illustrations were a key component of the program because the majority of the target audience were individuals who would not know how to read and write. The use of illustrations to explain the content made learning possible. In fact, during the evaluation of the pilot phase, one of the Program's strengths cited was the illustrations (Forcier Consulting, 2016).

In addition, STAR employs a number of interactive activities to make learning experiential. There are several role plays and practical exercises supporting learning about the challenges and how to get over challenges. Instead of bringing the STAR activities as they were to South Sudan, local activities were introduced. Role plays were tailored towards South Sudanese real issues such as cattle raiding, early marriages, and revenge killings. Practical activities for healing were encouraged and introduced. A vivid example was the use of massage

as a stress relieving mechanism. The South Sudan communities did not only fail to associate with the mechanism, but they also worried about gender dynamics of the country. It would be inappropriate for a woman to massage a man and vice versa unless you are in relationship. As such, other mechanisms familiar to the community such as talking, walking, and dancing were introduced. Last but not least, the examples of incidents used in STAR to explain technical concepts had to change and instead, the use of familiar incidents was introduced.

Adapting the curriculum also meant considerations for its delivery. As earlier explained and as shall be seen in Chapter II, South Sudan is largely divided along ethnic lines. Some of the divisions are so pronounced that some groups cannot freely move or work in some regions. The cultures are equally unique that if one belongs to one group, they may not necessarily know what is happening in another group. The Program leadership intentionally identified and trained individuals from each of the targeted locations to be responsible for the community level trainings. Considering the technical nature of the curriculum and the low levels of education in South Sudan at that time, there was a suggestion to recruit qualified people from other east African countries as trainers. That suggestion was rejected because of the need to promote local ownership, build local capacity, and embrace the local knowledge. It is worth mentioning that having a local leadership team significantly contributed to the success of the Morning Star Program in general. It is important to note that the adaptation processes were not a onetime event. Each time that there was feedback suggesting the need to change or improve, it was done.

While the curriculum was adapted, Morning Star's mode of delivery remained in its conventional forms, mainly through the workshops. Even in its traditional format, the Morning Star Program was viewed favorably by community members. In a 2016 evaluation conducted to determine the relevancy of the program in South Sudan communities, 100% of those interviewed

requested the Morning Star Program be made accessible to more people in South Sudan (Forcier Consulting, 2016). The Morning Star Program realized that restricting the program's delivery solely to workshops would limit coverage, yet all South Sudan communities desperately needed the intervention. Well aware of the interactive nature of theater, the Program's leaders, with support from funders, decided to explore its (theater) inclusion as an approach. Thus, the emergence of the Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding.

Performing the Curriculum—Morning Star Forum Theater Pilot Activity

The emergence of Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding came at a time when program leaders and funders were exploring alternative and diverse ways to achieve the program's goals while at the same time reaching more people across the country. The majority of peacebuilding efforts at the time were employing traditional approaches (Reeve, 2012; Zelizer, 2003), which posed challenges not only in reaching large numbers of individuals but also in addressing the diverse nature of the conflicts. South Sudan has received a wide range of peacebuilding efforts, but most of these efforts have employed traditional conflict resolution mechanisms such as workshops, trainings, and peace dialogues (Bennet et al., 2010; SaferWorld, 2019). Even the Morning Star Program initially approached peacebuilding work through workshops and trainings. Given the expansive nature of peacebuilding processes and the need to use diverse approaches (Shank & Schirch, 2008), Morning Star Program leaders decided to explore theater as a new approach based on its popularity, as recommended by experts and scholars in the field of peacebuilding (Shank & Schirch, 2008; Zelizer, 2003).

In order to pilot Morning Star Theater intervention for peacebuilding, the Program leaders collaborated with a national organization known as South Sudan Theater Organization (SSTO) (www.sstheater.org), to identify actors across the country to be trained in the Morning

Star Peacebuilding approach. The SSTO was formed in 2012 to promote peaceful co-existence through theater, particularly one type of theater called Forum Theater, to be discussed more fully in Chapter II. The SSTO had collaborated with Morning Star's USAID-funded program in the past, making it feasible to arrange a new partnership. The SSTO mobilized a group of 25 actors from various theater groups in South Sudan for training in Morning Star's standard curriculum, held in Juba, South Sudan in 2016. Theater groups represented in the training were drawn from three different locations of Juba, Malakal, and Wau. Both women and men from diverse ethnic groups were represented.

It is important to note that the Morning Star Theater plays were developed using the Morning Star curriculum, which draws its strength from multidisciplinary fields of trauma and education, justice, meaning making, conflict transformation, and resilience (EMU, 2011). As such, Forum Theater plays were carefully constructed with stories that address all the important aspects of the curriculum in order to facilitate individual and community wellbeing. Specifically, the plays emphasized the relationship between historic trauma and conflict, meaning-making and conflict, and justice and creative approaches that transform conflicts.

According to Morning Star (2016), participants of the Morning Star Session for Theater groups in Juba overwhelmingly requested additional training in theater for peacebuilding in order to prepare themselves to perform plays for that purpose. The Morning Star report captures participants' feedback that, "What has happened here should happen in every community in our country. We request Morning Star to train us so that we can use theater to reach many people with this message" (Morning Star, 2016, p. 4). It was not surprising that participants appreciated theater's potential to reach more people with peacebuilding messages. After all, they all

belonged to theater groups and were already engaged in promoting peaceful coexistent in South Sudan.

Morning Star leadership then worked with SSTO to select a group of 10 individuals from the 25 to receive further training in writing peacebuilding scripts. The limit to 10 was imposed by budget constraints. At that time (2016), there was active violence in South Sudan; hence, the individuals were flown to Nairobi, Kenya for training. The 10 SSTO actors were trained as trainers, ensuring that they would be able to train others, which they eventually did when the theater initiative was extended to other parts of the country. Following the training in peacebuilding and script writing, the individuals prepared theater plays and performed in six different locations, all in Juba, the capital of South Sudan. In total, 24 performances were conducted during the pilot activity, reaching approximately 3,000 people between February and May 2017 (Morning Star, 2017, p. 3).

The Morning Star Forum Theater at State Level—Reaching the Grassroots

Following the Morning Star pilot event in Juba in 2017, program leaders and the SSTO received requests from other states in South Sudan for similar performances (Morning Star, 2017). As a result, the Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding was extended to five additional states, which include Jonglei, Central Equatoria, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile, Western Bahr el Ghazal, and Unity. Figure 1.4 shows locations where the Morning Star Forum Theater events were organized.

Figure 1.4

Locations Where the Morning Star Theater Events Were Implemented
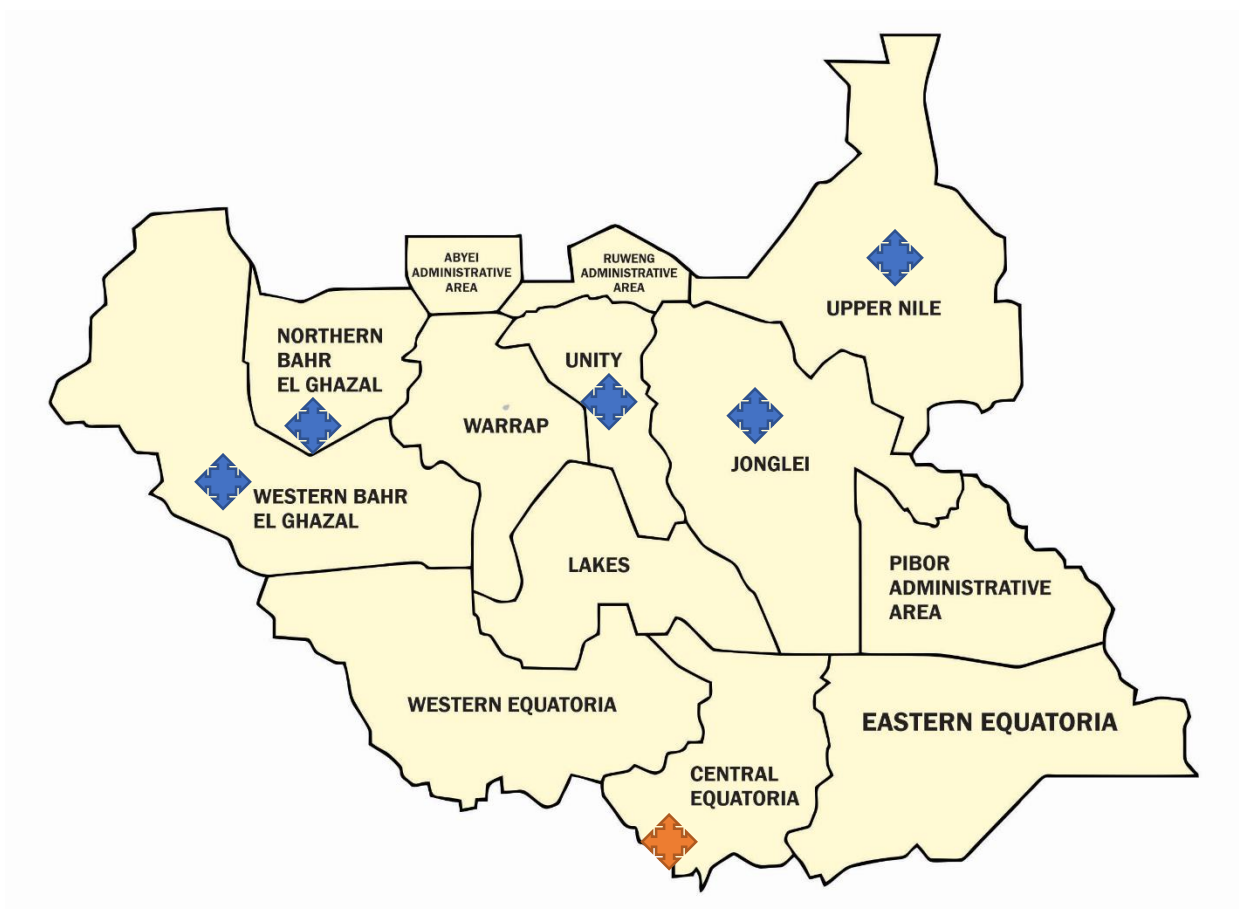
The locations were selected based on SSTO's field locations, which provided the capacity to mobilize, train, and implement the activity. Performances at state levels (◆) culminated in a national theater for peacebuilding festival, which took place in Juba (◆), South Sudan's capital in February 2019.

The 2019 national theater festival celebrated regional Forum Theater events and connected the various groups that had participated in the events at regional levels. Specifically, the festival brought together more than 80 individuals, involving both performers and individuals from the audience, drawn from all six states. In addition to state-based groups, the festival

attracted thousands of participants from Juba, representing about a dozen tribes including the Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Murle, Bari, Kuku, Balanda, Jur, Lokoya, Latoka, Madi, and Khresh. Different theater groups from the different regions performed to hundreds of a mixed group audience with the majority of people from Juba. Since Juba is the country's capital city, residents were also ethnically diverse. This was a scenario that was and still is hard to come by in other parts of the country.

As was the case during the pilot activity, the national theater festival garnered praise. Morning Star (2019, p.16) highlights some of the positive reactions from participants:

Achen from Juba, *"*This Theater on peace should be spread to all the states especially the greater Jonglei State covering Bor, Pibor and Akobo. Due to the going conflict, people hate each other because of trauma. They need this knowledge."

Dominic from Wau, "This theater event has changed me. I have been reconnected to others and I also say let the Morning Star continue to extend this to other parts of the country."

A participant from Bor, "This is my first time to meet with people from Pibor. I did not know that they were good people. All I have heard about them is that they are our enemies."

Yet another participant from Aweil, "This festival has helped me to connect with people from all parts of our country."

Such participants' testimonies challenge the narrative of concern expressed by event organizers that bringing people from various tribes together could lead to violence. For example, the SSTO leadership was so conscious of the potential that fights might break out that one planner suggested, "The SSTO staff have to stay at the venue where regional-based groups shall reside to ensure that no fighting erupts between the different groups" (Morning Star, 2019, p. 12). Yet, during and after the theater events, participants shared their positive attitudes towards

each other as evidenced from the quotes above. The organizers of the event could easily claim that the event was a success, especially having registered more than 3,000 in attendance at the events.

Yet, apart from these sporadic testimonies taken at the time, there was little evidence about the nature of participants' interactions or if the experiences positively impacted their perceptions about those from other tribes after the events were over. In essence, we knew little about whether relationships were built across warring tribes. Sentama (2009) emphasized the need for peacebuilding interventions to lead to the recognition of "the other" as human beings. While the ability to bring together warring tribes in a single event when most of these tribes are in conflict with one another is itself a true success, little is known about whether connections created during the event translated into interpersonal growth and relationship building that promotes peace at the individual and community level during or after the theater events.

As some scholars allude, the debate over the role of the theater is perhaps "an obsession among theater and literary scholars to prove, outside the attempts … that theater, whether in the literary or performative form has a contribution to make to the development of the society" (Akashoro et al., 2010, p. 1). There is limited research and evaluation that provides real evidence of their effectiveness. The current debate lacks supporting evidence, such as the voices and experiences of the people who benefit from these events themselves. This is what sparked the curiosity behind this study.

The Purpose of the Study

This study explores the role of theater for peacebuilding in post-conflict settings by capturing and analyzing the narratives of participants, specifically those involved in the Morning Star Forum Theater events in South Sudan. The primary interest is to examine if, and in what

ways, participating in the Forum Theater events fostered interpersonal relationships over the short- and long-term with "the other," given that relationship-building is considered a key element in peacebuilding. To be clear, the term "participating" here simply referrs to having attended the Morning Star Forum Theater events.

Research Questions

The overarching research question of the current study was to explore in what ways did participation in the Morning Star Forum Theater impact participants' interpersonal growth and relationship-building across conflicting communities in South Sudan? The research question was explored using the following sub-questions:

- What were participants' experiences of connecting and working with "the other" during the theater event and their reflections on those experiences?

- What were participants' experiences of connecting and working with "the other" after the theater event and their reflections on those experiences?

- What were participants' reflections on the ways in which the theater event impacted their personal growth regarding relationship building at community level with those from other communities?

Research Method and Design

The study employed narrative inquiry to collect voices of the lived experiences among the people who were involved in theater events for peacebuilding. Specifically, the research used an exploratory narrative approach because of its ability to enable the exploration of a connection between individuals' experiences and the event, and how that event impacted relationship building. According to Sandelowski (1991), exploratory narrative research's focus is to explore

the connection between events through a causal lens, which is also recommended by Clandinin and Connelly (2000).

Therefore, the exploratory narrative approach was chosen because the study aimed at exploring how participating in theater events for peacebuilding impacted individuals' growth and relationships with those from other groups with outstanding conflicts. Participants were drawn from individuals who participated in the Morning Star Forum Theater events for peacebuilding implemented in various communities in South Sudan. The intent was to illuminate perspectives of the participants rather than theater funders or producers. This would lead to a new perspective in understanding the role of theater in peacebuilding because the debates by peacebuilding practitioners and scholars are powerful, but lack the voices of the people targeted by these events.

Significance of the Study

The study intends to contribute to the current debate about the role of theater in peacebuilding processes, specifically how theater might impact relationship-building between individuals from communities with a history of conflicts. While there is a convincing argument about the essential role theater can play in peacebuilding on one hand (Mtukwa, 2015; Zelizer, 2003), there is also an argument that perhaps the presumed essential role is overblown. Fairey (2018) and Akashoro et al. (2010), for example, express their skepticism of relying on outcomes generated from assessments done by funders and implementers on the effectiveness of theater in peacebuilding interventions. Funders expect tangible results in peacebuilding work such as reconciliations, yet theater or other forms of the arts may just be appropriate to initiate reconciliation processes, which normally take longer to achieve than the actual reconciliation expected by donors. Analyzing theater events to specifically conform to donor expectations

complicates and delimits the possible insights and reinforces the determinants of the role of theater in peacebuilding by donors.

The study did not inquire from theater groups or peacebuilding practitioners who have used theater, or funders. But rather, the study interviewed individuals who were targeted by theater events. The research intended to contribute to the current debate by lifting-up the voices from direct beneficiaries of theater for peacebuilding events. This is because much of the available information on the role of theater in peacebuilding exclude participants' own voices (Fairey, 2018). In addition, the study's findings might influence the peacebuilding practice in the sense that practitioners will gain additional insights from the reflections of participants themselves to inform peacebuilding strategies.

Researcher's Positionality

I am a Ugandan woman who grew up in a country divided across tribal lines. As a young person, I witnessed and experienced tensions between northern Uganda and other parts of the country especially western and southern Uganda. At that time (1986–2006), northern Uganda was under attack by the Lords' Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel group which brutalized northern Uganda for almost two decades (1986 to 2006). With Joseph Kony as its leader, the LRA was opposing the government of Uganda at the time. The rebels conducted violent acts against civilians that led to displacements, killings, rapes, and abductions, among others. The abductions targeted mainly children, who were also the majority of those in the rebel group (Lomo & Hovil, 2004). The president of Uganda at the time was from western Uganda, the same region that I am from. Coming from the same region with the regime in power was enough to be considered part of the government, hence part of the "enemy." Although I was not living in the conflict area, I was affected by the conflict.

From 2008 to 2012, I became involved in peacebuilding processes for the rebuilding of northern Uganda. At that time, I was working with United States Peace Corps' Uganda program and was tasked to develop a psycho-social strategy for US Peace Corps' volunteers and local communities to address the traumatic impacts of the war. The strategy I designed led to the creation of peace camps which were implemented annually from 2009 until 2012, the same year I left my position at Peace Corps. After Peace Corps, I went to South Sudan immediately after the 2013 violence to work in the peacebuilding sector, specifically the Morning Star Program. I was a program director, responsible for all aspects of the Program, including technical and operational.

The Researcher's Role in the Leadership of Morning Star Program

As a program director, the researcher provided the overall leadership and technical support required to implement a nationwide program on trauma awareness and peacebuilding. This involved the development of an effective strategy for the nationwide program, while designing the technical piece. The strategy had to ensure a relevant program for the South Sudan context. Working with the team, we turned the initial activities into a pilot phase. Pilot phase activities were taking place in 10 communities and were being led by volunteers. The volunteers had been trained. The leadership before me had translated the materials into eight local languages hoping that the information would be easily accessed. The translated versions were also put to test during the pilot. In addition, community sessions were designed to happen for two hours, once a week, for 12 weeks.

Learning from the pilot, indeed the program was appreciated by all, including those who had participated in it and those who had simply heard about it. That was good news, because then we knew we had a relevant service. However, the volunteers always prioritized their other

work over the Morning Star activities. Moreover, the translations were disputed in almost all communities. For example, the Dinka versions were not accepted in Upper Nile or Bor, but may have been accepted in Aweil. Clearly, one language is spoken, written, and understood differently even in one tribe. The materials were too many and confusing to the audience. These included but were not limited to the facilitators' handbook, participants' handbook, posters, and visual cards. We learned that most participants were not able to read or write, yet they wanted materials and would then give them to their children or the friends who could read. The two-hour session per week for 12 weeks was also problematic. People moved and were difficult to locate, others were unable to commit for 12 weeks, while others claimed that the period was too long to keep the learning connected.

Learning from the Morning Star Pilot

These identified challenges meant that the program strategy needed rethinking. Among the many changes, these were key: (a) opting for fulltime trainers, (b) positioning the trainers in similar locations with other VISTAS programs as much as we could or identified active partners to host the trainers, (c) keeping a few but relevant materials and in English, (d) having the materials in English meant that we had to train the trainers well enough so that they could train in their local languages, and (e) designing the curriculum that would be delivered in five consecutive days.

It was time to select the trainers. The ideal way would be to select both men and women from all the communities where the program was operating. The program secured a pair of trainers for each location, but these were all men. Among the 100 plus applications, only eight were women, only three of these were invited for interviews, and only one woman was hired. Developing the leadership team also meant training the team in the technical aspects of the

model plus the necessary skills for delivery. I designed a Training of Trainers that provided knowledge on all aspects of STAR and facilitation skills.

In order to be selected as a Morning Star trainer, individuals needed to have attended and passed the entire Training of Trainers (STAR and facilitation skills). The program target was to hire 24 trainers to be paired-up and assigned to 11 project locations. A total of 26 individuals attended the Training and out of 26, only 13 were recruited, and of these 13, only one was a woman. The Training of Trainers was also used as forum to identify locally accepted activities for the curriculum. The low representation of women among candidates is a common scenario in most formal activities and it is associated with lack of prioritizing women's education in South Sudan.

There were a number of built-in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure the success and inform the course of action for the program. These included quarterly and annual reviews, activity reports, and strategic review sessions, among others. We increased the number of trainers from 13 to 24, expanded the coverage from seven locations to 12, and developed three more specialized curricula for unique groups; specifically for youth and children, primary health workers, and peer support groups.

Although the Morning Star Program as a whole is not a subject of this research, it is important to note that the program ran smoothly and was appreciated by several members of the communities surrounding its locations. As a director, I was happy about the success, which I attributed to the program team, management, the people of South Sudan, and definitely the funder. However, one day, a colleague introduced me in a partners' meeting, and this is what he said, "She is the woman behind the Morning Star Program. … We did not know what to do with

it until she came on board." At the time I left my position, I was known as "Mama Morning Star," a nickname I take with delight.

All was good, but then we were aware that the funding cycle was coming to an end. The funder's priorities were changing. Yet the whole country wanted to have a taste of the service. In one of the program reviews, a suggestion was made to introduce complementary tools such as theater. Therefore, we introduced the Morning Star Forum Theater as a complementary tool. This is the activity explored under the present research. Specific steps taken to design the Morning Star Forum Theater events were explained in the preceding sections.

It is important to note that I was not directly involved in the grass roots implementation of program activities, including the theater events. While I had technical expertise, I would not do everything alone. I had a competent team, and I drew support from different professionals from across the globe. My role ended in 2019 when the Morning Star program was discontinued.

Therefore, my interest in the peacebuilding sector can be traced from my experiences as a victim of tribal rage, as a citizen of this war-torn region, as a practitioner, and as a scholar. My academic background is in the social sciences, specifically psychology, peace studies, and conflict transformation. From the practitioner's point of view, I have been part of peacebuilding processes mainly conducted through the conventional approaches such as trainings, workshops, and peace dialogues. However, when Morning Star introduced theater as a methodology for peacebuilding, the event attracted much attention and interest, which prompted my curiosity about the impact—short- and long-term—on peacebuilding processes. This has led to my own curiosity as a scholar, to explore and share what participants experienced. Given my prior relationship with the participants, I have access to them and believe that my positionality has

been advantageous both in opening the opportunities for interviews and in applying the insider knowledge to understand the context.

Dissertation Structure

Chapter I is the introduction of the study and presents the issue that was addressed and the study's purpose, limitations of the study, the context of the South Sudan, and foreshadows the literature on peacebuilding and relationship building, the arts and peacebuilding, specifically theater, and ends by presenting the researcher's positionality.

Chapter II critically reviews the literature related to peacebuilding, with a specific focus on the arts and peacebuilding, theater and peacebuilding, and on relationship building as part of the peacebuilding processes in post-conflict settings.

Chapter III discusses the research methodology of narrative inquiry that was used to explore the proposed study's question. This section also covers the choice of narrative inquiry as a suitable methodology and provides details of the research design. The ethical challenges will also be addressed.

Chapter IV presents the findings from the analysis of the interviews conducted. The study employed a structural analysis in order to explore all aspects of participants' stories emerging from participating in the Morning Star Theater events.

Chapter V examines the findings in the context of how they contribute to the understanding of the role of theater in relationship building in the peacebuilding process, with implications to both practitioners and scholars.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Theater has been widely acknowledged and applauded as a productive and essential approach in peacebuilding processes (Sullivan, et al. 2007; Fairey, 2018; Premaratna, 2015; Schrowange, 2015; Warheit, 2017). The socially engaged Theater of the Oppressed (TO), specifically Forum Theater, is considered a way to create a dialogue "within the individual and among the audience through the very structure of the play" (Premaratna, 2015, pp. 69–70), making the technique suitable for peacebuilding. Although literature suggests an increased interest in the use of theater in the field of peacebuilding processes as complementary tools to traditional peacebuilding approaches (Akashoro et al., 2010; Bergh & Sloboda, 2014; Fairey, 2018; Khuzwayo, 2013; Malpede, 1999; Reich, 2012; Zelizer, 2003), a critical review of the literature equally reveals a dearth of research involving the perceptions, experiences, and voices of the participants themselves, the community members, during and after the theater activity. Yet, they (theater participants) are the supposed beneficiaries of the peacebuilding processes. That their stories and experiences are visibly absent from the literature illustrates a compelling need for research to understand the impact of theater in peacebuilding among the community members affected by the conflict.

This Chapter critically reviews literature on the role of theater in peacebuilding with an emphasis on its potentiality to help restore and reimagine relationships among parties in conflict. The Chapter is presented under four sections: (a) peacebuilding processes in general, (b) peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan, (c) the nature of theater, specifically Forum Theater, and (d) theater for peacebuilding—a forum for relationship building in post-conflict settings. The conclusion of the Chapter articulates the gaps, which are the basis for this proposed study.

Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Settings

The study aims at understanding the role of theater for peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. In order to understand the role of theater, it is first of all important to understand the term peacebuilding itself. This section examines the concept, the origin, the features, the debate about the significance of peacebuilding in post-conflict settings, and the debate about decolonizing peace.

Peacebuilding is described as organized efforts and processes aimed at rebuilding and transforming societies after the ruins of war or violence (Schirch, 2013; Lederach, 1997). In their work on improving the effectiveness of peacebuilding at all levels, from community-based projects to international policies, by linking conflict assessment to self-assessment and theories of change, Schirch (2013) describes peacebuilding as "a wide range of efforts by different actors to address the immediate impact and the root causes of conflict before, during and after violent conflict occurs" (p. 7). Schirch's (2013) definition builds on Lederach's (1997) prior work, which considers peacebuilding as a concept that involves processes, approaches, and intangible dimensions such as relationships, emotions, communications, identity, values, and culture after a violent conflict. Both Lederach (1997) and Schirch (2013) build on Johan Galtung's (1976) foundational theoretical work in peace studies.

Earlier on, Galtung (1976) introduced the concept of positive and negative peace, arguing that peace and violence go beyond an actor-oriented explanation to incorporate a structure orientation. According to Galtung, negative peace is simply the absence of direct violence, while positive peace involves the absence of both direct and indirect violence and enables individuals in conflict to be integrated. Galtung (1976) argued that:

> Violence exists because of the structure and the actors merely carry out that violence … the extended definition of violence leads to an extended definition of peace, where peace is not merely the absence of direct violence … but also the absence of structural violence as well as the cultural violence. (p. 298)

Galtung's (1990) work further extends the explanation of violence to include cultural violence, with the argument that cultural violence has the potential to cause structural violence, which can lead to direct violence. His work had a major influence on the debate about peace in post-conflict settings. For instance, Herath (2016) observed:

> Peace is best understood through the concepts of 'positive peace' and 'negative peace' Negative peace is the absence of violence or the fear of violence; it is the definition of peace that we use in the Global Peace Index (GPI). Positive peace is the attitudes, institutions and structures, that when strengthened, lead to peaceful societies. (p. 106)

The implication to the extended understanding of positive and negative peace points to the need to expand the notion of peacebuilding processes to focus on both short- and long-term goals, in order to address the direct and indirect forms of violence. The short-term view of peacebuilding aims at addressing the immediate short-term goals such as the cessation of violence as a necessary precondition, although not considered sufficient to achieve lasting peace (Ropers, 2002; Waldman, 2009). Lasting peace can be achieved through the long-term view of peacebuilding processes, which not only stop the violence, but also address the impact of the violence and empower communities to enhance sustainable peacebuilding initiatives (Lederach, 1997; Ropers, 2002; Waldman, 2009).

In addition to addressing direct violence, peacebuilding focuses on attitudes, institutions, and structures that, when supported, lead to peaceful societies, hence resulting in positive peace (Herath, 2016). Such a holistic view of peacebuilding makes the concept essential in addressing post-conflict issues because of the focus on both the short- and long-term view (negative and positive peace).

Furthermore, Sentama (2009) claims that the concept of peacebuilding gained significant international momentum in the 1990s, with the strategic aim to provide countries emerging from violence with the relevant skills and resources required to rebuild and prevent future violence (Sentama, 2009; Wennmann, 2012). Since World War II, violent conflicts and wars have affected almost a third of the world's population, with most of these taking place in the least developed countries (Waldman, 2009). The pursuit for long-term solutions to mitigate the impact of wars, rebuild the affected societies, and prevent similar occurrences in the future has led to the increased attention to and expansion of conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts, with the latter offering more promising results (Lederach, 1997; Schirch, 2013; Sentama, 2009; Waldman, 2009).

For instance, the former UN-Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali (Boutros-Ghali, 1992), proposed a new framework to manage international conflicts, while suggesting the use of innovative concepts, notably peacebuilding. As an innovative concept, peacebuilding would help to identify the root causes and build structures in post-conflict settings in order to avoid a relapse into conflicts in the future. Since the former UN Secretary General's proposal, peacebuilding processes have attracted global attention in places where violent conflicts have taken place (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2012; Sentama, 2009; Wennmann, 2012).

The desire to engage a peacebuilding approach in post-conflict settings came after the realization that the processes that prevailed before, such as conflict resolution, were not comprehensive enough in addressing issues of a society that has undergone conflicts (Lederach, 1997; Sentama, 2009; Waldman, 2009). While conflict resolution processes address conflict issues per se, they tend to ignore the preventative aspect of the conflicts. Instead, they focus on

supporting "institutions which can manage conflicts in a non-violent way. Conflict resolution

processes are based on the understanding that conflict is a normal part of human social

interaction" (Waldman, 2009, p. 4).

Peacebuilding processes, on the other hand, focus on both the immediate and the

preventative, for instance, leading to security in the short-term, while facilitating reconciliation

in the long-term (Lederach, 1997; Sentama, 2009). The argument is that peacebuilding processes

enable both security and reconciliation, because they are transformative in nature and empower

the people. Transformative and empowering are important aspects towards fostering positive

relationships among conflicting parties and building local capacities (Waldman, 2009).

There is yet an emerging debate problematizing some of the peacebuilding scholarship

and practice, labeling it as "liberal peace" (Fontan, 2012; Ghunta, 2018; Guerra, 2019; Mac

Ginty & Richmond, 2013). Guerra (2019) described liberal peace as:

> The hegemonic international narrative about peace and pacification processes, which
> claims that democratization and economic liberalization are the central premises and
> objectives in order to build sustainable peace in post conflict scenarios. (p. 3)

Guerra (2019) agreed with the above when they referred to liberal peace as "an attempt to unite

the world under a hegemonic system that replicated liberal institutions, norms, political, social

and economic systems" (Ghunta, 2018, p. 1), while Fontan (2012) refers to liberal peace as "the

linear, mechanistic building of peace as an aggregation of parts built through a liberal

framework" (p. 30). This liberal peace has been criticized for its role in propagating the colonial

mindset over the populations served. Instead of liberal peace, it is fundamentally important to

embrace the "local turn," which Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013) explained as:

> The range of locally based agencies present within a conflict and post-conflict
> environment, some of which are aimed at identifying and creating the necessary
> processes for peace, perhaps with or without international help, and framed in a way in
> which legitimacy in local and international terms converges. This peace is normally an
> everyday and emancipatory type, in which authority, rights, redistribution and legitimacy

are slowly rethought, and are reflected in institutional and international architecture. (p. 769)

Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013) made the observation in their endeavor to stress the critical position the local plays in the peacebuilding process, which cannot and should not be disregarded.

In fact, building local capacities has always been pointed out as one of the key features of peacebuilding (Lederach, 1997; Schirch, 2013). Building of local capacity is key in facilitating lasting peace as it enables the involvement the people seeking peace, hence promoting local ownership (Lederach, 1997; UNPSO, 2010). The United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (UNPSO) suggests that local ownership is one of the essential features of building long-lasting peace in a post-conflict setting. UNPSO (2010) places the peacebuilding responsibility within the local population, arguing that donors and development partners should aim at supporting local structures. In most post-conflict settings, international agencies often take the lead. Yet, engaging local stakeholders in meaningful participation has been pointed out as a key aspect in promoting ownership and sustainable peace.

The form for local involvement, according to Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013), is not the superficial type, where the liberal peacebuilders are involving a few individuals in the process, ignoring the fact that most of these individuals have positions and interests to play. The local turn, so to say, is to acknowledge that:

> Peace building, state building and development should support their subjects rather than define them. It sheds a different perspective on the invisible melding that has occurred of colonial attitudes, post colonialism and cold war stabilization of states, peace keeping, peacemaking, diplomacy, development and military intervention. (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013, p. 769)

The debate places emphasis on peacebuilding processes that embrace the local turn by recognizing that the populations served can and should be part of the rebuilding of their societies.

Processes that facilitate locally owned paths to peace directly respond to the call to approach

peacebuilding "from below." As Oda (2007) notes, peacebuilding from the grassroots is about:

> Utilizing various resources to create amicable relationships with national, ethnic, racial, religious or political others and to build a social structure which is able to promote a sustainable peace. The word 'non-state actors' means in this context neither transnational corporations nor big international NGOs, but local grassroots members of the affected society or civil society actors. (p. 7)

The strength of the locally owned approaches in post-conflict peacebuilding is vested in their

ability to allow local leadership and local initiatives instead of foreign-imposed solutions.

Fontan (2012) reminds peacebuilding practitioners to stop "applying one-size-fits all

solutions to Africa's woes, instead, identify and customize actions according to local realities"

(p. 33). The author challenged the notion of having planners based in different contexts and other

parts of the world, while claiming to have all the necessary skills and knowledge to plan

peacebuilding interventions in post-conflict settings. Failure to adapt peacebuilding plans to the

local context risks causing more harm than good as argued by Anderson (1999) in her work

about how aid and conflict interact. Anderson (1999) states that aid given to build peace

sometimes does both the building of peace as well as the supporting of conflicts. The latter

(supporting the conflicts) usually comes out when the local people are disengaged from the

peacebuilding processes. It is a necessity for agencies and individuals leading such projects to try

to avoid the risk of reinforcing or creating further conflicts through their work. One way to do

this is to ensure that peacebuilding processes are not simply tailor made, but are locally owned

and appropriate.

In addition, several peacebuilding scholars (Lederach, 1997; Llamazares, 2005;

Waldman, 2009) have suggested three different levels at which peacebuilding efforts should be

directed. Level One encompasses the official domain, in which international diplomacy and

government agencies operate. The official level often produces the widely touted peace

agreements between parties, often mediated by third parties with little input from the local population. The outcomes of such processes are difficult to sustain because they are disconnected from the population. Instead, Lederach (1997) suggests the need for the official level to be conducted alongside the other two levels, the middle and grassroots tiers. Level Two emphasizes the involvement of local leaders as key actors, whose positions are to serve as intermediaries between the elite tier and grassroots levels, including all sectors of society (Llamazares, 2005). Lastly, Level Three focuses on grassroots peacebuilding processes that promote the involvement of local communities, both as individuals and organized groups as key actors in the peacebuilding efforts (Lederach, 1997).

Based on the author's (Lederach, 1997) integrated model, building peace in a country after reigns of war requires an extensive view into the past and the present, and involves a wide range of actors at various levels of the society. Lederach (1997) argues that peacebuilding practitioners must work to transform systems of conflict at individual, community, organization, national, and international levels. As well, it is fundamentally important to review the causes of conflict through its stages, working from the past to address the root causes, its impact on identity, and working on the current issues related to the conflict, while focusing on the future. Lederach's (1997) peacebuilding model underscores the complexity of and the relationship between systems targeted by peacebuilding processes in post-conflict settings.

Fontan (2012) too explains these complexities as they introduced the concept of a "panarchy of living systems" to address "the sustainability of complex adaptive systems in relation to the interactions they maintain among internal and external factors" (p. 101). According to the author, individuals in post-conflict environments are in constant interactions with "one another, and embedded in the village, district and state contexts" (Fontan, 2012, p.

102). In recognition of this complex nature of relationships, Fontan (2012) advocates for decolonizing peace approaches that promote sustainability, which comes "in as the capacity to create, test and maintain the adaptive capability of the system" (Fontan, 2012, p. 105). Such approaches appreciate and recognize the role of networking, community engagements, and relationship building, among others.

Regardless of which level is chosen as the primary focus to intervene, it should be complemented by actions at all other levels in a holistic and integrated manner to mutually reinforce the peacebuilding process (Lederach, 1997). Achieving a holistic and integrated peacebuilding process requires targeting four essential categories: the personal, interpersonal, structural, and cultural (Lederach, 1995; Waldman, 2009). It is the interpersonal category that is central to this study, hence a need to elaborate on it further.

Long-term conflicts divide societies, ultimately requiring peacebuilding processes that pay attention to building and restoring relationships to bridge the divides (Kumar, 1998; Sentama, 2009). The interpersonal category represents the changes in relationships and interactions and, according to Waldman (2009), it is concerned with:

> Relational affectivity, power and interdependence, as well as the expressive, communicative, and interactive aspects of conflict. The relational dimension refers to how the patterns of communication and interaction are affected by conflict, including the ways people perceive, what they desire, what they pursue, and how they structure their relationships. It involves questions such as: how close do people wish to be in their relationships; how will they use, build and share power; how do they perceive themselves, each other and their expectations; what are their hopes and fears for their lives and relationships, their patterns of communication and interaction? (pp. 16–17)

Building interpersonal relationships as a core element of peacebuilding requires a focus on addressing the causes and the effects of conflict-related hostilities through restoration of damaged relationships, as well as the building of new relationships (Waldman, 2009). As

explained in the subsequent section, theater is viewed as an appropriate tool to foster connections, thus supporting relationship building.

One of the costs of conflicts is the "damage done to human relationships. Such conflicts strain interpersonal relationships and make it difficult for conflicting parties to recognize that they share common needs and goals … parties in conflict tend to form negative stereotypes and enemy images of each other" (Sentama, 2009, p. 28). Kumar (1998) suggests that to achieve long-term peace, post-conflict peacebuilding efforts must aim at restoring interpersonal and inter-communal relations. While Ryan (1990) observes that failure to attend to the interpersonal relationship aspect of peacebuilding obstructs achieving long-term peace. Peacebuilding scholars' insistence on the need to pay attention to the relationship domain during peacebuilding processes clearly situates relationships—or the lack thereof—at the center of the conflict, and therefore peacebuilding.

In summary, it is clear that the concept of peacebuilding and its application has expanded from its earliest approaches, which were primarily reactive and limited to stopping violence, to processes that are far more proactive and comprehensive. As Waldman (2009) argues, peacebuilding is no longer restricted to settings after conflicts subside but is now applied to all phases of the conflict cycle, including prevention. The expanded nature of peacebuilding is directed to more than just reducing violence, but also to building local capacities and restoring or building relationships (Lederach, 1997; Schirch, 2013). While all three domains (reducing violence, building local capacities, and building relationships) are crucial in rebuilding a society torn apart by conflict, this study is focusing on one—relationship building through the use of Forum Theater as a viable tool for relationship building as part of the peacebuilding process. Literature related to theater and relationship building in peacebuilding processes is also presented

under this chapter. However, before that, let us examine the specific peacebuilding efforts in

South Sudan, a setting where this study is based.

Peacebuilding Efforts in South Sudan

The preceding section examined literature on peacebuilding in post-conflict settings in

general with the aim of understanding the concept (Lederach, 1997; Schirch, 2013), the debate

about its significance (Waldman, 2009), and the crucial role the relationship-building domain

occupies (Lubit & Reda, 2012). This section provides an overview of peacebuilding efforts in

South Sudan and how these efforts connect to the proposed study.

While presenting the context of the study in Chapter I, it was clear that the current

conflicts in South Sudan can be traced as far back as the Colonial Era (1898–1956), mainly

between the North and South Sudan (Kumsa, 2017). Even after the 2011 successful separation

from the North, the newly established country of South Sudan remains immersed in conflicts,

mainly showing up through ethnic divides (Shulika & Okeke-Uzodike, 2013). The persistent

tension between groups in South Sudan proves that besides the civil war between the North and

South, there were otherwise identity or power struggles within the groups.

Nonetheless, peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan are as old as the conflicts themselves.

The peacebuilding efforts over time have had tangible outcomes such as the Addis Ababa

Agreement of 1972, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005, Independence status

in 2011, the Addis Ababa Peace Accord of 2015, and the more recent Revitalized Agreement on

the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in 2017. When considered along

Lederach's (1997) various levels at which peacebuilding processes should be directed (top,

middle, and lower), it is clear that these strides largely represent the top level. While it is possible

that some of these top tier achievements are celebrated at the grassroots level, there is scant

evidence that shows they have translated into peace, since various communities continue to experience conflicts (SaferWorld, 2019).

Additional peacebuilding efforts targeting both the middle and grassroots levels have also taken place in South Sudan (Bennet et al., 2010; Reeve, 2012; SaferWorld, 2019). According to SaferWorld (2019), peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan are said to have registered some progress towards achieving peace. For example, "In Yambio, religious institutions have engaged communities—including armed youth—in dialogues, peace conferences and trust-building between the state government and those who joined the rebellion, encouraging the latter to pursue peaceful solutions to their grievances" (SaferWorld, 2019, p. 1). Reeve (2012) notes that several peacebuilding processes have taken place in South Sudan at all levels, although the majority of these efforts have been organized in form of peace conferences. While there is nothing wrong with peace conferences and dialogues, peacebuilding scholars (Lederach, 1997; Schirch, 2013) argue that building long-lasting peace in post-conflict settings requires diversified approaches.

Furthermore, multiple donors have worked in South Sudan and collaborated with a wide range of actors, all focusing on the peacebuilding process of the country (Bennet et al., 2010). These actors range from international agencies to local organizations. The international agencies include the United Nations, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and Foreign Missions in South Sudan. Other actors include regional bodies such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a body comprised of seven countries in the Horn of Africa (SaferWorld, 2019). In addition, the number of international and national NGOs involved in the South Sudanese peacebuilding and humanitarian response has increased substantially since the outbreak of the 2013 violence (Moro et al., 2020). The authors note:

> Humanitarian response also grew significantly during this time; for example, the number of South Sudanese NGOs included in the UN-led HRP increased from 40 in 2016 to 143 in 2020. The number of South Sudanese NGOs registered with the South Sudan NGO Forum also increased from 74 in 2011 to 242 in 2015 and 263 in 2019. (Moro et al., 2020, p. 20)

While the number of local NGOs has increased substantially, the INGOs continue to dominate the peacebuilding sector in South Sudan. The dominance of INGOs themselves is not a problem, however, there is need to engage with local organizations in meaningful processes, thus building local capacities and promoting local ownership, both of which are important elements of building lasting peace.

Staying within this broad view of actors, peacebuilding processes in South Sudan are controlled by different agencies and these include international agencies, African national governments, as well as private contractors. Each of these actors has a different mandate from another.

> The UN mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) has responsibility for peacekeeping … The UN Development Programme (UNDP) provides extensive support in the security sector … The African Union provides mediation … Regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) provides very limited input, including conflict early warning. Private development contractors compete with or complement INGOs in delivering development and stabilization programs for international donors. Notable examples are AECOM, contractor for the South Sudan Transition Initiative of the United States Agency for International Development. (Reeve, 2012, p. 75)

The presence of several agencies is also a sign of commitment on the side of the Sudanese people, as well as external well-wishers. It is within this broad view of actors and wide range of peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan, that the USAID in collaboration with an international development contractor established the Viable Support to Transition and Stability (VISTAS) project, which was implemented by Architecture, Engineering, Consulting, Operations, and Maintenance (AECOM), a contractor for the USAID. The Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding, which is the focus of this study, was part of the VISTAS project.

The significant presence of international agencies is considered a positive peacebuilding effort, because these agencies provide funding for a wide range of peacebuilding processes. However, despite having multiple actors, Reeve (2012) suggests that peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan were ineffective and that "the support provided by multiple donors in 2005–2010 was often mistargeted" (p. 22). Reeve (2012) made the suggestion based on an assessment exercise on peace, conflict, and peacebuilding in South Sudan, specifically the dynamics surrounding several peacebuilding actors in the country and how they were likely to influence peace and development in the years following independence. The author concluded that the process of achieving peace is either slow or not effective.

In 2006, the Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies looked at conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities in South Sudan and pointed out substantial weaknesses in the effectiveness of program design and processes (Fafo Institute, 2006). Among the weaknesses highlighted, the report noted the poor coordination among INGOs in the peacebuilding sector. Moreover, Fontan (2012) claims that most of the funds intended to solve challenges in the least developed countries "seldom reach the people that desperately need it and instead feed the egos and budgets of international NGOs and workers" (p. 33).

In yet another review on the impact of donors' contributions towards peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan, a *Multi-donor Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding* was conducted in 2010. It determined:

> Community reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts have tended to be isolated events, rarely linked to national initiatives, and beset with problems of poor monitoring and follow-up. To some extent, international engagement has been guilty of poor preparation particularly with respect to fully understanding who the key players are, and what their motivations are in participating. (Bennet et al., 2010, p. xviii)

The authors' observation points out substantial gaps in the current peacebuilding efforts particularly the lack of follow-up to ascertain the impact of the various efforts being

implemented. Failure to integrate INGOs' peacebuilding efforts with national initiatives too undermines any possibilities of creating local ownership, which is essential in achieving peace.

Despite the many challenges listed above, it is important to acknowledge that there have been sporadic experiences of peace in some parts of South Sudan. For instance, Reeve (2012) observed that despite little evidence of sustained peace, there was "considerable difference in the degree of peace experienced in different states as well as strategies deployed. A few states, notably Northern and Western Bahr el-Ghazal and Central Equatoria, were characterized by a sustained absence of significant violent conflict" (Reeve, 2012, p. 8).

However, there is little evidence to suggest the achievement of peace. Moreover, Reeve's work was published in 2012, a year after 2011 when the country had secured its independence, an important landmark that was expected to usher in peace. During that period, the country's peacebuilding efforts were focused on addressing the conflict between Sudan and the South Sudan, but evidently with less attention to the internal conflicts that existed. Unfortunately, immediately after independence, the few states that had experienced relative peace were caught-up in the nationwide violent conflicts in 2013 and later in 2016.

Going back to Lederach's (1997) suggestion about the necessity to direct peacebuilding efforts on all the three different tiers, most peacebuilding interventions in South Sudan have been confined to the top tier through the use of limited approaches, notably high-level negotiations and peace dialogues. In most cases, peace dialogues are negotiated by the elites with minimal engagement with grassroots and local communities; thus, clearly neglecting the second and third tiers. The success of such interventions is unlikely because in addition to focusing on the top level, the interventions employ limited approaches. Considering the comprehensive nature of

peacebuilding, limiting the design to a single approach affects the level through which sustained peace can be achieved (Schirch, 2013).

A more recent report by SaferWorld (2019), an international organization working in the field of peacebuilding in South Sudan, revealed little success and minimal effectiveness of the many interventions. The observation was made during roundtable meetings on strengthening community safety and addressing peace challenges in South Sudan from 2017 to 2019. The round table meetings brought together several peacebuilding actors including "state-level and local authorities, heads of organized forces (military, police and national security), United Nations (UN) agencies, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, community members, religious leaders, and youth and women leaders" (SaferWorld, 2019, p. 1). Clearly, as evidenced by the list of actors, the round table meetings had representation at all tiers, hence the broad nature of the perspectives from the meetings. SaferWorld (2019) observed that:

> Ethnic divisions and tensions between groups are a major conflict driver and a hindrance to enduring peace and reconciliation among and between communities across South Sudan. Hate speech against other … including composing negative songs, calling names and posting derogatory statements on social media and other platforms …stereotyping in community meetings ... undermine trust-building among communities. (p. 10)

The International Crisis Group (2013) equally observed that South Sudan's main challenge is the ongoing conflicts between different ethnic groups. Therefore, among all the relevant societal domains, findings by SaferWorld (2019) and the International Crisis Group's (2013) observation underscore the need for peacebuilders in South Sudan to pay more attention to the relationships among the different ethnic groups. This (the need to pay attention to the relationship domain) links directly to the hoped outcome of the Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding, an intervention being investigated.

As indicated by several studies (Bennet et al., 2010; International Crisis Group, 2013; Reeves, 2012; SaferWorld, 2019), the current peace process in South Sudan is neither comprehensive nor guaranteed. Although it is equally important to acknowledge that building peace in a country with prolonged conflicts such as South Sudan is a challenging task. As UNPSO (2010) noted:

> Strengthening or rebuilding the foundations of a society that has been torn apart by conflict is not business as usual. Protracted conflict and violence leave behind not only physical destruction and institutional disarray, but also a torn social fabric characterized by mistrust, apprehension and enormous difficulties in even imagining the possibility of working together towards common goals. Sometimes the most scarce resource in a fractured society is not funding or institutional capacities: it is the sheer will to stay together. (p. 14)

The persistent ethnic tensions between the various tribes are an obstacle to achieving sustainable peace in South Sudan. The tribal divisions and tensions continue to fuel internal conflicts between communities, thus widening the gap in already stalled relationships. While all peacebuilding domains are crucial and still lacking in South Sudan, efforts should be put on addressing destructive behaviors in order to lay a foundation for better results in other domains. As emphasized by peacebuilding scholars (Lederach, 1997; Lubit & Reda, 2012; Schirch, 2005; Sentama, 2009), it is fundamental to restore broken relationships and build new ones between people from conflicting parties, in order to facilitate lasting peace.

In brief, the general assessment is that peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan have been minimally successful. While there have been some significant achievements such as the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005, the Addis Ababa Peace Accord of 2015, and the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) 2017, these strides have not translated to the grassroots level.

These strides fall largely under the orientation of liberal peace, which has been criticized because of its:

> focus on superficial issues and quick fixes or ideological goals with little regard for major structural matters or causes of conflict, or local everyday dynamics of peace. … and maintain a distance from everyday life that enables peace building and state building to operate as if there is no ethical responsibility for their consequences, unintended or otherwise. (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013, p. 768)

Moreover, little is known about their impact on Levels Two and Three, especially, and experiences of the people being targeted by these interventions. It is also clear that most of these interventions have tended to employ traditional approaches such as peace conferences, also aiming at making peace agreements at local levels. Yet scholars (Lederach, 1997; Llamazares, 2005; Schirch, 2013; Sentama, 2009) suggest that attaining lasting peace requires diverse approaches.

The point here is not to diminish all these peacebuilding efforts that have been put in place at various levels, but to demonstrate that peacebuilding in South Sudan is far from complete. Understanding the nature of peacebuilding processes and how they facilitate the will to stay together among conflicting parties, notably ethnic groups, can inform future peacebuilding designs. It is against this background of the existing tensions between ethnic groups that peacebuilding actors in South Sudan continue to search and explore the most appropriate interventions that can restore and/or build better relationships. Among these interventions was the Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding, which was fully described in Chapter I. Little is known, however, about its contribution towards relationship building during or after its intervention.

The Nature of Theater with a Focus on Forum Theater

This section provides a description of theater, specifically the nature of theater, to facilitate individual and societal change. Special emphasis is put to Forum Theater, which is the

focus for this study, analyzing the current debate about the role and use of Forum Theater in peacebuilding.

To begin with, theater is a form of the arts. Scholars (Fairey, 2018; McCarthy et al., 2001; Shank & Schirch, 2008) describe the arts as means of communication expressed in various forms. For example, Shank and Schirch (2008) describe the arts as an "expressive vehicle for communication … to include both ephemeral and more classical approaches and embrace the wide variety of forms including visual arts, literary arts, performance arts, and movement arts" (p. 218). McCarthy et al. (2001) posit that the arts encompass different forms including performing, media, visual, and the literary. These forms can be further subdivided; for example, the performing arts include dance, music, and theater, among others. The present study focuses on one form of performing arts, which is theater.

Theater can be described as an active engagement that facilitates dialogue between the performers and the audience, with the intent to highlight and address issues of common interests. This description is based on much existing literature (Boal, 1979; Conteh-Morgan, 1994; Idogho, 2013; McCarthy et al., 2001; Umenyilorah, 2014). For example, Idogho (2013) described "theater as a collaborative form of art which presents the experiences using live performances held in a physical space to the intended audience" (p. 232). The presentations are always in the form of gestures, speechs, songs, music, and dance. Boal (1979) described theater as "change and not a simple presentation of what exists" (p. 28), a description of action, which makes the tool essential in facilitating change. Umenyilorah (2014) described theater as "a form of art re-enactment of an event, which could either be real or imagined, and communicated to an audience through the medium in which the artist seeks to contact his audience" (p. 34). The event itself could be an integration of several kinds of media including music, dance, mime, and/or

sculpture, with emphasis on both voice and images of expression to the targeted audience. In their work that examined the trends affecting performing in America, McCarthy et al. (2001) described theater as collaborative processes that combine performances, words, voice, movement, and visual elements to express meaning. The authors emphasize that theater processes can be used in the examination and resolution of important societal issues through the presentation of interactions between people.

While theater may encompass many forms of art re-enactment such as storytelling, the focus of this study is theater as "a more formal and conscious activity ... that finds expression in a variety of performances" (Conteh-Morgan, 1994, p. 4). This likely excludes, for example, the work of the griots who were the custodians of the knowledge of their group's lineage and descendants as it exists in many African cultures. To clarify as well, the term theater is used interchangeably for drama and performance (Dean et al., 2006). Furthermore, some scholars refer to the more universal term, the arts, to include theater (Bergh & Sloboda, 2014; Shank & Schirch, 2008; Zelizer, 2003). Zelizer (2003), for example, talks about the role of arts in peacebuilding in Bosnia-Herzegovina to have included interventions such as "organizing hundreds of theater and music performances" (p. 62).

Even honing in further on the term, theater remains broad because it encompasses a variety of types (Boal, 1979; Green, 2017; McCarthy et al., 2001; Umenyilorah, 2014) including but not limited to "development theater, popular theater, community theater, intervention theater, theater for social change and Theater of the Oppressed" (Search for Common Ground, 2012, p. 6). It is important to note that this list of the forms of theater is not exhaustive as theater represents variety of forms. This study is focusing on Forum Theater, which is one technique/game within the larger category of Theater of the Oppressed (TO).

Theater of the Oppressed

Theater of the Oppressed (TO) was founded by Brazilian actor-director Augusto Boal (Coudray, 2017; Sullivan et al., 2007). The roots of the Theater of the Oppressed lie in Brazil's decolonial struggles during the late 1950s when Augusto Boal, as a director of the Sao Paulo *Teatro Arena,* revolutionized theater by writing and producing many plays aimed at freeing Brazilian theater from its European colonial roots (Coudray, 2017). Boal's mission was to promote local content while encouraging the participation of the local community. Augusto Boal had deep faith in the revolutionary power of theater to be change and make change. He used theater to highlight and redress societal issues of his time and many others have followed (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994).

To date, Theater of the Oppressed has been widely used to address issues of social change in many parts of the world (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994). Its expansive usage is attributed to its flexible nature that enables the users to adapt it to the local issues of social concern. Theater of the Oppressed does not profess to follow a singular model but "changes as it encounters new situations that demand it evolve to meet the specific challenges those situations present. It is in an endless search for dialogue that will enable people to have their say" (Gökdağ, 2014, p. 29). The adaptiveness of Theater of the Oppressed makes the approach suitable for decolonizing peacebuilding approaches while exploring multiple interpretations of the situation by all the parties involved, including those in post-conflict settings.

While Theater of the Oppressed was originally developed to address political issues such as a power dynamic utilizing monologue rather than dialogue (Sullivan et al., 2007), it subsequently evolved to address broader community issues incorporating dialogue and participation as way of motivating people, restoring hope, exploring and transforming the reality

in which they are living to bring about social change (Midha, 2010; Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994). Theater of the Oppressed uses individual stories while encouraging "spect-actors" to seek solutions that address the common good. Spect-actors are precisely what the unique term implies, an individual who is both spectator and actor. "Spect-actors are encouraged to see the commonality of what is taking place and to act on behalf of the others as well as herself" (MacDonald & Rachel, 2000, p. 3). By its nature, Theater of the Oppressed can be implemented in any community, regardless of the cultural background or setting, making it perfect to inspire local solutions to a local challenge. Clearly, Theater of the Oppressed approaches encourage active participation, listening, and expressing opinions and feelings while addressing the situation. The performance is done by both the performers and individuals from the audience. At the same time, the creation of the play is an ongoing play between the audience and the actors.

There are five different types or games of Theater of the Oppressed: Image Theater, Invisible Theater, Rainbow of Desire, Legislative Theater, and Forum Theater (Sullivan et al., 2007). *Image Theater* is a technique that highlights hidden truths in a society without words. Actors, for example, sculpt themselves for the audience to observe and initiate a dialogue of an issue. The second is *Invisible Theater,* which is performed in public spaces to generate spontaneous public dialogue about an issue without the audience's prior knowledge that the event has been planned and rehearsed. Invisible Theater nonetheless provokes the onlookers to voice their own opinions on social issues, such as racial injustice or gender discrimination. The *Rainbow of Desire* is another Theater of the Oppressed approach. It invites the sharing of stories by participants in order for the group to select one story with which to identify and put into the theater space. The fourth is *Legislative Theater* that dramatizes community concerns and then

suggests legislation and policy to address these concerns. This was practiced by Boal as a

member of the Rio City Council to mobilize citizens.

      The final approach of Theater of the Oppressed that is the focus for the current study, is

Forum Theater, in which performers present a dramatized situation based on a societal issue to

evoke emotional responses from the audience. However, it is important to note that the

differences between various forms of Theater of the Oppressed are not hard and fast because "the

kinds of theater share a purpose, the differences between them are less important than what is the

same in all—at least to an inquiry like this one, which begins from the common purpose and

works back to a classification of ways to achieve that purpose" (Woodruff, 2008, p. 2). In the

same vein, some of the following assessments of Forum Theater might well cut across other

forms of Theater of the Oppressed in general.

Forum Theater

      According to MacDonald and Rachel (2000):

> Forum Theater was developed as a way of taking theater from the stage to community, turning an ordinary person into an artist and performer, the spect-actor. During Forum Theater, sessions begin with exercises and games aimed at activating and connecting the five senses and engendering an atmosphere of fun and creativity. The objective of the session is to evolve a piece, or several pieces of theater derived from the experiences of the participants of which oppression or a problem is the focus. The structure of the piece must involve a Protagonist –the oppressed person who is defeated or frustrated by the Antagonist or oppressor, who, unlike the Protagonist, may be a multiple entity. The session is conducted by a facilitator who becomes the 'Joker' for the Forum, the enabler or mediator for the group. (p. 2)

During Forum Theater sessions, the audience not only observes but proactively contributes to the

situation by making suggestions and asking questions. During performances, actors are

occasionally replaced by those watching from the audience in an effort to offer alternative or

better solutions to the situation. The concept of spect-actors and not just spectators makes the

audience active participants of the event, as equal partners in finding solutions to their problems. This offers options to the actions of the protagonist and the spect-actors are encouraged to shout-out, halt the action, take over the role, and try out another solution. Interestingly, anyone who wants to contribute to the discussion can have a turn (MacDonald & Rach, 2000).

Based on its design, it is clear that Forum Theater provides a space not only for discussion and reflection but also a rehearsal, so to speak, of a desired change involving both the performers and the audience. Forum Theater "is a way through which people may build an understanding of their own situation and explore in a creative and constructive way their needs and potential solutions to their problems. It enhances the capacity to analyze local problems" (Schrowange, 2015, p. 10). The performers are trying to engage the audience to think of creative ways to solve the situation. The unsettling situation opens a dialogue between performers and the audience.

> Some scenes are repeated with one crucial difference: the audiences can at any point replace an actor to attempt to change the situation portrayed. In this participatory process anyone can speak, and anyone can act. During the replay of the situation, audience members are urged to intervene by stopping the action, coming on stage to replace actors, and enacting their own ideas in order to find solutions, while the other actors remain in their characters. The audience realizes, if they don't intervene, nothing will change. And change needs to be done strategically. The people acting as perpetrators of direct, psychological or structural violence on stage will maintain their positions of power until they are convincingly stopped, and just like in life, changing someone's attitude and behavior isn't easy. (Schrowange, 2015, p. 16)

Forum Theater's popularity is precisely located in its ability to create a dialogue between the actors and the audience (Premaratna, 2015; Schrowange, 2015). In essence, the dialogue created by Forum Theater takes place at two levels, "within the individual and among the audience through the very structure of the play" (Premaratna, 2015, pp. 69–70), making the technique suitable for facilitating change, and thus its alignment with the purposes of peacebuilding processes.

According to Premaratna (2015), this active engagement between performers and the audience makes Forum Theater an effective way of working with people from conflicting groups, as it can lead to opening up broken relationships and the formation of new relationships, thereby increasing chances for peace. The author (Premaratna, 2015) argues that "facilitated space for dialogue and disagreement on stage for all those who are present nurtures critical thinking and creativity … drawing them into the play with an active role of reconstituting the story" (p. 70). Although Premaratna's (2015) study had an empirical angle to it, it was focused mainly on the performing groups of "Jana Karaliya theater group from Sri Lanka, Jana Sanskriti theater group from Bengal, India and Sarwanam theater group from Nepal" (Premaratna, 2015, p. 15). Data generated from performing groups fails to confirm whether sustained relationships developed out of the actual theater activity created in a facilitated space. Such evidence could increase our understanding of theater's long-term impact on community members.

Plastow (2009) reminds us that Theater of the Oppressed in general, and Forum Theater in particular, were largely developed in relation to Boal's experience based on his South American culture and his Western experience in the United States and Europe (Plastow, 2009). The author's observation serves as a reminder for the users to constantly adapt Forum Theater when applied in different cultural contexts. For example, in Burkina Faso, the founder and director of Atelier-Théâtre Burkinabé (ATB) found it easy to adapt Boal's Forum Theater because he noticed that "much of the thinking behind Forum Theater was similar to indigenous African participatory performance forms" (Plastow, 2009, p. 298). Similarly, the Morning Star Forum Theater in South Sudan did not follow the exact description of Forum Theater as provided by Boal, rather it created a combination of Forum Theater techniques mixed with other African

participatory techniques such as traditional dances, which highlighted the unique cultural contexts.

Chumbes (2020) reminded us that Theater of the Oppressed was inspired by Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, which focused on problem-posing for individuals to enhance "their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation" (Chumbes, 2020, p. 55). Both Freire and Boal positioned theater as an effective tool for a liberating praxis of oppressed people. Oppression is certainly a characteristic of conflict and post-conflict settings. As such, peacebuilding efforts should ultimately aim at facilitating community empowerment and liberation. Theater in general, and Theater of the Oppressed in particular, have been used extensively in processes aimed at community empowerment and liberation. While highlighting the origin use of theater in liberation processes, Chumbes (2020) posited that:

> Paulo Freire engaged farm-workers in the untangling of their own oppression and empowering them to be co-authors of their own history using reflective action through a problem-posing education based on themes generated by the material conditions of the students. Augusto Boal was engaged in playwriting and directing when he made the connection among poverty, disempowerment, and passivity by giving people a space—the stage—to discuss and rehearse revolution. (p. 55)

Therefore, connecting Forum Theater with peacebuilding seems like a natural process. To begin with, theater has been viewed by innumerable scholars as an appropriate tool for peacebuilding processes in general and relationship building, in particular (Fairey, 2018; Reich, 2012; Shank & Schirch, 2008; Zelizer, 2003). More so, the past three decades have seen increasing attention to the intentional including of the arts, and theater in particular, as alternatives to or complementary to traditional peace-building mechanisms.

Fairey (2018) shares that the arts' projects designed strategically to support peacebuilding and reconciliation processes were seen "in South Africa, where numerous artistic projects took place alongside and after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission established in 1996" (Fairey, 2018, p. 204). Although Fairey (2018) suggests that the years following the rebuilding of peace and reconciliation processes in South Africa have attracted the strategic use of the arts in peacebuilding, Cohen (2017) actually argues that societies have always solved societal issues by engaging in creative and expressive forms, and theater is one such an expressive form. The notable example is the ancient Greek amphitheaters and colosseums, which were places for performances and forums where disputes were settled (Malpade, 1999). Although Theater of the Oppressed in general and Forum Theater in particular have been and can be used to address a variety of societal issues related to peacebuilding, the current study is mainly focused on the use of Theater in relationship building as an integral aspect of peacebuilding.

This section has analyzed theater's attributes such as building connections, enabling expression of diverse views, active engagement, and emotional healing, among others, as significant contributions to addressing societal issues. The push to engage theater in peacebuilding is best understood through this analysis of the nature of theater and its capacity to facilitate change in general, and peace in particular.

Theater as a Forum for Relationship Building in Post-Conflict Settings

This section discusses theater's capacity to bring together warring parties and to facilitate attitudinal change as a catalyst for restoration of damaged relationships. In addition, the section analyzes a few studies where theater in general, and Forum Theater in particular, have been used to build and foster relationships among conflicting parties in post-conflict settings, although hearing from the actual beneficiaries is a glaring absence in the literature.

Peacebuilding scholars (Lederach, 1997; Schirch, 2005; Sentama, 2009) remind us about the fundamental necessity of restoring broken and forming new relationships between people from conflicting parties. This is because at the heart of conflicts are negative attitudes held towards the other, perceived incompatibilities in values or interests, and destructive behaviors towards the other. Negative attitudes lead to negative stereotypes. Destructive behaviors present themselves as threats while unresolved contradictions manifest as perceived impenetrable incompatibilities of values or goals between the groups. Fisher (2006) posits that conflict is a "social situation involving perceived incompatibilities in goals or values between two or more parties, attempts by the parties to control each other, and antagonistic feelings by the parties to control each other" (p. 178). Undoubtedly, there are other issues in the conflict situations; however, by design, the current study focuses on the relational aspects. The essentiality of relationship building in peacebuilding processes serves as a reminder for actors in the field to constantly review the tools in use and how these tools contribute to the restoration of broken and/or construction of new relationships.

In addition, Lubit and Reda (2012) argue that violent conflicts often cause deep societal fractures that damage interpersonal connections between and within conflicting groups. And when connections between groups are damaged, alienation and distrust become part of everyday life. "Even after the threat of violence ceases to exist, these feelings and experiences persist, affecting all interpersonal interactions within society" (Lubit & Reda, 2012, p. 5). Suspicion, mistrust, fear, anger, and hatred among conflicting parties affect the nature of interactions between these groups, subsequently alienating individuals from one another. Restoring relationships in such situations requires fostering trust, building connections, and developing empathy between divided communities (Lederach 1997; Lubit & Reda, 2012).

It is suggested that theater has a potential role in promoting collaboration and connections among divided communities. Premaratna (2015) explains that theater's broad spectrum of activities (e.g., dance, dialogue, and music) is more accessible than rational discourse, which is the common approach in peacebuilding, especially at the Level One and Level Two tiers. Theater's performative plurality and fluidity can enhance accessibility of the message, hence succeeding "in reaching different individuals at multiple levels of reception" (Premaratna, 2015, p. 75). Enhanced collaborations and connections serve as a foundation to fostering mutual understanding, which is a precursor to addressing and countering existing negative stereotypes among-groups and creating trust and empathy.

Collaboration and connections are important but not enough to restore the broken trust and/or foster empathy, unless they lead to individual attitudinal change and facilitate emotional healing. Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz (1994) argue that theater has the ability to facilitate both attitudinal shifts and emotional healing. The authors trace the use of theater to impact emotional healing to Boal's Theater of the Oppressed workshops when "participants brought themes of loneliness and alienation … Frustrated by these seemingly insignificant hardships, Boal began to realize the depth of pain these oppressions produced" (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994, p. 4).

Boal's first efforts to use Theater of the Oppressed to explicitly address participants' emotional hardships was during his time in exile in Europe from 1976 to 1986. In France, Boal conducted street theater activities with young people, immigrants, and other disenfranchised citizens in short forum scenes in "a kind of socio-dramatic inventory of the conflicts of their different neighborhoods. The Forum scenes served not only as a social education but as a mouthpiece of an otherwise speechless population—a deep felt, personal victory over silence"

(Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994, p. 88). Over the years, Theater of the Oppressed's Forum Theater has been adapted in many situations that require emotional healing, including post-conflict settings such as South Sudan.

The development of trust and empathy can happen over the course of interactive processes, in which individuals freely work and collaborate with another (Sentama, 2009; Six, 2007). These processes help with suspending of opportunistic behavior or distrust, exchanging positive not negative relational signals, and putting in place trust-enhancing mechanisms (Reis et al., 2000). Interactive processes are the foundation for building healthy relationships and promoting empathy and trust, among others. Lubit and Reda (2012) urge peacebuilding actors to design interventions that "address the deeply embedded emotional effects of the conflict on both individuals and communities. This means fostering feelings of understanding and empathy which will help to rebuild interpersonal relationships damaged by the conflict both within and between communities" (p. 3).

Forum Theater has been described as a way that people can step out of their positions in conflicts and rehearse different, and in most cases preferred, positions; a process which has the potential to promote deeper understanding of the conflict and "the other." Deeper understanding of the conflict and "the other" can serve as a foundation for fostering empathy. In one study conducted in Cyprus, for example, Broome (2009) noted that peacebuilders employed interactive methodologies based on the shared vision and a "collaborative action agenda that was designed both to develop a larger core of peacebuilders and to target key segments of Cypriot society" (p. 185). The agenda was based on the convergence of multiple views, which enabled empathy to be "built in a protracted conflict situation through an interactive design process" (p. 189).

Schrowange (2015) suggested that Forum Theater as such is/has an interactive design process:

> [Forum Theater] is a way through which people may build an understanding of their own situation and explore in a creative and constructive way their needs and potential solutions to their problems. … It interrogates one's own assumptions … whilst simultaneously holding in mind one's immediate interests and the larger interests of the community as a whole. (p. 19)

The opportunities created by Forum Theater's coming together are a basis for deeper understanding of "the other" and open avenues to see "the other" in a different and more positive way. Bergey (2019) suggest that Forum Theater is such a process in which emotions and rational ideas can mix freely, and through which empathy can develop.

According to Schirch (2013), theater has the ability to create safe spaces for individuals to express their silenced opinions. Safe spaces that enable the expression of opinions are central when addressing tensions between individuals and groups dealing with the aftermath of conflict. Individuals in conflict and post-conflict societies normally exhibit feelings of rage and revenge, which fuel cycles of violence. Safe spaces created through Forum Theater processes can control such negative emotions (Bergey, 2019) and enable meaningful dialogue. Meaningful dialogues have the ability to cause deeper conversations and understanding of "the other," hence opening up avenues to see "the other" in a different way.

Further arguments for theater as a forum for relationship building can be traced to its ability to facilitate genuine conversations in ways that are usually not possible, through avenues such as seminars and workshops. Scholars (Cohen, 2003; Premaratna, 2015) observe that in periods of conflict, regular conversations are infused with demeaning gestures and jokes, fueling negativity and perpetuating stereotypes. As such, while conventional peacebuilding interventions can raise awareness about these negative behaviors, those involved may choose to engage in polite yet primarily superficial and performative conversations.

According to Premaratna (2015):

> Theater has the potential to enable a broader expression through embodying different forms of art, and the potential of peacebuilding offered through the imagination of theater. These features of theater are interrelated and together open up multiple avenues of expression conducive to authentic peacebuilding that is difficult to achieve within the conventional peacebuilding approaches. (p. 75)

The author's argument suggests that even when logical and formal peacebuilding processes can manage to bring conflicting parties together, they are unlikely to uncover deep-seated stereotypes underlying the conflicts. Changing such attitudes is not just a long process but one that requires interactive processes, with the ability to shift the way people think about themselves and their enemies. Theater is such an approach with the potential to organize safe and peaceful interactions, creating opportunities among parties involved in the conflict (Premaratna & Bleiker, 2010).

Relatedly, Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz (1994) explained how theater can help to address emotional pain and healing through their comparison of the theater stage "to a magnifying glass on which human impulses, passions, and conflicts are played out … and drama as the place where deep psychological processes are expressed" (p. 87). Imagery exercises can be useful to come to terms with death, loss, and grief (Shear, 2012). Promoters of theater's capacity to help emotional healing (Cohen-Cruz, 1994; Long & Brecke, 2003; Premaratna & Bleiker, 2010; Schutzman & Shear, 2012) argue that theater activities are good at kindling processes of emotional transformation, which is an important stage towards healing emotional wounds caused by the conflicts. For example, Premaratna and Bleiker (2010) posited, "Theater helps to reduce the often-divisive emotions, such as anger, fear and hatred. These emotions often become key rallying points after conflict, thus entrenching antagonistic attitudes even more" (p. 12). Forum Theater's nature of active engagement with individual and collective emotions makes it a fitting

approach in building relationships, because of its ability to facilitate the process of emotional healing.

Conflicts silence shared emotions. Premaratna and Bleiker (2010) noted that "grief and loss, by contrast, are often silenced and so are attempts to show empathy to the opposing side. The resulting culture of fear has to be healed in order to bring reconciliation" (p. 12). When certain emotions, such as hatred and anger, are transformed and become less dominant, room is created for other emotions such as sadness and grief, which can be shared as a source of commonness. Premaratna and Bleiker (2010) noted:

> Reconciliation might come about when certain emotions, such as hatred and anger, are superseded by different ways of engaging with past traumatic events. Focusing on loss and grief, for instance, is much more likely to bring about a shared sense of community. (p. 13)

The opportunity to create shared narratives of emotional mutuality in societies, where conflicts have created divisive narratives of hatred and other stereotypes, is foundational to building and restoring relationships (Long & Brecke, 2003). Moreover, Shank and Schirch (2008) posited that drama and movements have a significant contribution to emotional healing, especially when it is integrated into therapeutic settings. Forum Theater's techniques, the combination of role-playing, performances, and dialogue, can raise awareness about emotional pain and enable individuals with skills to deal with day-to-day stress presented by conflict situations.

There is rich literature with powerful cases of theater being brought into conflict areas as a way to reimagine and restore relationships (Fairey, 2018; Premaratna & Bleiker; 2010; Shank & Schirch, 2008). However, most of these do focus either on the methods, the performing groups, or the funders themselves, and less and less on the individuals' experiences of these events both in a short and long run, as reviewed next.

Sentama (2009) explored how communication, engagements, and connection with "the other" can improve interpersonal relationships in his study of the role of a cooperative organization in fostering relationships after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The study found that cooperatives that brought people together were instrumental in restoration of relationships among the conflicting communities in Rwanda. Findings from the study indicated that cooperatives "facilitated the development of positive communication for mutual understanding, which turned out to be a constructive process, whereby reciprocal truth, acknowledgement, and expressions of apology and forgiveness, and friendship were fostered among the members" (p. 170). While the said study was not specifically about theater, its relevance to the present study is its focus on bringing people together in dialogue and activity that promoted engagement and communication, just like theater processes do.

While other peacebuilding interventions that are conventional in nature can raise awareness about these negative behaviors, those involved may choose to engage in polite yet primarily superficial and performative conversations. As Premaratna (2015) observed:

> Theater has the potential to enable a broader expression through embodying different forms of art, and the potential of peacebuilding offered through the imagination of theater. These features of theater are interrelated and together open up multiple avenues of expression conducive to authentic peacebuilding that is difficult to achieve within the conventional peacebuilding approaches. (p. 75)

Theater's attribute, especially through its ability to engage with emotions, can be essential elements in facilitating genuine conversations in a post-conflict environment.

In a study of arts and peacebuilding in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Fairey (2018) examined how the arts, including theater, contributed to fostering interaction and contributed to peace processes among communities who were distrustful of each other. The study examined the work of Most Mira, an arts group that brought young people together from conflicting areas "to make friends across ethnicities and celebrate diversity through youth arts festivals, arts and peace-building

workshops, visits and tours" (Fairey, 2018, p. 6). In one of their festivals involving two villages, whose communication had broken down due to conflicts, Most Mira organized arts activities involving over 450 children, aged 7–14, from various ethnic backgrounds. These activities included participatory workshops in art, drama, dance, and music (Fairey, 2018). One of the theater directors who was involved noted that the arts "provided a safe, common and neutral space for people from all sides to come together, to push boundaries and create something new and unrelated to conflict … the arts opened up a new space where people could come together" (p. 4). Coming together and opening-up are key aspects of relationship building. However, a question must be raised on such a conclusion about growth, and whether such a determination can be made without hearing from the individuals targeted by the theater interventions themselves.

In a study conducted in three London high schools, Teoh (2012) explored whether youth's participation in Forum Theater strengthened their understanding of and relationships with refugee children. The author argued that the process of making theater together enabled the young people to spend ample time together and to experience "the other" outside of the formal discourse and regulated interactions in classrooms. The experience of spending time together allowed the students to get to know one another more fully and begin to appreciate the differences as well as areas of commonness. The study does not, however, show whether the Indigenous and refugee children developed a positive attitude toward each other after the theater activity. Teoh's conclusion resonates with similar conclusions of Premaratna and Bleiker (2010), who observed that theater transformed the actors themselves during the actual production process. Yet in both cases, participants' own perceptions and reflections were absent.

Yet, in another study by Premaratna and Bleiker (2010), theater's role in peacebuilding in Sri Lanka is examined. Specifically, the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had fought for nearly two decades without any ceasefire or reconciliation. The authors examined how Jana Karaliya, also known as Theater for the People, brought warring parties together in a joint forum, something that was very rare. During theater presentations, both parties would listen to the theater performances. Jana Karaliya, whose objective was to use theater activities to promote peacebuilding among different ethnicities, "travels around the country, performing in a mobile theater tent that can house 500 people at a time" (Premaratna & Bleiker, 2010, p. 379). Performers interviewed prior to the event confirmed their attitudes were largely of mistrust and hostility among communities, which are typical characteristics in conflict settings. The authors noted shifts after the events:

> After a few performances and theater workshops, the situation gradually became less tense … Such a change of attitude—and the resulting ability to form relationships where before there was only hostility—is possible after personal experiences with conflict are transformed into narratives that are less vengeful and more accepting of others. (Premaratna & Bleiker, 2010, p. 382)

As explained earlier, the dynamic nature of theater, which facilitates safe spaces to create shared narratives, can potentially lead to rebuilding trust. In fact, based on their findings, the authors suggested that theater can make a modest but symbolically important contribution to peacebuilding by changing conflict attitudes; hence, facilitating positive relationships among the conflicting groups was created. Although Premaratna and Bleiker's (2010) work involved both the performers and individuals from the audience, emphasis is put on the method and not individuals' experiences of processes.

Additional studies across the developing world provide examples of theater being employed effectively to promote relationships, including communities of Sri Lanka's Batticoloa District, Israel's Peres Center for Peace, and the Interactive Resource Center in Lahore, Pakistan

(Shank & Schirch, 2008). In a review of Interactive Resource Center's work in Pakistan, Forum

Theater was used to facilitate meaningful dialogues among conflicting groups. The authors

observed that, "Theater practitioners throughout Pakistan are witnessing Forum Theater's

efficacy as a dialogical forum to address social injustice, engage marginalized communities in

democratic decision-making, and analyze and resolve pervasive community conflict" (Shank &

Schirch, 2008, p. 6). While the study (Shank & Schirch, 2008) highlighted Forum Theater's

positive outcomes in a conflict zone, it remained silent on community members' own reflections

on their experiences and whether participation fostered positive relationships during or after the

theater activities.

In a similar vein, Mtukwa (2015) looked at Forum Theater in the Democratic Republic of

Congo (DRC) and observed that:

> In the Kivu provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, arts-oriented
> peacebuilding efforts were highly successful in initiating peace dialogues because they
> were accessible to women and children, who are normally ignored in formal peace
> negotiations … The major strength of these efforts was that they drew from the people's
> indigenous knowledge, cultural references, and languages, and were relatively
> inexpensive to facilitate. As a collective art, theater encourages community cohesion and
> discourages community isolation and fragmentation. (p. 92)

Clearly, the author recognized that fostering community cohesion while discouraging community

isolation and fragmentation is crucial in building relationships. Through its collaborative

technique, theater enables the expression of meaning, investigation of the issue, and working

together to find solutions to the issues. But like most other examples reviewed, Mtukwa's (2015)

study lacked the voices of those who were involved, notably the women referred to as evidence

about how highly successful the process was especially towards relationship building.

In a study perhaps closest to the proposed research, the Search for Common Ground

(SFCG), an International Nongovernmental Organization (NGO), used participatory theater in

Rwanda to transform local land conflicts (SFCG, 2012). SFCG's broad mission was to contribute

to the peacebuilding efforts through the promotion of "constructive and collaborative dialogue within Rwanda" (Smith & Webb, 2011, p. 68). Through the use of participatory theater, SFCG reached more than 20,000 people between 2010 and 2011. SFCG's assessment of the effectiveness of participatory theater in conflict resolution regarding land in Karongi, one of the districts in Rwanda, concluded:

> Theater programs had informed people and also had inspired changes in behaviors and attitudes. Those interviewed shared an increased understanding of the skills that could be gained from attending such performances. Beyond gaining knowledge and skills, the interviewees could cite specific examples of how they applied this new knowledge to their own lives. (SFCG, 2012, p. 72)

The SFCG (2012) study assessed the role of theater directly from participants themselves. This study is relevant to the proposed study because the context in which it is carried out is almost similar to the context in which the current study is taking place. However, there are two fundamental differences. First, the theater events in Rwanda were implemented at a time when the country had already made significant strides towards recovery from the tribal conflicts of 1994, which was not the case in South Sudan. Secondly, SFCG's assessment was conducted by SFCG, the same international organization that implemented the theater events with grants from two major funders—European Commission and United States Agency for International Development.

As Plastow (2009) observes, "In Africa most artistic tools have been co-opted by the development community, the major funder of the arts across the continent, and the danger is that they can promote conformity" (p. 298). The hope that funders will return may color what participants share in assessments. The SFCG study even noted that "each interview subject requested that the theater be performed more often … what we learned in the theater was good but sometimes it is easy to forget if you do not return" (Smith & Webb, 2011, p. 77). It should be

noted that the present study was done independent of funders in the hopes that those interviewed

would likely feel freer to share their reflections frankly and fully.

Burleson (2003) offers insights into Forum Theater techniques with interpersonal

conflicts while seeking solutions in a classroom setting, which is of course different from the

context of the present study, but its focus on addressing interpersonal conflict is relevant. The

process involved dividing the class into groups and each group was given a short dramatic script

that depicted a conflict in an intimate, familial, or professional relationship. Each group

developed a Forum Theater presentation including rehearsing solutions to that particular conflict.

According to the author, students came up with solutions to the different conflict situations they

were addressing. The implication of this is that Forum Theater effectively raised awareness about

interpersonal conflicts that existed. However, what is not clear is whether the students'

interpersonal communication improved after the dramas. As the intended beneficiaries, it would

be valuable to know how they perceived the experience of theater in peacebuilding as helping

them resolve conflict and in building relationships.

In one of the most recent studies, Burbridge and Stevenson (2020) examined a live

theater, Salaam Bethlehem, a play commissioned by Riding Lights Theater Company and

performed in United Kingdom and Palestine. The authors asked:

> Can the experiences a member of an audience might have in the imagined world of
> theater be transformative for their life in the real world? The empathy the characters in
> Salaam Bethlehem created with British audiences was powerful—allowing the audience
> to experience emotional turmoil by identifying with those in the play whose best
> intentions with regard to peace are tested to breaking point. These genuine emotional
> experiences within the imagined world of theater are perhaps too ambiguous to give an
> audience any conclusive ideological answers. (Burbridge & Stevenson, 2020, p. 386)

The authors acknowledge the impressive atmosphere created by theater, the "tone of warmth,

love and familial good humour which was a strong part of the play's naturalistic

atmosphere—the accuracy of which was praised by some Palestinian Muslim students who came to see the production in Leeds" (Burbridge & Stevenson, 2020, p. 385). The play was staged in traverse, a technique wherein the action is central, and the audience sit on either side; a style of staging in which the actor does not directly address the audience. Instead, the audience are intimate observers of a truthful reality created by the actors, and they themselves form the backdrop to the other half of the audience's view of the action. Burbridge and Stevenson (2020) argue that when such experiences are taken to heart, they can be transformative and can soften stalled attitudes. Here too, the question remains as to whether individuals actually took these experiences to heart and if they experienced interpersonal growth, especially towards relationships with "the other." Answers to this question can partly be understood by listening to the people themselves and not solely from the organizers of the events or the directors of the plays.

Another study with significant relevance to the current research focuses on theater in Kenya and Uganda. Burns et al. (2015) examined seven cases in which Forum Theater was used to identify underlying community issues and offered peaceful alternatives to conflict resolution. Theater events were implemented by three organizations: Amani People's Theater (APT) based in Kenya, Budondo Intercultural Center (BI Center) in Uganda, and Presence Center for Applied Theater Arts (Presence) from the United States. Despite the different contexts, the three organizations focus on "interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions of conflict … that if people are divided among themselves, or within themselves, it is hard to unify to confront societal oppression. Intimate experiences of conflict can be investigated through Forum Theater" (Burns et al., 2015, p. 139).

In eastern Uganda, the Budondo Intercultural Center used Forum Theater to address family-level conflicts originating from power sharing gaps between men and women, which was considered a source of domestic violence (Burns et al., 2015). Forum Theater was performed with 100 community members in attendance. The organizers made a video of the event, which has received "40,000 internet views across the globe" (Burns et al., 2015, p. 142). The authors claimed that the Forum Theater event empowered women to stand-up for themselves through active participation in village committees through their assertion that:

> When some husbands grew suspicious and reacted violently to the women's long hours of VHT training, the group enacted solutions through Forum Theater that awakened compassion and forbearance … The community continues to use theatrical methods to empower young women and men as leaders and healers, and to facilitate community discussions on gender and leadership. These theater projects in rural Uganda show the interplay between psychological and political elements. (Burns et al., 2015, p. 143)

Burns et al.'s (2015) study is particularly relevant to the proposed research because of its focus on interpersonal relationships. In addition, the case studies are drawn from the East African region, the same region where the proposed research is based. Yet, as common with the other studies reviewed in the chapter, Burns' (2015) assessment is drawn from the authors' experience with the three organizations and not the women, who were beneficiaries of these events. One wonders what types of experiences the women themselves would share if they were involved in the study? For example, what would they say about the types of solutions that had awakened compassion and patience?

In a study looking at theater in South Sudan, the specific region of this the present research, Schrowange (2015) described the effectiveness of Forum Theater in peacebuilding through his collaboration with a local theater troupe. *Nyakica,* the play, was used to highlight the problem of cattle raiding, which is connected to most of the armed violence between various

ethnic groups. In addition to the play's content, the performance was intentionally integrated with South Sudan traditional dance, notably:

> The Toposa traditional war dance, with special symbolic fight movements, words and sounds. The audience could easily identify with the scene. Since over 99% of the audience members had never attended any school it helped them to immediately become attached to the content of the play … Dance choreographies and physical theater elements also help the actors to release tensions and calm down after emotional acting. (Schrowange, 2015, p. 30)

Forum Theater's benefits can be analyzed from this example. To begin with, it is clear that the message was easily accessible despite the fact that the audience was illiterate. The audience was able to identify with the content of the play. Lastly, the experience releasing tensions and calming emotions as facilitated by the dance and physical elements are important factors that can lead to emotional healing.

Clearly, these studies suggest and provide some evidence that theater offers a great potential in peacebuilding efforts in general and relationship building in particular. However, direct insights from participants themselves are lacking.

Summary and Conclusion of Literature Review

This Chapter critically reviewed literature on the role of theater in peacebuilding with emphasis on relationship building. The Chapter was presented in four different but related sections, aligning the current debate on the role of theater in peacebuilding, with emphasis on Forum Theater as an approach on the relationship building aspect of peacebuilding.

Section One examined peacebuilding in post-conflict settings in general, relying heavily on the work of Lederach (1997), Schirch (2013), and Johan Galtung's (1976) foundational framework, all of which consider peacebuilding as comprehensive processes aiming at addressing conflicts in the immediate short-term, as well as the sustainable long-term. Fontan's (2012) work on decolonizing peace underscores the fundamental necessity for practitioners to

design peacebuilding processes that are specific to the situation, instead of relying on international models developed and tested elsewhere. The review points out four important domains that must be addressed in peacebuilding processes but emphasizes more on the relationship domain, which is the focus of this study (Llamazares, 2005; Waldman, 2009).

Section Two focused on peacebuilding efforts specifically in South Sudan. Despite the recognized progress made especially at the top level, the general assessment is that the efforts have met minimal success (Reeve, 2012). Moreover, the current conflicts are largely showing up through the tribal lenses (SaferWorld, 2019), requiring peacebuilding efforts to pay attention to the community-level of the relationship building domain more. While the present study was not intended to carry-out an evaluation of peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan, a review of peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan situates the study among these efforts—the role of theater in peacebuilding in post-conflict settings, aimed at the grassroots level.

Section Three explored the nature of theater in general and Forum Theater in particular. Literature situates theater in the broader landscape of the arts, describing it as means of communication expressed in various forms. Theater falls under one form, the performing arts (Fairey, 2018; McCarthy et al., 2001; Shank & Schirch, 2008). Literature indicates that theater encompasses a variety of types (Boal, 1979; Green, 2017; McCarthy et al., 2001; Umenyilorah, 2014), but the review focused primarily on Forum Theater, a technique under Theater of the Oppressed, because the present study examines a Forum Theater event.

Section Four focused on the use of Forum Theater as a part of peacebuilding process, highlighting theater's acclaimed potential to challenge stereotypes, build trust and empathy, and help restore and reimagine relationships among parties in conflict (Lederach, 1997; Schirch, 2005; Sentama, 2009). A number of relevant studies identify the positive role played by Forum

Theater in relationship building including Premaratna's (2015) in Sri Lanka, Schrowange's

(2015) work in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, and the work of Search

for Common Ground (SFCG, 2012) in Rwanda. That theater offers a viable tool for

peacebuilding is argued by many scholars (Akashoro et al., 2010; Bergh & Sloboda, 2014;

Khuzwayo, 2013; Malpede, 1999; Premaratna & Bleiker, 2010; Reich, 2012; Shank & Schirch,

2008; Zelizer, 2003).

However, while it is true that there is increasing attention to the use of theater processes

in peacebuilding (Akashoro et al., 2010; Zelizer, 2003), there is little known about how

participating in these theater events actually impacted individual growth towards building

relationships with "the other." As reviewed herein, much of the literature focuses on the positive

appraisals expressed by promoters of theater and not the reflections from the grassroots

individuals involved about the impact on the short- and long-terms (Burbridge & Stevenson,

2020; Burleson, 2003; Teoh, 2012).

It is possible therefore, that the role of theater in peacebuilding has indeed been

exaggerated. Akashoro et al. (2010) observe that the debate is "an obsession among theater and

literary scholars to prove, outside the attempts … that theater, whether in the literary or

performative form has a contribution to make to the development of the society" (p. 1). Other

scholars (Coudray, 2017; Teoh, 2012) express caution towards over praising theater as an

approach in peacebuilding, arguing that it is one thing to recognize the benefits of the approach

(Teoh, 2012) but quite another to see how that translates into lasting peace. Shank and Schirch

(2008) also highlight a gap in the area of evaluating the arts processes in general and theater in

particular, pointing to the need for peacebuilding practitioners to begin to evaluate theater

processes. The studies mentioned above underscore the need for more research and analysis in

articulating the reasons why and how theater is a powerful tool for peacebuilding, especially relationship building. The more that is known, the more useful its application will be in the field of peacebuilding.

Thus, the literature suggests the need for evidence-based data on the use of theater in peacebuilding. This cannot be extensively explored in one single study, but an attempt in this direction opens a space for future explorations of the subject. The current study focuses on one aspect of this gap by trying to get views on the role of theater in relationship building from intended beneficiaries themselves. The study explores the role of theater in peacebuilding in post-conflict settings by collecting and analyzing narratives of participants, specifically those involved in Morning Star's Forum Theater for Peacebuilding in South Sudan.

Collecting and analyzing individuals' experiences involved in theater events could be achieved through multiple ways, but Bold (2011) claims that narrative inquiry may be the most appropriate method for a study that includes social relations, like the current one. The analysis of individuals' stories of experiences of a theater event and how these experiences impacted their relationships with "the other" would shed more light on the role of Forum Theater in relationship building in post-conflicts settings. This leads to the next section, which is the study's methodology.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As demonstrated in the previous Chapter, existing scholarship and literature on the role of theater in peacebuilding has mainly focused on researchers, academics, and peacebuilding practitioners highlighting theater's potential as a viable approach (Fairey, 2018; Mtukwa, 2015; Premaratna & Bleaker, 2010; Shank & Schirch, 2008; Zelizer, 2003). For example, while Mtukwa (2015) credited the participatory nature of theater as an alternative method for peacebuilding at grassroots' levels because it "offers practical, inclusive, inexpensive space conducive for organic peacebuilding at grassroots level" (p. 85), the author acknowledges the need to combine theater with other approaches to make it more effective. Mtukwa noted that "theater is an excellent tool for communication in communities experiencing hostilities and mistrust, especially those emerging from violence" (p. 99). Yet, the author further notes that "theater concerns itself with initiating suggestions and solutions from its process which can then be advanced to form frameworks for mediation and advocacy" (p. 103) for governments and other partners involved in the peacebuilding work. In addition, while Shank and Schirch (2008) suggest the use of the arts in peacebuilding processes, the authors equally acknowledge that there is limited research and evaluation that highlight the effectiveness of their (the arts including theater) usage in peacebuilding, noting "there is very little solid theory, research, or evaluation of arts-based peacebuilding" (p. 2017). The arts-based peacebuilding referred to by Shank and Schirch (2008) encompass theater.

Moreover, Akashoro et al. (2010) think that the role of theater is "an obsession among theater and literary scholars to prove" (p. 1) that it works because they need to attract funders. There is little research that documents the experience and impact of theater on the participants of

theater events themselves. Lifting up the voices of groups targeted by theater for peacebuilding interventions is meant to enrich the current debate and provide missing evidence of the role of theater in peacebuilding (Akashoro et al., 2010; Mtukwa, 2015; Shank & Schirch, 2008). The current study explores ways in which participation in the Morning Star Forum Theater impacted participants' interpersonal growth and building relationships across divided communities in South Sudan. Narrative inquiry, as a research methodology, was selected as the best fit for the study and the rationale for a particular form of narrative inquiry is provided in the following sections.

This Chapter describes narrative inquiry, the methodology used in the present study. In order to understand the rationale for the methodology, it is important to examine its roots, its applications in research, especially in the area of peacebuilding, and then present its suitability to the present study. Specific to the present study, this Chapter presents details of the study's design, participant selection criteria, measures taken for ethical protection of participants, data collection, data analysis, and addressing credibility issues. The Chapter concludes with a discussion on the role of the researcher.

Research Question

Before providing a detailed description of the methodology used, it is first of all important to present the research question. This is intended to show how the methodology was purposely selected to answer the research question. Chapter II revealed that the current debate about the role of theater in peacebuilding is silent about the voices of individuals who participate in the theater events. Moreover, other scholars such as Mtukwa (2015), suggest the need for additional studies to understand the role of theater and its effectiveness. While the present study alone could not fill this gap, it potentially adds new perspectives to the debate. The present study

explores the following question: In what ways did participation in the Morning Star Forum Theater have impact on participants' interpersonal growth and relationship-building across conflicting communities in South Sudan?

The research question was explored using the following three sub questions:

- What were participants' experiences of connecting and working with "the other" during the theater event and their reflections on those experiences?

- What were participants' experiences of connecting and working with "the other" following the theater event and their reflections on those experiences?

- What are participants' reflections on the ways in which the theater event impacted their personal growth regarding relationship building at community level with those from other communities?

Philosophical Assumptions for Narrative Inquiry

There are underlying philosophical assumptions that influenced the selection of narrative inquiry as an appropriate method for understanding the impact of theater on individuals and relationship building, as a part of peacebuilding efforts. Understanding the underlying assumptions and philosophy is important (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) because doing so provides foundations for research and guides researchers towards adopting appropriate strategies and methods to conduct research (Benton & Craib, 2001).

Burrell and Morgan (1979) explain different philosophical assumptions such as ontological and epistemological assumptions in research. Ontology is more about the assumptions you have about the nature of reality itself (Saunders et al., 2019) and the nature of our beliefs about reality; different positions reflect different perceptions of the characteristics of existences (Willis, 2007). The central point of ontological debate concerns questions about

whether the world around us can be objectively "real" in relation to our social actions. Epistemology on the other hand is concerned with the nature of human knowledge (Saunders et al., 2019). It is the assumptions about knowledge, what constitutes acceptable, valid, and legitimate knowledge, and how we can communicate knowledge to others (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). It is about whether knowledge is hard, real, and in a general form, or whether it is soft, subjective, and generated from unique individual experience (Saunders et al., 2019). Among the different types of epistemological and ontological positions, positivism and objectivism are on one end of the epistemological continuum, and interpretivism and constructionism on the other end of the epistemological continuum.

A positivist epistemological position "focuses on the importance of objectivity and evidence in searching for truth and the world is unaffected by the researcher … facts and values are very distinct, thus making it possible to conduct objective and value-free inquiry" (Al-Saadi, 2014, p. 2). A positivist epistemological position holds that the researcher can potentially distance themselves from the research. In addition, positivism holds among other positions that "meaning and meaningful realities already reside in objects awaiting discovery and they exist apart from any kind of people's consciousness" (Al-Saadi, 2014, p. 2). Interpretivism and constructionism on the other hand hold the view that:

> There are many ways of knowing about the world other than direct observation; namely, our perceptions and interpretations of the world around us. People use their perceptions to interpret what their senses tell them . . . knowledge of the world is based on our 'understanding' which arises from our reflection on events rather than only on lived experiences. (Al-Saadi, 2014, p. 3)

The present research is based in an interpretivist and constructionist standpoint because it is premised on the belief that there are multiple ways of knowing and a wide range of truths that can be told differently by different individuals about a single phenomenon. In other words, there is no one singular truth in any social situation. For example, while Chapter II revealed certain

truths about the role of theater in peacebuilding, especially on the relationship-building domain, there are likely to be more and different truths about it that can be told by those individuals most directly involved in a theater event in South Sudan. Moreover, Bold (2011) suggested that people construct truth through their own perspectives, supporting the choice of the methodology since the main interest of the study is to discover other and additional sets of truths from the people who actually participated a theater event.

In addition, the researcher has experience with the theater intervention for peacebuilding in South Sudan that the present study is based on, which also makes it hard to separate herself from the research as promoted by the positivism epistemological view. The difficulties in separating a researcher from the research is supported by Latour and Woolgar's (1979) argument that the researcher's personal and professional history are interlinked. But more than the separation, during the theater event, the researcher observed how excited participants were about the event, yet it is not clear whether that excitement translated into relationships as was intended by the event.

As explained in Chapter I, a theater for peacebuilding event in South Sudan brought together different tribes who normally see each other as rivals. During the event, participants shared stories about their new and positive attitude towards each other, but it was not clear whether what emerged during the intervention was practiced at community level and if it was, what impact it created over time, in line with the current debate about the role of theater in peacebuilding (Fairey, 2018; Mtukwa, 2015; Zelizer, 2003). It is not clear how that excitement translated at the community level, nor does evidence exist about how that role translated at the grassroots level to relationship-building over time. The present study collected stories from individuals who directly participated in that theater event. While these stories are likely true to

the particular individuals who shared the stories, that is an important truth to add to the current debate. It is clear that the participants of the Morning Star Theater for Peacebuilding event might have been part of other peacebuilding processes, however, reflection questions were specifically directed to the theater events during and after.

As already explained in Chapter I, the theater events drew thousands of people together from a cross section of ethnic groups. The participation of thousands of people on its own was considered a success and actually in line with the positivism epistemological position of demonstrating knowledge, if sheer numbers meant impact. Yet, counting numbers would not shed light on the experiences of each individual, the meanings the individuals made of these experiences, nor the impact over time. However, the constructivists' views allow the surfacing of the varying meaning-making of the experiences of theater events, which is a key component in designing appropriate peacebuilding processes. Therefore, narrative inquiry was considered because of its ability to enable the researcher to explore experiences focused on an individual (Brown, 2017) and the meanings they attribute to particular events.

Narrative Inquiry: Roots, Applications, and Suitability

This section examines the roots, applications, and suitability of narrative inquiry as a methodology for the present study. It is important to note that narrative inquiry belongs to the field of qualitative research methods, employed in social science studies, with a focus on interpreting and understanding human experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that "qualitative research methods focus on interpretation and human actions while concerning themselves with understanding a phenomenon" (p. 2). The authors suggest that qualitative research is conducted in social science research to explore individual experiences in relationship with others and with a phenomenon, stating that "qualitative research methods' focus is on

interpretation and human actions while concerning themselves to understanding a phenomenon" (p. 2). Narrative inquiry was specifically chosen because of its ability to explore individual experiences in relationship with others and with a phenomenon.

As Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) argue, narratives are part and parcel of humankind, however, the application of narrative as a research methodology is a development of the 20th century (Riessman & Speedy, 2007). While Connelly and Clandinin (1990) claim that narrative inquiry has its history in the humanities and other fields with constructionist epistemological strands, the last two decades have ushered in a renewal and steady popularity of its usage in social science research (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011; Riessman & Speedy, 2007). Narrative research has particularly been widely used to document and understand the complexities of people's lived experiences using stories as the data (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011).

Additionally, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argue that narrative inquiry offers alternative approaches of understanding and knowing in four different ways commonly known as the narrative turns. The first turn is about a change in the relationship between the researcher and the study participants. This turn recognizes that there is a relationship between the researcher and the participants and that these two categories bring their histories and worldviews together in one particular context.

The second narrative turn is the turn from numbers to words as data. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) state:

> The turn from numbers to words as data is not a general rejection of numbers but a recognition that in translating experience to numeric codes researchers lose the nuances of experience and relationship in a particular setting that are of interest to those examining human experience. (p. 13)

While the assumption regarding the use of numbers is about reliability issues, promoters of qualitative research, including narrative inquiry, believe that there are more ways of

understanding human experiences than through codes (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). The authors argue that when researchers use numbers to explain experiences, parts of that experience can get lost or may not be revealed. In fact, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that narrative inquiry can help in understanding more about individuals' experiences because it "involves the reconstruction of a person's experience in relationship both to the other and to a social milieu" (p. 2).

The third turn in narrative inquiry presents a change from focusing on the general to the specific (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). This turn challenges the notion of scientific objectivity and instead recognizes that studying people automatically creates a relationship, hence the espoused separation between the researcher and participants can hardly be achieved (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Narrative inquiry invites individuals to tell their stories, revealing the depth of their individual experiences (Clandinin, 2013). The emerging narratives eventually act as a bridge between researchers and respondents, whereby researchers are immersed in the respondent's experience, making the distanced objectivity difficult. The opportunity to tell stories revealing the depth of personal experiences makes narrative inquiry more relevant to the present study, which aim to explore individuals' experiences in a theater event for peacebuilding.

The fourth and final narrative turn is the change from one way of knowing the world to multiple ways of understanding the world through human experiences (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). There are multiple ways of knowing and understanding human experiences, implying that knowledge itself is relative. As explained earlier, narrative inquiry is grounded in the constructionist theory that truth is also subjective.

Noel et al. (2019) argue that the use of narrative inquiry involves studying phenomena without necessarily aiming at solving a problem. The present study does not intend to solve a

problem, but rather to understand people's experiences of an event and the impact after the event. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) argue that "to use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study" (p. 375). Narrative inquiry builds on past experiences in order to understand present circumstances and, according to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), one's current experience is a reflection of one's past experience.

Haydon et al. (2017) argue that narrative inquiry is an interpretive paradigm that brings out the experience of an individual in one's physical, social, and cultural context, enabling the researcher to understand and study one's experience. In short, narrative inquiry can be described as a qualitative research methodology employed by social scientists to document and understand the layers and complexities of individuals' lived experiences, using stories as the data (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011).

Difficulties Associated with Narrative Inquiry

Narrative research has been criticized by some scholars, not because it cannot generate the required information, but because it generates too much information and may become difficult to analyze. However, narrative inquiry does not aim at proving set hypotheses, but relies on what the narrative would reveal. As such, narrative inquiry remains open and requires gathering an abundance of data. Josselson (1993) observed that "each individual is unique, yet what we seek in narrative research is some understanding of the patterns that cohere among individuals and the aspects of lived experience that differentiate" (p. 6). This implies that the disadvantage of narrative research is having a massive amount of data that may be hard to analyze and more so depending on what the narratives would reveal. Both Josselson (1993) and Squire (2008) observed that narrative research generates a lot of material that can be overwhelming and can result in multiple interpretations, which requires the researcher to

determine how much is needed in order to understand the phenomenon. Yet, Polkinghorne (2007) posited that narrative research faces a problem of harmonizing the "differences in people's experienced meaning and the stories they tell about this meaning and the connections between storied texts and the interpretations of those texts" (p. 471).

Despite the complexities of narrative research highlighted by Josselson (1993) and Squire (2008), it still has attributes that make it ideal for use in studying theater for peacebuilding in post-conflict situations. Narrative inquiry is used in the present study because the study explores how participating in theater events for peacebuilding impacted individuals' growth and relationships with one another during and after the event. Participants shared stories that illuminated how they made sense of their experiences of theater events in relation to relationship-building as an aspect of peacebuilding processes. As Littlewolf (2020) observed, "The basis of self, of consciousness, is the base of narrative theory; without an awareness of self, placed in the story, there isn't a point of reference" (p. 56). The study explores the role of theater in peacebuilding by examining voices of the people who lived the theater experiences and their perceptions and experiences in relationship building after the event. The researcher mitigated the alleged challenges of narrative inquiry through the use of a set of similar questions to guide participants' reflections as well as emergent coding to identify emergent categories. Moreover, the use of structural analysis helped to identify individuals' and collective elements from the stories that spoke to relationship building.

Appropriateness of Narrative Inquiry

Riessman and Speedy (2007) argued that the multi-disciplinary nature of narrative makes it impossible to confine the methodology "within the boundaries of single scholarly field" (p. 427). Likewise, Bold (2011) asserted that narrative inquiry may be most appropriate for studies

that include social and educational contexts. Explained by Clandinin and Connely (2000), narrative research as a methodology gathers stories about a certain theme to find out information about a specific phenomenon. Federman (2016) confirmed that narratives are powerful social forces that constrain and guide actions, consequently providing a moral framework for those actions, while Bruner (1986) added that narrative inquiry focuses on understanding "experience with meaning" (p. 39). The rise and extensive use of narrative in research is a development, which scholars refer to as "the narrative turn" already discussed in this Chapter (Riessman & Speedy, 2007, p. 427).

In addition, narrative research was considered suitable for study in the peacebuilding field because the inquiry process focused on researching *with* people rather than researching *on* people (Schwandt, 2007). Dudouet et al. (2008) while studying the tensions in Israel-Palestine and in the Western Balkans, suggest that telling stories was ideal because it brought out issues, most of which people had remained silent about. The purpose of their study was to gather views from different conflict zones (Israel/Palestine and the region of former Yugoslavia) and facilitate the reflection and the process of peacebuilding. The study aimed at understanding "the consequences of not dealing with the legacies of this period [World War II, the Third Reich, and the Holocaust]—for today's societies" (Dudouet et al., 2008, p. 7). The study explored the Dan Bar-One's personal experiences of working on the dialogue between the German and Israeli-Jewish society and compared this experience with approaches used and dilemmas faced by those working in the Western Balkans. This study too highlights the potential nature of narrative inquiry in exploring individual experiences, which is related to the present study. As Chase (2003) argued, narrative inquiry researchers are "interested in the meanings people construct as

they talk about their lives, as well as in the social contexts and resources that enable and constrain them" (p. 81) and so is the current study.

Likewise, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) suggested that what distinguishes narrative inquiry from other qualitative research methods is the fact that "researchers usually embrace the assumption that the story is one if not the fundamental unit that accounts for human experience" (p. 2). Therefore, narrative inquiry was chosen for the present study because individual stories about building relationships during and after the theater event would help to shed more light on the role of theater in relationship building as part of peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. According to Clandinin (2013), the most common narrative research methodology consists of gathering stories about a certain theme, where the researcher would find out information about a specific phenomenon. The author's view is supported by Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) in their position that narrative inquiry can generate data more than other approaches because narratives, or stories, are part of our lives, supporting our understanding of experiences as our narratives are interrelated in time, environment, and culture, reflecting our understanding of an event. Clearly, such arguments on the potential of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007) speak to the methodology's ability to engage in a deep way with people's experiences.

Specifically, the present research used an exploratory narrative approach because of its ability to enable the exploration of a connection between individuals' experiences and an event, and how that impacted relationship building. Sandelowski (1991) suggested that exploratory narrative research's focus is to explore the connection between events through a causal lens, which is also suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). The exploratory narrative approach was chosen because the study explores how participating in theater events for peacebuilding

impacted individuals' growth and relationship with one another. This was particularly important since the stories generated would be the voices of individuals who participated, hence collecting information from direct experiences. These individuals' stories would be part of the knowledge base in the current debate on the role of theater in peacebuilding, which is largely based on stories provided by practitioners and academicians.

Research Design

The study gathered twelve sets of stories of the lived experiences among the people who were involved in the Morning Star Forum Theater events for peacebuilding in South Sudan in 2019. As noted previously, theater events were implemented as peacebuilding interventions among South Sudan communities who have been in conflict with one another for decades (Dessalegn, 2017). Currently, apart from the large numbers of attendees of theater activities and the coming together of individuals from different ethnic groups, there was little evidence to show how the event contributed to building relationships among participants during or after the event. The generated stories from participants and their perspectives on the experience of relationships with "the other" during and since the event provide important insights into the value of theater in peacebuilding. The study illuminated perspectives of the participants rather than the funders or producers to enhance the understanding of the role of theater in peacebuilding. While the debates by peacebuilding funders and producers are powerful, they are one sided, as they lack the voices of the people targeted by these events.

Selecting Participants

Participants were drawn from individuals who participated in the Morning Star Forum Theater events for peacebuilding in South Sudan in 2018 and 2019. As described in Chapter I, the events took place in six different states and eventually culminated in a grand festival in Juba,

the capital city of South Sudan. The South Sudan Theater Organization (SSTO), which had

partnered with Morning Star, assisted in reaching out to participants. Upon an approved proposal

and the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher contacted the SSTO, requesting them to

send out information on the study through their social networks. The communication to SSTO

was made via email and followed up through a WhatsApp call.

In order to ensure confidentiality, the researcher provided an introductory note, her email

address, and WhatsApp number to the SSTO. Thereafter, the SSTO sent the researcher's contact

information together with the introductory note to their networks. The note briefly explained the

research project and asked those who were interested in participating to contact the researcher

directly. The SSTO sent the information across their networks, which are located in all regions

that participated in the events, to attract diverse groups and sufficient numbers of people to

participate. Detailed steps taken are provided in the research protocols as Appendix A.

The researcher chose to use the SSTO because they were responsible for bringing all the

actors and a group of individuals from the six states together, and thus had existing connections.

Besides, the organization has an active network of the theater groups based in different regions.

SSTO's theater groups keep contacts with community participants, making it possible to reach

participants from a diversified spectrum of South Sudan ethnic tribes. Although the researcher

had planned to use purposeful sampling technique to ensure a diverse representation in the study,

no individual was turned down from participating in the study. As it will be explained in Chapter

IV, a total of 23 participants contacted the researcher but of these, only 12 participated in the

study.

Sample Size

There is no predetermined rule for determining the number of participants in qualitative research, except for the general requirement for rigor and trustworthiness. However, Sim et al. (2018) point to the fact that there are multiple ways of determining the sample size in qualitative research and one of these ways, which they refer to as conceptual models, is particularly relevant to this study. According to the authors, researchers can select their sample size based upon specific characteristics of the study including the study aim, type of analysis intended, the scope of the study, and the topic, among others. In respect to the research topic, the authors argued that "the more obvious … the more rich the data, the smaller the sample size" (Sim et al., 2018, p. 4). The present study aimed at a deeper understanding of individuals' stories rather than a broad range of stories, therefore putting more emphasis on the richness of the data gathered rather than the quantity. In addition, Vasileiou et al. (2018) emphasized the need for researchers to be "transparent about evaluations of their sample size sufficiency, situating these within broader and more encompassing assessments of data adequacy" (p. 3).

In consideration of the topic for the current study and the need to collect richer stories about individuals' experiences, a smaller sample was appropriate. As it was intended, the researcher interviewed 12 participants and as it will be revealed in Chapter IV, their stories illuminated rich stories of experiences on relationship building during and after the event, adding insight to the role of theater in peacebuilding.

Data Collection Tools

The researcher used WhatsApp and Skype calls to make appointments with the participants and to collect the data. WhatsApp or Skype interviews were utilized not just because of the current COVID-19 related travel limitations, but because they are communication tools

that can generate the required information. While social science research prefers face-to-face interviews in narrative research, Holt (2010) elucidated that telephone interviews can equally generate deep understanding of the phenomenon in the same way as face-to-face. In addition, Stephens (2007) explained how the use of telephone creates a link between the researchers and high-status position respondents, an argument that can be aligned with the situation under study. According to Stephens (2007), telephone interviewing with elite and ultra-elite respondents is a productive and valid approach to gather data.

It is important to acknowledge that Stephens (2007) was dealing with the elites, which is not the case in the present study. However, the point here is less about the elites but about accessibility. Similar to the difficulties involved in accessing the elites due to their busy schedules, the ability to access the participants in South Sudan due to pandemic, security issues, and travel restrictions also required an alternate yet effective way to collect data. As was the case of Stephens, most of the participants of the Morning Star Theater possess phones and some of these are even smartphones, making the use of WhatsApp and Skype calls appropriate tools in the present study.

Interviews

Guided by Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000), narrative inquiry interviews follow five important phases: (a) the preparation phase, during which the researcher formulates the research questions; (b) the initiation phase, which is about formulating the initial topic; (c) the actual interview; (d) the fourth phase also takes place during the interviews and allows the researcher to engage in minimal follow-up questioning asking only for additions onto the story and not offering the researcher's own opinion; (e) the final phase is concluding interviews. They

(Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000) further argue that narrative inquiry interviews must promote an atmosphere that is encouraging to the interviewee to appreciate the significance of their stories.

As had been planned, the third call the researcher made with the participant was to conduct the interview, although in some cases, interviews were done during the second call. The researcher spent time establishing amicable conversation and a cordial relationship that promoted willingness to participate and share thoughtful and frank conversation. As Schwandt (2007) observed, the process of narrative inquiry is supposed to be researching with people rather than researching on people. Allowing a free and cordial environment enabled participants to participate fully and freely. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participant. The request to record was included in the consent form, which was read out to participants at the start of each interview. The consent form is provided as Appendix B. Last but not least, all interviews were conducted in English language, a criteria adhered to in the selection stage of the participants.

Interview Questions

Beginning the narrative inquiry from an inductive/emergent approach, the interviews were conducted without preconceived notions of the experience or the impact of that experience on relationship building. After all, Wells (2011) suggested that the primary role of narrative research is discovery, conceptualization of ideas, and observations with the possibility of the development of hypotheses. Given the intent of the present study, to explore in what ways did participation in the Morning Star Forum Theater impact participants' interpersonal growth and relationship-building between individuals from different communities in South Sudan, the researcher used the following four open-ended interview questions:

1. When you reflect on your experiences with Morning Star Theater event, what are your most powerful memories and recollections? Based on what they said, the researcher followed up with further probes and listened to hear what they said was important and powerful.

2. Please share your experiences of being involved in the Theater event with people from other communities. Please describe your encounters in detail. Here too, the researcher listened, then probed further with follow-up questions such as: what was it like working and connecting with individuals from other communities? Did you learn something you didn't expect? In what ways was this experience unusual for you?

3. Please share your experiences of relating with people from other communities since the time you participated in the theater for peacebuilding intervention. Please describe your encounters in detail. The researcher listened and asked follow up questions depending on what they shared. Those who shared that they have had further relationships, they were asked to describe those relationships. What enabled those to occur? In what ways have these relationships grown over time? The researcher explored the level of trust? Of caring? Those who have not had relationships since the event, the research explored WHY? What were the obstacles to further interactions? And if they would you like further interactions?

4. Tell me your experience of theater as an approach to building peace. (Here too, the researcher listened and followed up. For example, did they experience the event and participation as important for peacebuilding in South Sudan? What was helpful in that regard? And what they feel would make the theater events more impactful in the peacebuilding process?

Where necessary, the interview questions were supported by prompts such as, "Tell me more," "And then," and "What else?" depending on the individual's story. The prompts were meant to focus the stories on relationship building with "the other." The other general information such as gender and ethnic groups was collected, and these categories are spelt out during the analysis of the findings, in Chapter IV.

Data Analysis

As suggested by Bold (2011), the analysis of narratives from interviews can be conducted through the use of two traditional analytical approaches— thematic and structural. Thematic analysis emphasizes the content presented in the text, while structural analysis focuses on the organization of the narrative, its form, and the flow of the entire story. Following Bold's (2011) claim that structural analysis is fit for studies aiming at understanding everything about the story in a holistic manner, the researcher had planned to use structural analysis. However, Wells (2011) emphasized the need for narrative inquiry scholars to desist from entering the research terrain with preset hypotheses and instead be open to discovery. Such discovery is not just about the content but also about the methodology, depending on the way in which data presents itself. During the process of manual transcription, a wide range of important themes that relate to relationship-building as an aspect of peacebuilding emerged from the stories. The themes were too powerful to be ignored. The researcher concluded that the emergent themes were a golden opportunity to contextualize the research findings instead of analyzing each story separately. Therefore, thematic analysis emerged from the data itself and prompted the researcher to approach the analysis thematically, rather than structurally. Approval was secured from the Chair to make this shift.

Thematic Analysis

Once the interviews were completed, the researcher conducted all transcriptions. There were 12 raw audios that were transcribed manually. Although the manual transcription was cumbersome, it was an opportunity to become thoroughly familiar with each story. By the time all 12 stories were completed, the researcher was conversant with the reoccurring categories in each story. After transcription was completed, the transcripts were shared with participants through WhatsApp to verify if they reflected their statements and views as encouraged by Wells (2011). The process of sharing summaries of the transcripts with participants allowed them to check for accuracy of their stories as captured in the transcript.

Following the approval of transcripts by study participants, the researcher embarked on the process of data cleaning to remove participants' identifiers such as names and other identifiers that could easily be recognized by readers familiar with the context. Participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms and some texts describing a specific tribe in a divisive way were replaced with the term "the other." The analysis of stories from interviews to reporting followed a process similar to an illustration in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1

Steps Taken from Interviews to Analysis
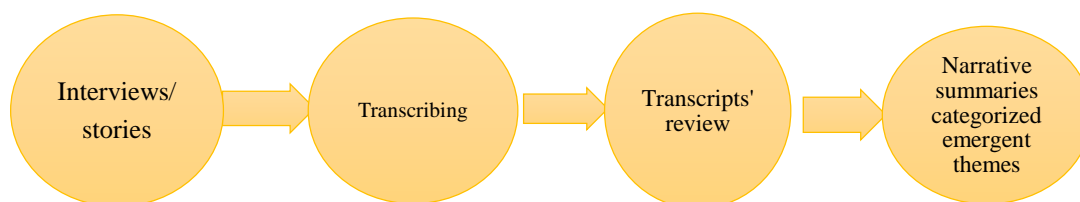
Narrative summaries were organized following the four parts of the study: (a) participants' most powerful memories of the Morning Star Theater event, (b) participants' stories of relationship-building experiences during the event, (c) participants' stories of the existence and growth of relationship with "the other" after the theater event was concluded, and (d) participants' own reflections on the impact of the theater in building peace in post-conflict settings, specifically in South Sudan.

Inductive/Emergent Approach

The researcher employed an inductive/emergent approach to return several times to the interviews to make sense of the data. Basit (2003) asserted that an inductive approach in data analysis helps to set the stage for a "creative process of inductive reasoning and theorizing" (p. 143). The emergent approach helped the researcher to identify emergent categories most relevant to the four interview questions. The emergent categories were aligned to the four interview questions. Eventually, the emergent themes were presented and described in connection with relationship building as an aspect of peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. The data analysis process is visually illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2

A Visual Representation of Data Analysis
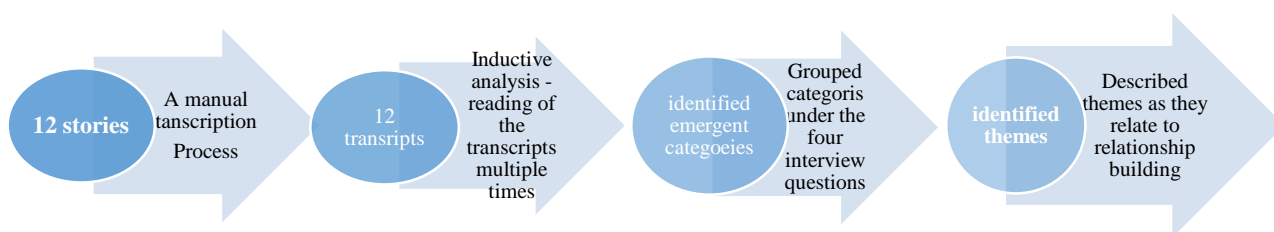
After the identification of categories, these (categories) were compared among the 12 stories to identify the most predominant themes. The predominant themes were those that ran throughout each narrative and crossed in many other stories.

The emerged themes demonstrated how the Morning Star Theater Event facilitated relationship building with "the other" in a transformative way (Riessman, 1993). Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to re-aggregate the stories and bring them back together to tell a grand narrative of progressive relationship building across all the 12 participants of the study. While the identification of themes was important, the interpretation was made with the ultimate aim of meaning-making, while ensuring that participants' intent was maintained in the analysis. As will be seen in Chapter IV, the themes speak to both the individual and collective growth in relationship building, illuminating shared experiences of relationship building over the short- and long-term.

Criteria for Rigor

In any research, credibility of the gathered data and the robustness of the analysis determine the quality of research. Ćwiklicki and Urbaniak (2018) argued that methodological precision is a fundamental criterion for research quality. It is especially important where the flexibility of the research methods offers a number of different ways to proceed. Rigor, or soundness of research, was determined in terms of planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting, which can result in trustworthiness. Rigor was achieved through member checking through multiple ways. The first step of establishing rigor was through asking participants to review the transcripts for accuracy. The second step of establishing rigor was done by the researcher through multiple reviews of the narrative summaries generated from the transcripts.

The final stage of establishing rigor was achieved by working closely with a Doctoral Committee Chair, who reviewed the narrative summaries and the emerging categories from the stories.

Ethical Considerations

The study involved sensitive topics and human participants who might have been traumatized as a result of the South Sudan conflict. There was a need to handle participants with utmost care and confidentiality. The researcher was aware about possible risks, some of which were foreseen. For example, the researcher was particularly aware that the environment in which the study was carried out is a post-conflict setting, targeting individuals whose lives have been affected by the conflicts. As observed by Ketefian (2015), researchers dealing with vulnerable groups, such as victims of violence, must ensure that there are additional conditions or protections to minimize the possibility of causing more harm. In addition to seeking participants' consent before the start, the researcher acted sensitively during the interviews, allowing participants absolute flexibility to pause the interview, to stop and reschedule, and/or to stop participating completely. The researcher is a trained counseling psychologist which prepared her to act with sensitivity during the interview process. In addition, her experience within the community equipped her with knowledge to understand some of the reactions when participants were not willing to disclose. The researcher included contact information for local individuals and organizations that provide counselling for any individual that might require follow-up.

Absolute confidentiality of individual stories, except for the purposes of this dissertation, was accorded to individuals by protecting their identities as suggested by Petrova et al. (2014). As will be seen in Chapter IV, all participants' names are pseudonyms. It is also important to note that the proposal was vetted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Antioch University to ensure that the researcher had addressed all the ethical considerations.

A final ethical consideration relates to informed consent. The signing of the consent form has cultural interpretations. Most people associate signing forms to binding yourself to legal processes that are not familiar. Therefore, before the interviews, the researcher read out loud the consent form to the participants and secured verbal consent. Only those who agreed to participate in the research were interviewed.

The Role of the Researcher

The researcher's obvious roles were data collection, management, and analysis. However, these three were not done in a vacuum; instead they required full engagement of the methodology. The researcher ensured adequate preparation, clear and timely communication to the organization that posted information about the study and to study participants. This was achieved through planning ahead with individuals providing enough time to ask and respond to questions. Slembrouck (2015) suggested that researchers' roles involve, among other things, the ability to engage people and encourage expressions. As such, during the interviews, the researcher assumed the fundamental role of encouraging participants' expressions by asking open-ended questions, which were followed-up with prompts. Finally, during data management and data analysis, the researcher actively engaged with study participants to ensure truthfulness and credibility of the data.

Next is Chapter IV, which presents the analysis of research findings. As explained earlier, the analysis of data was done through structural analysis to identify the existence of and nature of a development path towards relationship building with "the other" across all 12 stories. The use of emergent approach allowed the researcher to review all 12 stories and examine categories of shared experiences from multiple sources across the different parts of each story, as discussed in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Introduction

The present study explores the role of theater in peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. Specifically, the study hoped to capture and analyze experiences of participants who were involved in Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding in South Sudan. The primary interest of the study is to examine if, and in what ways, participating in the Morning Star Forum Theater events impacted relationships among participants from differing regions/tribes in conflict, over the short- and long-term, given that relationship building is a key element in peacebuilding. Twelve individuals who participated in the Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding events were interviewed over the course of eight weeks, from March to May 2021. The interviews were conducted via WhatsApp or Skype calls, recorded, transcribed, and shared with each interviewee for any corrections prior to the beginning of the analysis. The researcher then read each transcribed interview multiple times to allow for sense-making of the data.

As described in Chapter I, the Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding was organized in six different states in the last quarter of 2018, and concluded in Juba, the capital city of South Sudan in February 2019. The event in Juba, which brought together individual representatives from all the six states, was the culmination of the State-level events. The Juba gathering was organized as the National Theater Festival for Peacebuilding under the theme "Reconnecting South Sudan Communities through Theater," hosted by the Morning Star Program leadership in collaboration with South Sudan Theater Organization (SSTO). All 12 study participants attended theater events at both the state and national levels.

During the selection of participants, efforts were made to ensure both ethnic and gender diversity in the composition of interviewees. As shown in Figure 4.1, nine of the participants

were men and three were women. The lower number of women parallels the gender diversity of the events themselves, especially the national theater festival, in that far more men participated than women (Morning Star, 2019).

In addition to gender, study participants represented ethnic diversity as they came from seven different tribes, although the representation was marginal (with one or utmost three individual(s) from each of the participating tribes). Despite the minimal representation, the diversity enabled the researcher to gather diverse experiences and also to be able to explore whether differences in that experience existed among the various tribes. Figure 4.1 also shows that of the 12 study participants, three were Dinkas, two were Shilluk, two were Nuers, and two were Murle. The remaining tribes—Lakoya, Kuku and Bari—were represented by one participant from each.

Figure 4.1

Participants' Gender and Ethnic Representation
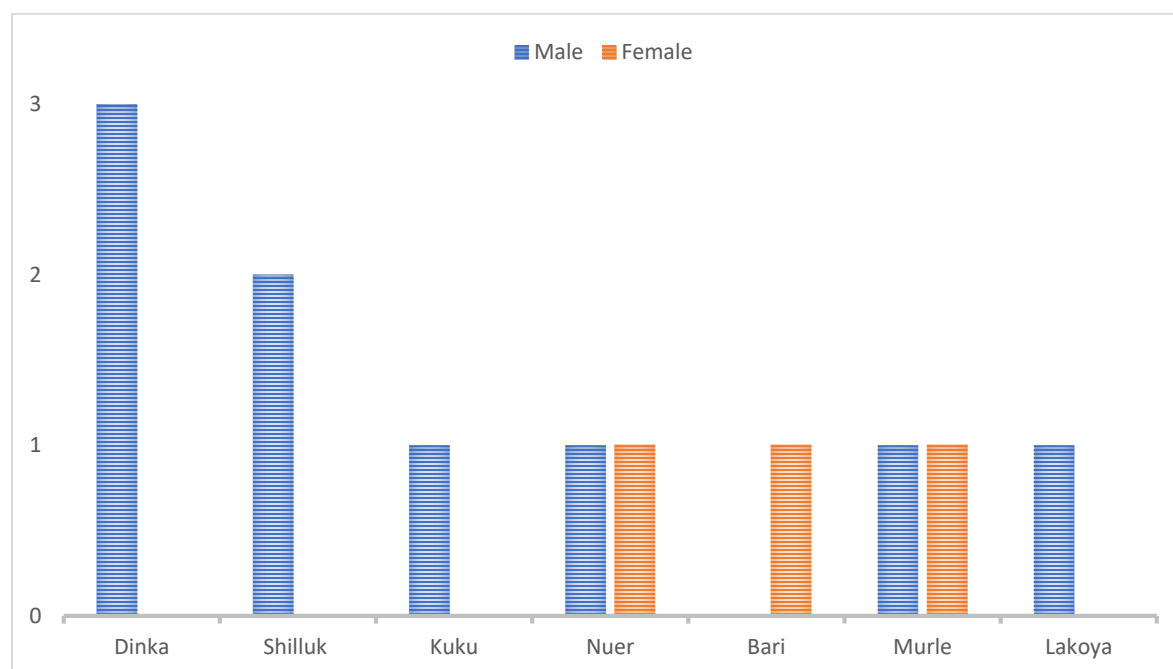
Diversity was further augmented by widening the geographical base from which participants were drawn. All 12 participants were from different regions that were involved in Morning Star Theater events across the country. Specifically, three participants were from Upper Nile, one was from Northern Bahr el Ghazal, one was from Western Bahr el Ghazal, three were from Jonglei, and four were from Central Equatoria. Regional representation in the study is shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2

Number of Participants per Region
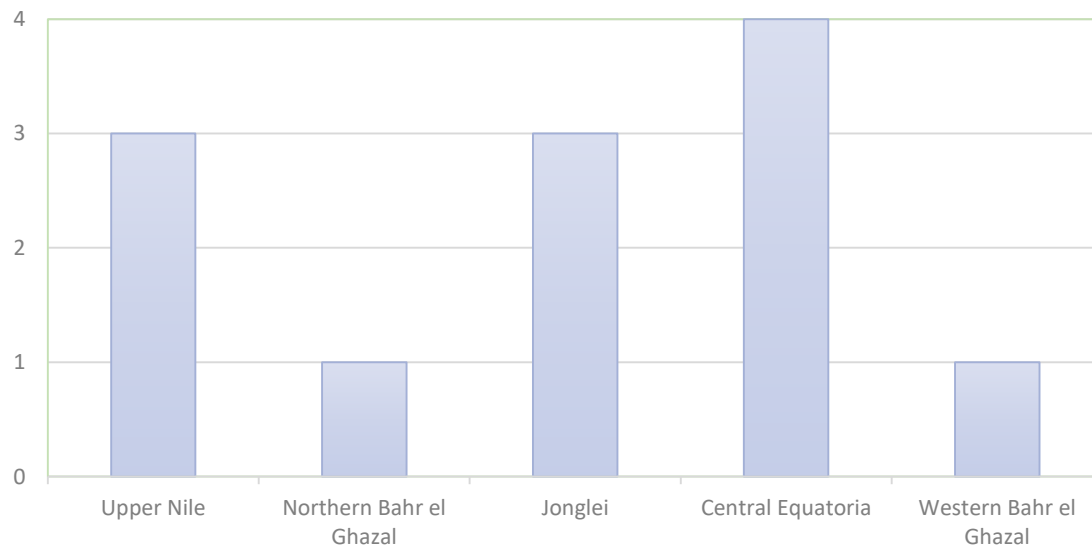
The geographical base from which participants were drawn is provided to show how many regions that participated in the Morning Theater events as shown in Figure 1.4 participated in the study. All regions covered by the Morning Star theater events were represented in the study except Unity State. In fact, the geographical locations of study participants confirm the diverse tribal distribution, a perspective that has a bearing on how individual participants experienced the Morning Star Theater event, as will be seen in the findings of the study.

A final unique demographic feature among participants was age, which ranged from 28 to 45 years. Participants' ages significantly contrasted with the anticipated age group at the time of the proposal for this study, which had been expected to be generally younger. However, age was not a key criterion in the selection of participants, hence all participants who expressed interest in participating, whatever their age, were accepted. Participants' specific ages are presented in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3

Number of Participants Within Age Groups
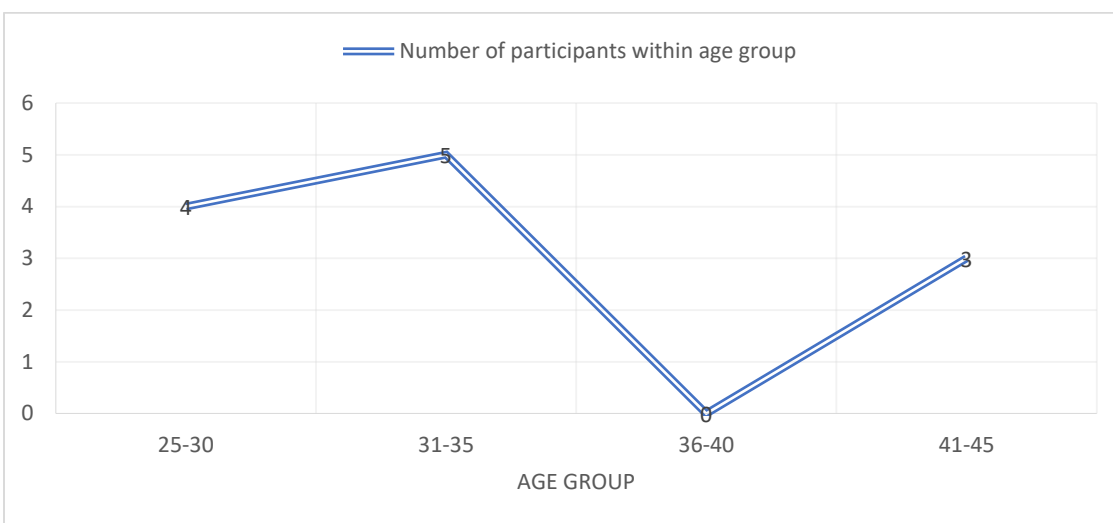
Procedure

Upon securing IRB approval, the researcher then sent an email to the SSTO asking to identify participants for the study. Attached to the SSTO email was a brief introduction about the study to be distributed across the organization's networks and the contact information of the researcher if recipients were interested. The SSTO distributed the introduction about the study immediately. Over the next several weeks, 23 individuals contacted the researcher. However, when an effort was made to reply, almost half were unreachable as the phones were unavailable. Eventually, 12 were reached and agreed to participate in the study.

As described in Chapter III, three steps were then taken to select participants and collect data. Step One was the initial call with individuals upon contact with the researcher in response to the information shared by the SSTO. During this call, the researcher provided a brief introduction and scheduled a second more extensive call. Step Two was the second call, during which the researcher provided detailed information about the study and made appointments for the day and time of the forthcoming interview. Step Three was the actual interview, which began with the reading out and verbal acceptance of the consent form. In a number of the interviews, Steps Two and Three were combined.

The overarching interest of this study was to examine the ways in which participation in the Morning Star Forum Theater impacted participants' interpersonal growth and relationship-building across conflicting communities in South Sudan. During the interviews, specific questions and probes or the interviewees' own unprompted reflections spoke to the following four areas:

1. What were the participant's most memorable or powerful recollections of the Morning Star Theater for peacebuilding events?

2. What were the participant's experiences of connecting and working with the other *during* the theater event and their reflections on those experiences?

3. What were the participant's experiences of connecting and working with the other *after* the theater event and their reflections on those experiences?

4. What were the participant's reflections on the ways they believe the theater event impacted their personal growth regarding relationship building at community level with those from other communities?

Each interview unfolded in slightly different ways. During some interviews, all four questions were asked as planned with additional probes. In other interviews, the first question prompted the interviewee to provide detailed information on some or all the other areas without specific probes. However, the data were analyzed and organized in order of the four questions. Organizing data in the order of the questions revealed the comparable nature of the interviews, and ultimately, provided an insightful way to track the path of growth in relationship building for analysis.

As discussed in Chapter III, data from all the interviews were analyzed by the use of thematic analysis to identify the emergent themes that illuminate interpersonal growth towards relationship building with "the other." The researcher employed an inductive/emergent approach, returning several times to the interviews to make sense of the data, while making sure that participants' perspectives were captured as it has been those perspectives that have been most absent in the relevant research to date, a discussed in Chapter II. The emergent approach to the analysis of the data allowed the researcher to examine categories of shared experiences from multiple sources across the different parts of the story. Major themes are those that emerged from four or more stories, although other categories that merged from few interviewees were equally analyzed and presented as reflections from few interviewees.

As presented in this Chapter, the participants' names are pseudonyms to protect their identity and other personal details that if shared could easily be connected to specific individuals. The use of protection of identities was part of the IRB and the participants' consent. If participants shared stories during which they named others, pseudonyms have also been used. Detailed information about each of the 12 participants is provided in Appendix D.

This Chapter presents the findings from the all the 12 interviews. It is organized into four sections, with each section focused on one of the four questions identified above. Section One presents participants' most powerful memories of the Morning Star event. Section Two presents participants' stories of relationship building experiences during the event. Section Three presents participants' stories of the existence and growth of relationship with "the other" after the theater event was concluded. Finally, Section Four presents the participants' own reflections on the impact of the theater in building peace in post-conflict settings, specifically in South Sudan.

Specifically, Section One presents the most powerful memories of the Morning Star Theater event and identifies both commonalities and differences that emerged from the multiple stories. Understanding participants' powerful memories of the event provided a foundation on which to examine if, and in what ways, participating in the theater events had an impact on relationship building. The participants' unique contexts in terms of their own ethnicity and region were taken into account as possible influences on the similarities and differences in the experiences and reflections. As will be presented, the primary categories that emerged from these shared memories relate to (a) the weight of history and the associated discomfort, (b) encounters with "the other," and (c) emerging self-awareness and recollections of hope.

Section Two examines participants' reflections, specifically about experiences and encounters during the theater event with people from other communities. The themes that emerged from reflections on relationships during the theater event were grouped in the categories. One category of analysis is where the relationships occurred, during the plays and performances. The other categories are about the types encounters of "us" vs. "them," and illustrated the pre-existing distrust, as well as shifts in attitude. It was during these encounters at

the event that participants reflected on their own growth, as Individual Turning Points and from Individual to Collective Responsibilities.

Section Three addresses the experiences shared by interviewees in terms of relationships with those from other communities since the theater event, which at the time of the interviews was approximately two years previously. This Section is the heart of the researcher's curiosity, since the study's primary interest was to examine if and in what ways participation in the Morning Star Forum Theater fostered interpersonal relationships with "the other" over the long-term, as relationship building is a fundamental aspect to peacebuilding. The major themes that emerged and are presented in this Section fall into the categories of Individual Relationships, Community Peacebuilding, and Obstacles to Relationship-Building.

Section Four presents participants' own sense of the role that theater had as an approach to peacebuilding in post-conflict settings given their Morning Star experiences. What emerged was the degree to which participants appreciated the purposeful design of the Morning Star Theater event, especially having started from state levels before bringing all groups together in a national event, the mix of events, and the duration of the events, which might have had an impact on the effectiveness of the event. In their reflections, participants reiterated the need for further tailor-made theater events, wider coverage, and constant reproduction in the use of theater as peacebuilding processes.

The Chapter's conclusions summarize the major insights from each of the four sections and as the context for Chapter V's analysis and implications for both practice and scholarship, focused on the value of incorporating theater as an effective tool with emphasis on decolonizing peacebuilding processes.

Section I: Participants' Most Powerful Memories of the Event

This Section presents what participants identified as their most powerful memories of the Morning Star Theater event. The aim of this Section is to present the most powerful memories of the Morning Star Theater event and to identify both commonalities and differences that emerged from the multiple stories. Understanding participants' powerful memories of the event provides a foundation on which to examine if and in what ways participating in the theater events had an impact on relationship building. While some participants used short phrases to describe their most powerful memories, others shared extensive details and reflections on their individual contexts. The participants' unique contexts, in terms of their own ethnicity and region, were taken into account as possible influences on the similarities and differences in the experiences and reflections.

The Morning Star Theater for Peacebuilding events in Juba brought individuals from six different locations across the country. Most of the individuals who attended the Morning Star Theater festival had never met with others from different regions and ethnicities previously, nor would they likely have done so if not for the theater event. Although the geographical distances between the six different communities pose a potential obstacle to interactions, the distance is less about the miles and more about the mindsets. The ongoing tension and prior conflicts between these communities is largely responsible for the existing divides and distance between people. It should be noted as well that even individuals who hailed from the same state were not accustomed to interacting previously and, in some cases, the theater event brought them together for the first time.

So, what do participants remember most vividly; what were their most powerful memories? As will be presented, the primary categories that emerged from these shared

memories relate to (a) the weight of history and the associated discomfort, (b) encounters with "the other," and (c) emerging self-awareness and recollections of hope.

Discomfort Associated with the Weight of History

The memories shared by all 12 interviewees were framed by the context of the political conflicts that took place in 2013, six years prior to the Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding event. Participants identified both themselves and other participants on one side or another of those events, and that historical context influenced the feelings they brought to Juba. For example, some came to the theater event concerned with physical safety while others harbored distrust. From their stories, it was clear that these feelings were omnipresent and palpable.

Malish, a Dinka man from Northern Bahr el Ghazal, a region that is predominantly occupied by people from his tribe, shared:

> I was not sure of the repercussions of having several of us with dissenting beliefs and opinions together. Because the war, which started in 2013 and was repeated in 2016, was interpreted as a war between the Dinkas and Nuers. This narrative ran from top down to the community. During the theater event, as a Dinka I was worried about how other participants would look at me. You see it is us, the Dinkas in government, who have failed the country.

Bebi, also a Dinka from Jonglei, a region that is ethnically diverse, shared his sense of fear and foreboding:

> I knew I was going to meet with people from the Protection of Civilians camp [PoC] and I was like how will I talk to them? I know that these people have negative opinions about me because they are in the PoC and they know it is my tribe that sent them there. That fear was in me.

Laku, a Shilluk man from Upper Nile, a region that is predominantly occupied by the opposition groups, shared:

> I was not sure whether the Juba event was going to succeed. I knew that the Dinkas know that we are fighting the government. But I also thought it would be good to go to Juba and meet with many people from different communities. I had not been to Juba since 2013. I was worried but I still wanted to go.

As a Nuer man, which is a tribe viewed as a part of the opposition to the current government, Munki, also from Upper Nile, had similar concerns as he shared:

> I remember how afraid I was of being in Juba. I knew the government would arrest me. Surprisingly, during the event, I experienced acceptance by all and I mean by all including the ones I call my rivals.

Chalo, coming from Upper Nile too but belonging to the tribe of the current regime, shared his distrust.

> I was not comfortable with participants from the opposition-controlled communities and I know that they were not really comfortable with me because I was from the government-controlled areas. The 2013 incidents were at the back on my mind. I knew I was going to meet participants from the opposition.

The above quotes were from interviewees from the ethnic groups that are seen to have been actively involved and at the center of the 2013 events, the Dinkas and the Nuers. Interviewees from other ethnic groups also reflected feelings of discomfort influenced by the 2013 and 2016 events because of the popular political climate.

Hatima, a woman from Central Equatoria and not from one of the primary tribes viewed to be at the helm of the conflict, shared her concerns about a possibility of the prior conflicts manifesting at the event:

> I was curious about how other tribes would relate and work together. I never thought that I could see Dinkas and Nuers in one room working together. Since 2013 war, these two tribes became enemies. These two groups are like two bulls in one shelter. For me, seeing those two groups together demonstrated the power of theater.

As demonstrated by the above quotes, the prior 2013 events influenced how the participants came to the theater event, whether from the primary ethnic communities involved in the strife or from those outside the conflict but impacted by it. Participants recalled coming to the event full of a degree of discomfort and longstanding distrust. It is

clear that the feelings of distrust and discomfort were contextual. For some, it was due to

their involvement with the government. For others, it was due to their alliances with the

opposition groups. For others, the concern came from imagining individuals from the

major actors in the South Sudan conflicts at one shared event. While a deeper analysis of

relationships during the event is examined in Section Two, it is interesting to note that

interviewees revealed in their open-ended sharing how the weight of the historic conflict

framed their mindset as they came to Juba.

Encounters with "The Other"

Yet another set of unprompted powerful memories were about their actual

encounters with "the other." While all 12 participants brought forward the historic 2013

conflict that framed their distrust and discomfort, seven actually shared specific memories

of actual encounters with people from other communities. Whereas most of these

encounters started from the point of distrust, with some even being confrontational,

similarly participants shared how these progressed into increased understanding.

Misha, a Nuer woman from Jonglei, shared:

> I remember when Anywar [*pseudonym*] was blaming Chol [*pseudonym*] for taking their cows. Chol tried to explain that he has never been in Anywar's state and therefore there is no way he can be accused of taking their cows. But you see Anywar and all of us from her tribe have known that everyone from Chol's group was responsible for taking our cows, which I realized then that it is not true.

In another instance, Chalo shared his memory of a confrontation on the first day of the Juba

event. Yet, the encounter also illustrated for Chalo how others saw him.

> I remember an encounter with a participant from the opposition groups. It was lunch time. It was the first day and this man asked me about a government official from my tribe who was accused of killing many people in 2013. That made me realize that people looked at me as part of the regime which has failed the country.

Munki, a Nuer man from Upper Nile, shared:

> I was put in a group to come up with an activity to present to others in the evening. It was me, a Shilluk and a Dinka. This was the most difficult moment I had at the event. I was with a Dinka, and a Shilluk and myself, a Nuer. The three main groups at the center of the conflict in South Sudan. Especially the Dinkas who I have known to be hunting us. Our first task was to come up with a traditional dance to share in the evening. I decided to watch and see if things were going to turn out well. In my heart I was thinking about a possible argument between the three of us, which did not happen.

Munki further elaborated:

> We accomplished all our tasks and there was no sabotage. We ended up with a dance that cuts across all the three communities. I realized I could have been wrong about labeling all the other as my enemy.

Misha, who had shared a confrontational encounter, also shared a memory of an emotional speech by one of the theater participants that opened a window of hope for him:

> I remember a speech of a young man from Jonglei who became emotional and made everyone in the audience emotional. That was a sign that everyone is tired of the war. He appealed to young people to use the theater event to re-write the nation's story and not to continue living the story of their fathers and leaders, and I agree with him. We are the ones to change the situation.

Keji too shared his excitement about meeting with "the other" and encounters that turned into productive relationships:

> When I was in Juba, I remember how I wanted to know everyone. I remember one colleague from Wau, Mustafa [*pseudonym*] was like me. We had sat next to each other during the introductions. So, Mustafa was like a mobilizer. On the first day we moved from one group to another. I remember one time a woman from Upper Nile asked me about the agenda for the week thinking that I was part of organizers. So yeah, it was good!

> Evidently, encounters with "the other" were initially based through the lens of 2013

history. It is also clear that participants' stories illustrate an arc, a progression, where encounters

between individuals from different communities often started from an uncomfortable position

but moved to an increased understanding.

Emerging Self-Awareness

Yet another theme that emerged from the reflections that participants shared as their most powerful memories was that of an emergent awareness, both of self and of a real other, not one simply shaped by a distant history. Interviewees recalled their emerging self-awareness and an increased understanding of others. It was clear that the event helped breakdown long-held negative perceptions, hence, generating new insights. Since knowing oneself is often a precursor to getting along with others, these memories of emerging self-awareness have a significant value in terms of relationship-building in particular, and in peacebuilding efforts in general.

Laku, whose tribe was displaced by the 2013 violence in South Sudan and who currently lives in a PoC shared:

> I always blamed 'the other' for destroying my town. I realized that my reason was not based on evidence but on what I heard about 'the other.' The event helped me to understand that those who destroyed my town are different people and not everyone from that particular ethnic group. Learning how to separate the events of 2013 from every individual from 'the other' group was liberating. It is easy to make wrong conclusions based on wrong information and some of that information can promote conflict.

Along the same vein, Chalo, from the ruling tribe, shared that the event helped him break down his stereotypes and even find commonality:

> I did not know much about the positive things about other communities until I met them and have continued to connect with them. I discovered that we are not different. I remember one evening, on the second day, we sat and talked about our unique cultures such as traditional dances. I realized that one of the dances in Shilluk is also in my tribe. The dance is called; chong nen piny jam mandong chong nen piny (Shilluk), chong yi dai piny e jam diardit chong yi dai piny (in Dinka). So, to say, these communities were one people before conflict, to the extent that a dance had seven words and five of these words chong/ piny. jam / chomg and piny are used in both languages, but then as a result of the conflict, we began to disown each other and deny anything common between us.

But as the event progressed, Chalo elaborated that:

> I started realizing that all of us either from the government or opposition are hungry for peace in our country. The opportunity to learn more about other people and to learn about myself made me understand the South Sudan conflicts better and sums up everything about my experience of the event.

Tabani, who had expressed his reservations about other communities because he considered them hostile and aggressive, chose to share a memory that illustrated his own emerging awareness of "the other:"

> I realized that some of these were mere rumors. I came to realize that these are not facts but perceptions. I now believe that all people are the same, all people deserve better and all people need respect. This was proven during the events in Juba.

Hatima, whose prior quote noted her curiosity about how the Dinkas and the Nuers would work together in one event, remembered Juba as a celebration of unity for the whole country:

> What I saw was that it was no longer about ethnic groups but about people of South Sudan. I still remember the excitement from all of us regardless of where we came from. The event brought all the people together despite their differences.

Misha reflected on how his self-awareness and increased understanding of "the other" tilts the negative weight of history:

> Perceptions stop us from getting to know people at individual levels. I learnt that people from other communities were eager to learn from me. I also learnt that other communities were aware of the perceptions about them and were trying to make others understand that some of these perceptions are not true. I created wonderful relationships, which still exist and will continue to grow forever.

As the above quotes show, one of the most powerful memories participants chose to share at the outset of the interviews was their own recognition of their emergent self-awareness, and that the opportunity to get to know "the other" minimized the prior discomfort and led to realizations of common interests.

Recollections of Hope

Another theme that emerged from all 12 participants in describing their most powerful memories was the hopefulness of the experience, captured by words such as "awesome," "awakening," "interesting," "profound," "amazing," and many more. Not a single participant framed the memories of the events with hopelessness or negative words. Figure 4.4 visually shows the words used, which capture a collective memory of turning point and optimism upon which new relationships could be built.

Figure 4.4

A Collective Memory of Optimistic Words

The use of powerful words to describe their experiences of Morning Star Theater events resonated with the same feelings and expressions of excitement and growth. Deeper reflections on whether the theater events influenced positive change in the relationship building with "the other" are further analyzed in subsequent sections of this Chapter.

In summary, when asked to choose the most powerful memories of the event, several themes emerged. The first was the weight of history that participants brought to the event. The

second was the encounters with "the other," from confrontational to an openness based on an emergent self-awareness of and an increased understanding of "the other." As individuals and collectively, these were powerful memories of the Morning Star Theater for Peacebuilding event.

Section Two: Reflections on Relationships During Juba

The Morning Star Theater for Peacebuilding event involved both formal and informal activities over the course of five days. The informal activities were interactions between the different groups during free time; for example, during meals or in the evenings. The formal activities were the actual Forum Theater plays (Appendix E) and performances. What the participants chose to share about the connections made during the five days was illuminating. All 12 interviewees shared stories of connections made during both the formal and informal events.

The themes that emerged from the review of participants' reflections on relationships made during the theater event were grouped in the following ways. The first group is where the relationships occurred, during the plays and performances. The other categories are about the types encounters of "us" vs. "them," and illustrated the preexisting distrust as well as shifts in attitude. It was during these encounters at the event that participants reflected on their own growth, as Individual Turning Points and from Individual to Collective Responsibilities*.*

Plays and Performances: Relationships Emerge

As described earlier, the interviews took place approximately two years following the Morning Star Theater attendance. Interestingly, the plays themselves left a lasting impact as sites of relationship and encounter. Eight interviewees still remembered specific plays and how those plays and the performances impacted their experiences.

Chalo recalled that seeing the play of Munki, was a powerful learning moment for him:

> I used to think that the only way to deal with 'the other' is through revenge. But the play about a young boy who joined the military to avenge his parents challenged me. I learned that I do not only hurt the enemy but I also hurt myself. I tell you, Deng [*pseudonym*] and I, despite coming from different conflicting communities in our state we did not want the festival to end. We had become good friends and until now we are still friends.

It was still the Munki play that Chalo went further to emphasize its impact on him. In the interview, he quoted a proverb, which was repeated many times during the performance of Munki, "Te de yen ke kec to yinic, ka biyin cham eben," which translates as, "If you have something bitter in your stomach, it will eat you up." Chalo added, "Resentment is bitterness and if you do not deal with it, it will destroy you. Simple, you cannot deal with bitterness with bitterness." For Sadia, a Murle woman living in Western Bahr el Ghazal, it was not one specific performance, but various plays that she recalled with excitement:

> I always think about the various plays. They all touched on the common issues that affect everyone in South Sudan. However, the play on my tribe is hated, clearly shows what we all think about 'the other.' But I always wonder why we did not feel that way during the event. We connected well as one big family.

Not only did the plays allow for relationship building, but some also shed light on ways that the South Sudan conflict has been transferred to many cultural practices. Malish noted:

> I used to consider some cultural practices simply as culture but after the theater event I can connect most of these practices to the conflict. For example, dowry has turned into a revenge system. Whenever one wants to pay bride price, instead of paying their own cows, sheep and goats, they raid 'the other' and pay a dowry. This was clearly demonstrated in the play about Cattle Raiding, Revenge and Conflict.

Similarly, Bebi, a Dinka man living in Jonglei State, reflected on how the Kasala play helped him understand how some cultural practices can be a source of conflict:

> Consider Kasala, the play about early marriages. Yes, early marriage is a practice used in many families to acquire wealth or even to settle tribal conflicts. But the play helped me to understand its dangers and that it should be stopped. Yes, we can have different dances, foods and marriages but cultures that bring conflicts should be stopped. I still remember the event as a unifying moment and building consensus among each other than blaming each other.

Tareka, a man from the Kuku ethnic group located in Central Equatoria, reflected that the plays

were moments of tremendous emotion for participants:

> I remember seeing people crying or sometimes becoming moody and then towards the
> end of the play, there was a dramatic change. I saw people become more happy and
> excited. People were sad because the stories are similar everywhere. People were happy
> because the solution to our situation was also performed on the stage. I remember, no
> individuals' contribution aimed at revenge but reconciliation.

The use of people's own local languages as an element in the plays, and during free time as well,

contributed to the event's impact, according to Tabani:

> The mixing of local languages and English was special as we were free to speak the
> language of our choice. People were part of the event fully. Individuals were free to make
> contributions to the stories in the languages they choose and each language was heard.

In summary, when asked to reflect on relationships during the Juba event, many of the

interviewees spoke about what happened during the actual plays, performances, and informal

interactions. Specific plays brought up specific issues of traditional practices and long-held

beliefs, and how these can perpetuate hostility and lead to conflicts. The informal interactions

enabled connections and conversations that had not happened prior to the theater event. These

encounters were emotional, history-laden, and opportunities for growth—personal and

collectively.

Juba Encounters of "Us" vs. "Them": Distrust Lingers

As described in Chapter II, divisive conflicts create the "us" vs. "them" narratives that

linger long past the actual conflict. And, as shared in this Chapter's Section One, the weight of

history weighed heavily on participants' memories before and at the start of the event.

Individuals in post-conflict zones may not only look at "the other" as the enemy, they may also

blame "the other" for the current situation, which is always characterized with hardships. South

Sudan is no different and participants' reflections on their experiences of connecting and

working with "the other" at the Juba event reflect this lingering distrust. When asked to share

memories of encounters at the event, all 12 interviewees noted the distrust of "the other" that hovered over the event, particularly at the beginning.

Ten of the 12 participants shared that it was challenging for them to connect at the beginning of the five days. Yet, in many cases, participants also seemed to recognize shifts in their feelings as they joined together as the days progressed.

Chalo, who had previously shared his distrust of being around "the other," noted that it took him time "to mix freely with participants from the opposition areas." In addition to his encounter with a woman from the opposition group who accused him together with his whole tribe for taking their cows, Chalo shared other challenging moments at Juba that opened his eyes:

> I was asked to comment whether the 2013 was an ethnic cleansing plan by the Dinkas or not. That made me think. I said 'I do not know,' but I also asked him if he thought it was not a coup. I asked him that because there is no single version for 2013 war. The opposition and international community blame the government and government blames the opposition.

Malish, talked about his distrust in these initial encounters, noting:

> The first problem that I encountered during the event was a division among participants. I made sure I sat with people from Aweil. I remember one participant from Wau told me that they are facing many problems because of the Dinkas. I did not know what to say to other people from other states.

In a similar vein, Misha, the Nuer woman from Jonglei shared that:

> It took me time to mix with others. I was thinking about the suffering my people and I are going through in the PoC. I knew that I was meeting with people from the Central Region who have no such problems like we do. You see, in PoCs, we wait on the UN for everything and I knew that people in Juba have access to all these things.

Laku, a Shilluk with pro-opposition leanings, framed his initial encounters at Juba along similar lines:

> It was challenging for me to connect with others. I had not met certain groups since 2013. I knew some as responsible for the 2013 war and here I am going to spend the whole week with them. Going to the government strongholds in my community was hard enough and now being Juba was more complicated.

Tabani's distrust as a context for his encounters at Juba was revealed as he shared, "When I met

them (people from Bor and Rumbek) at the event, I was looking to see if they had guns."

Clearly, the 2013 events were present as Juba events began. What is apparent from these

selected quotes, as well as others, is that the majority of those interviewed framed the Juba

encounters, at least initially, with the distrust wrought from the historical conflict. They were

honest in revealing their concerns. Yet, as discussed below, encounters in Juba also brought

about changes and shifts in the "us" vs. "them" narrative.

Juba encounters of "Us" vs. "Them": Shifts Happen

Even though participants shared their experiences of encounters framed by distrust, in

many cases, they seemed to recognize shifts in their attitudes as the event progressed and they

continued to interact with one another. Participants recalled that the five-day event provided

opportunities to listen to individuals with whom they would normally not interact. For example,

Malish shared:

> After the first two days, we started to mix freely. I and I think others too realized that
> ethnic rivalry was a hindrance to peace in South Sudan. All of us came with our
> perceptions of the conflict in South Sudan. My perception of 'the other' was wrong. I
> used to think that what the political leaders portrayed was exactly what people were
> believing. Ordinary people are told about who their enemies are and who their allies are.
> In most cases, the allies are simply their tribesmen. The things I believed in about the
> situation in my country I heard from my leaders. But that changed during the week.

Misha also noted the shifts as the event progressed:

> Through the week I connected with most of the people and realized that the whole
> country has issues. We just do not know much about 'the other' and we all hold on to our
> preconceptions. I understood that sometimes our perceptions are not true. Eventually, I
> connected with all people okay and I really had a fascinating experience.

Laku noted his shifts over the five days as he narrated: "When I spent time with them, I realized

that the people in the event were not responsible for what happened in 2013. I started to look at

individuals outside of tribes." Chalo attributed shifts in his understanding to the encounters

during the five days, noting that he had the chance to hear complaints from the other side,

towards him and his community, for the very first time. It was a revelation:

> I had never had the chance to sit, work and listen to their complaints. But when I look at my relationship with some of them, I know that meeting them and spending time with them helped them to know that not all people from the government controlled areas were responsible for the conflicts.

Tabani's reflections on what happened to him during the event are similarly profound. In his

mind, Juba changed him and how he thinks about and relates to "the other."

> During the event, I interacted with people formally and informally and I know that it is not true that those people are hostile. Had I not interacted fully with them during the event, I would still think about them in the same way. You see, in South Sudan, one person's character can end up defining the entire tribe. We all realized that during the event and that was powerful.

It was both the formal and informal encounters that left Malish a different man than when he

came to Juba:

> When we worked together, played together, ate together, and slept in the same house, that initial fear of the others changed. I remember on the 4th day, during the plays and the dances, we all went on stage and joined a dance by the Murle theater team. It was not a Murle dance anymore but a South Sudanese dance. We all started talking simply as Sudanese who want to see peace. By the way we were not just Sudanese but friends.

Tareka, a man from the Kuku ethnic group, shared that:

> Seeing all of us working with other tribes including those that are openly in conflict left a stunning impression on me. I was fascinated by the way people came together from different communities and all aiming at one thing, peace. We shared common issues through performances and conversations, which led to building trust among each other.

Then Sadia, a Murle woman, recalled:

> I always remember how we all sat in our small groups at the beginning. I sat with people from Juba and other groups also were sitting together but as the week progressed, that changed at the end we were all together.

Bebi commented about how through encounters over the course of the Morning Star Theater

event, he realized that:

People were holding grudges because they have never been enabled to share. Although we all came reserved and afraid of one another, the festival, helped us to open up. I knew that something good was happening. We were able to tell a story of peace, able to convince one another and able to speak to someone we have never talked to before. This built trust in all of us we started the process of reconciliation.

Interviewees' reflections reveal shifts, moving from preconceived distrust of an "us" vs. "them," to an us. As described in Chapter II, societies that have experienced prolonged conflicts, such as South Sudan, are characterized by negative perceptions and mistrust across the warring parties that linger on for decades. The Morning Star Forum Theater event aimed at bridging the gaps between the various communities. The interviews surfaced how the "us" vs. "them" thinking framed the encounters during the event. Nonetheless, all the 12 interviewees specifically made note of shifts in their own thinking, and nine interviewees commented on what they experienced in shifts by others about them or their tribe. The following subsections capture interviewees' turning points towards better understanding and different perceptions of "the other."

Individual Turning Points

The Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding events brought together more than ten different tribes with a goal to reconnect these communities that have been sharply divided mainly due to the 2013 conflict. Achieving such a goal requires, among other elements, that the theater events would address existing preconceptions in order to create the conditions for increased understanding of "the other." Interestingly, all 12 participants shared their changed understanding of the other that occurred during the Juba event. These were often high points in the interview, with participants sharing the power of their own shifts in thinking and feeling. These points of their stories were told with energy and excitement.

Malish shared that Juba was "a turning point for me as a person and I want to believe there is a group of South Sudanese whose lives changed because of that event too." The turning point was personal and he recognized that as he narrated:

> We were brought together even those that were not on good terms with one another. I discovered that they were the same people with the same wish of having a peaceful South Sudan. I had my own interpretations of the situation in my country, my own perceptions, and I looked at all people in a way they are represented by political leaders. But that changed. I know that people have different aspirations and all people want peace.

Munki, a Nuer whose tribe opposes the current government, shared that his individual experience was "one of the most memorable experiences that I will never forget in my life:"

> It was like a turning point for me. When I attended theater event in Upper Nile, it was normal because the majority of the people were from my tribe. But when I was told that I was chosen to attend the national theater festival in Juba, just like many Nuers, I was afraid of being in Juba. But when I was in Juba, I experienced acceptance by all and I mean by all including the ones I call my rivals. That was the first time I interacted fully with people from other tribes since 2013. That experience made me realize that I too needed to accept all and not just my tribe if I was to make a difference.

Chalo similarly shared that during the week they spent together, "I saw challenges in my personal perceptions about 'the others.' I really had to make change of perception about the conflicts in South Sudan," adding:

> I did not know a lot about others and I think they also did not know much about me. As the activity progressed, I started realizing that all of us either from the government and opposition are wanting one thing—peace in our country. That fear of being around others easily vanished after interacting with other people and realizing that everyone was desperate for peace.

In elaborating on his earlier reflection about his encounter with the Nuer woman who accused him and his tribe of stealing cows, Chalo also reflected on his change in perceptions:

> The Nuer woman who said that the Dinkas had taken their cows revealed to me that her grandmother is a Dinka and she said to me, 'You are my relative. I was hard on you on the first two days but now it is okay.' The resentment reduced and I believe that if we were to stay together for more days, we were all going to change our perception of one another. All that they were accusing me of had happened but it is just that I am not responsible but others from my tribe.

Describing a specific incident during the event with a woman from another state, Sadia shared

that it was a turning point for her:

> Amai [*pseudonym*] approached me and asked me where to buy telephone airtime. I think that was my first personal conversation with a person from that state. I took her to a kiosk, she bought airtime and we went back to Nyakron. From that time onwards, we stayed together most of the time. Staying close to her helped me understand that other communities face similar problems and we all want solutions. When the Kasala play was being performed on stage, Amai and I shared a lot about the same problem of early and forced marriages in our respective communities.

Munki shared that his personal turning point happened during a performance:

> I remember the play on tribalism like it was yesterday. It made me reflect on my role as an individual and as a tribe in the conflicts in South Sudan. I think I was the first one to go on the stage 'as a spect-actor' to suggest forgiveness instead of revenge. What was powerful was that everyone in the audience supported me. That particular play made me realize that someone has to try to unite our divided communities and that could be me.

The above quotes are examples of the many reflections shared by interviewees about

individual turning points when their preconceptions were challenged, and their opinions

changed. From the experiences shared by these 12 study participants, the encounters during the

Juba theater event clearly created scenarios that challenged long-held negative beliefs and shifted

certain feelings. The new awareness encouraged individuals to commit to wanting to make a

difference, from individual perceptions to a commitment to collective responsibility.

From Individual Shifts to Collective Responsibilities

Interviewees' reflections about their experiences during the event and the shifts in their

own thinking and feelings were deep and illuminated not only that they developed a better

understanding of "the other," but the experience also prompted a sense of responsibility to make

a positive change. A developmental storyline emerges so to speak as part of the Juba experience,

from self-awareness to an understanding of "the other," from personal to collective, from

divisions to an imagination for reconnection and collaboration.

Malish shared:

> The event helped me realize that I have a role to change the perception about the conflict of South Sudan because I believe it is not just Dinkas and Nuers but the entire South Sudan. Also, now I know that I can work with someone from the other tribe with confidence and trust.

Earlier, when he was talking about how the event was his turning point, Malish remarked, "I want to believe there is a group of South Sudanese whose lives were changed," speaking to a sense of a collective voice, which is later on confirmed by reflections from other interviewees.

Hatima noted that the event felt like a celebration as they spent a week together in unity:

> It was a celebration of unity. We were like one big family. People don't celebrate when they are hurting. I think the Morning Star managed to heal people's wound from the past.

Keji shared a similar sentiment that by week's end, he considered all "brothers and sisters:"

> Everyone knew my name and I knew most of the people. When it was time to go back, I thought about how we can keep the momentum. I realized it was up to us, the young people in South Sudan, to change history. So, when it was my turn, all I talked about was about the need for young people to start a start a new chapter that looks at everyone as South Sudanese. Yeah, it was good.

During the event, a number of those present wanted to keep the relationships that had been created during Juba and committed to stay connected. Section Three of this Chapter examines the reality of post-event relationships, but for now, it is important to share relational commitments that emerged during the event. For example, Malish shared:

> Four individuals and I agreed to form an alliance and stay connected as much as we can. Our group is made up of a Bari, a Murle, a Kuku, a Nuer and myself, a Dinka. Our goal was to continue to make changes in the perceptions of our people about others. We hoped to expand membership and bring in new individuals from other ethnic groups.

As it will be revealed later in Section Three of this Chapter, Malish's alliances with individuals from different communities grew, and the group has done some peacebuilding work together.

Clearly, the review of interviews demonstrates growth from individual level to recognizing collective responsibilities. Interviewees' reflections spoke to a collective growth towards relationship building with "the other." Having formal and informal encounters with

"the other" enabled participants' perceptions of those they encountered with to change, making reconnection and collaboration possible. All stories spoke to the need to stay connected and work together in order to bridge the existing gaps between their various communities.

In summary, Section Two illuminates participants' stories about their ability to shake the "us" vs. "them" feelings to building self-awareness, better understanding of "the other," and commitment to making a difference in the peacebuilding process in South Sudan. The following Section explores the reality of the post-event relationship building from this commitment, which was what the event intended to achieve.

Section Three: Relationships and Personal Growth After the Event

This section presents the experiences shared by interviewees about continuing relationships with those from other communities since the theater event, approximately two years from the time of the interviews. This section is at the core of the study's primary interest to examine if, and in what ways, participating in the Morning Star Forum Theater fostered interpersonal relationships over the short- and long-term with "the other," as a fundamental aspect to peacebuilding. While interviewees' reflections in Section Two illuminated relationships with "the other" during the event, it was over the short-term. This section examines how and if the relationships that developed during the event continued to grow over the long-term.

Remarkably, all 12 participants shared that the relationships that emerged during the Juba event continued to grow on both personal and professional levels. Stories illuminated active relationships with individuals they met at the event and other people they would normally not connect with prior to the event. In addition, interviewees highlighted possible obstacles to those relationships, which were both community-based and logistical in nature. Thus, the major

categories shared in this Section are (a) Individual Relationships, (b) Community Peacebuilding

Collaborations, and (c) Obstacles to Relationship building.

Individual Relationships

   Personal Growth: Gaining or Re-gaining Trust. One theme that emerged from

participants' stories of relationships since Juba was about learning how to trust again. One of the

impacts of prolonged conflicts is lack of trust between conflicting groups, as discussed in

Chapter II, and South Sudan communities are no different. This reality was confirmed by

interviewees in their reflections on powerful memories and the feeling of distrust and discomfort

prior to the theater event in Section One of this Chapter. However, when reflecting on their

connections and relationships since the event, all 12 interviewees shared that trusting "the other"

was a key part of the post-event relationships. It is trust that Munki underscored when he

commented:

> Believe it or not, currently my best friend is Chalo, from the Dinka tribe. I trust him more
> than some of my people. I am also in touch with most of the people I met in Juba. We
> communicate on WhatsApp, emails and when possible, we meet and all we do is to try
> and find ways to keep connected and re-connect our communities even more.

Similarly, Laku expressed his joy about staying connected and trusting someone from the Dinka

tribe:

> When I returned from Juba, my colleagues and I from Upper Nile remained connected.
> After working together, I am even getting more calls from the entire community
> including the Dinka community that I and my colleague should go and work with their
> people. I am happy to say that one of my good friends, who I really trust, is a Dinka from
> town.

Reflecting on post-event relationships started at Juba, Keji also talked about trust:

> The event was a chance to know each other and helped us all to understand the different
> communities and we learned how to trust them again. For me I created some positive
> communications and connections with people from other parts of the country. I am now
> friends with people in Wau, Aweil and not forgetting all my friends in Juba. I had never
> had friends from some of these places before.

Malish's declaration in this regard is profound:

> I believe that people from other tribes can also be trustworthy and honest while people from my tribe cannot. I trust people as individuals not as tribes. Before the event, the normal situation in South Sudan is where everybody is referenced by conflicts and you cannot criticize your tribe mate because you are as if you are betraying your own self but now not any more. I am sorry to say that we recently lost one of the individuals who attended theater festival with us and believe it or not, I went for his funeral. Can you imagine a Dinka at a funeral of a Murle! Even his people could not understand how I could go there. But I was confident.

Misha, a resident in one of the UN Protection of Civilian Camps (PoC), reflected on how the

event helped her to begin to trust other people outside the PoC:

> Yes, I became close with most of the people especially from my state and we keep in touch. In fact, when I came back, I used to go to town to meet with them until COVID-19 stopped us. But we still connect through telephone and sometimes the PoC manager helps deliver messages between us and our colleague in town.

Personal Growth: A Shift from Divisions to Unity. As previously noted, the theme of

the Morning Star Theater for Peacebuilding was reconnecting South Sudan communities through

theater. The choice of the word to "reconnect" was intentional because undeniably, South

Sudanese were at one time connected and lived in harmony. In providing the space for trust in

"the other" to grow through plays and activities, the event created the opportunity to feel a sense

of commonality, a unity that hopefully would manifest in relationships after the event concluded.

For instance, Chalo talked about his reflection on the late John Garang' era, when the country

was united as one. Others shared renewed feelings of unity across different groups.

Malish commented:

> The Morning Star Theater event in Juba was an awakening call. It reminded us about the importance of unity. You see when we were in Juba, we were not there in our individual tribes but as South Sudanese. We were reminded about the importance of behaving and living as South Sudanese if we want to have a peaceful South Sudan. I remembered that before and immediately after 2011 we all looked at each other as real South Sudanese until 2013 when two of our top leaders disagreed. That feeling of unity that was demonstrated remains a powerful memory and compels me to work towards unifying our communities.

Tabani, a Lakoya man from Central Equatoria, shared:

> That message of peace and reconciliation that I witnessed is still alive in my mind and other people's minds. People have continued to connect with those they had considered enemies for a long time. I know that most of us who were at the event are doing the little we can to see our country united once again. I am aware that some of our colleagues in other states started joint activities when they returned.

Keji saw the events' potential to unite communities divided along the lens of culture and inter-generational gap as he commented:

> The event was clear that most of the issues that bring conflicts are encouraged by our elders and our leaders. Some young people are out there fighting but if you ask why, they have no answer. We have to change that. Since the event, I decided to work with my colleagues in my state to unite communities divided by conflicts.

What is apparent from these reflections is that over the course of these past two years since the event's relationship and trust building, many participants continued to connect with each other for individual reasons and for collective betterment. For example, Misha started working on small projects, including a garden with individuals from the same state but in a different community, which she acknowledged she would not have done if they did not meet at the events. As another example, Malish shared his close personal friendship with a man from another tribe, so close that he went to the friend's funeral, something that would have been unheard of prior to the theater event. And Munki described his current best friend as being a man from a different and a rival tribe.

The degree to which these personal connections led to and continue to lead participants to recognize the need to unite different communities, despite their diverse backgrounds, goes well beyond individual friendships. The nature of these relationships is examined next.

Nature of Post-event Relationships with "The Other"

It is important to examine the nature of post-event relationships that enabled this trust to flourish. All 12 interviewees described their current relationships with "the other" in detail.

There are a range of active and positive processes ongoing from the Morning Star Theater events, some professional while others are personal. Participants often described their current relationships with "the other" with much delight.

Malish, a Dinka man who prior to the event believed that all tribes in South Sudan hated his own tribe because of the 2013 war, currently enjoys a professional relationship with someone from another tribe:

> As I speak right now, I was speaking to a friend. We are collaborating to form an association in South Sudan to work in the area of theater and peace. My friend is based in Juba and he can access some funds faster than us in the field. I have contacts from the funding agency and I wanted to share that information with him. This is a friendship and a beautiful relationship. Before the event there was no way a Dinka man like me can connect the other with the other to a funding opportunity.

Misha, a Nuer woman, shared that she and a colleague have a garden in the PoC:

> All the people I work with were at the theater performances at state level. We get seeds and equipment from our friends in town. These friends are the ones we met at the theater events in Juba and in town. We used to meet and get the seeds but due to COVID 19, the camp manager receives things from our friends and we pick them from him.

Misha's story was re-echoed by Bebi, who shared that:

> PoC colleagues tell us what they want in town, we buy for them and send to them at the PoC entrance. Some are doing some farming or sometimes they need things to organize events. When they need seeds or other things, we can send them and this is because of the Morning Star dramas. We did not know each other before.

Sadia has continued with the relationships that started at the Morning Star Forum Theater event as she shared, "I keep closely in touch with some friends I met at the festival in Juba. When I came to Wau, it was my first time and the people who helped me settle here were the colleagues I met during the festival."

Nyamed commented:

> That experience made me realize the need to connect with others. I know that I am not complete when I am working alone or when my tribe is working alone. Now I see value when I working with other people, there is something I am gaining. I try all I can to connect with others even those from different tribes.

Then Hatima shared how the theater event opened opportunities for her to connect with more people across the country as she narrated, "I am part of number of social media channels like What App and Facebook with people from all over the country. I also keep in touch with the SSTO. I believe in what they do." Similarly, Munki, a Nuer, asked a Dinka he met at the event to be a reference for new job and remarked, "I have also done the same for others which was not the case before the event."

Participants' stories on the current relationships were a powerful testament to the impact of relationship building post-theater event. The progression of the weight of history and Pre-existing biases to building self-awareness and getting to know "the other," to a commitment to ongoing relationships both of a personal and professional nature, is striking and illustrates transcending boundaries between communities in a post-conflict zone.

Personal Growth: Transcending Conflict Boundaries

Chapters I and II described the divisions between ethnic groups in South Sudan. In fact, Biel and Ojok (2018) reveal that settlements in South Sudan have largely been organized along the political affiliations of South Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Government (SPLMIG) and South Sudan People's Liberation Movement in opposition (SPLM-IO). Thus, depending on affiliation and location, individuals do not mix or move freely. Apart from Central Equatoria, which houses the capital city of the country, restrictions of movement are generally common across the country, especially Unity, Upper Nile, and the Jonglei.

However, when asked to share experiences of post-event relationships with "the other," seven of the 12 participants spoke about how the events transformed their lives, including overcoming the fear associated with crossing the boundaries of the conflict. Munki, whose fear

kept him from visiting Juba, the nation's capital, since the 2013 conflict shared:

> You know … before that theater event, for us Nuers, the narrative we know about Juba was that of kidnapping and ethnic cleansing of all Nuers from Juba. To tell you the truth, I had not been in Juba since 2013 because of the fear of being kidnapped. I believed in the narrative about 'ethnic cleansing' by 'the other.' I feared that I would be targeted as a Nuer because you know … they are not many Nuer people who are educated and because of that I was afraid that I would be the target. For a long time, I live here and when I am coming from East Africa where my family lives to Upper Nile, I do not leave the airport to go to Juba city. I just come to the airport and connect to Upper Nile. Since the Morning Star events, I have been going through Juba. I realized that we can reconnect and live peacefully irrespective of our differences.

Chalo, a Dinka who lives in Upper Nile but in a government-controlled area, has also

crossed conflict boundaries and can now go to the opposition strongholds as he narrated, "I can

go to the opposition strongholds and Munki can also come out to the government-controlled area

and visit me. Even our people could not believe this at the beginning, but yes, it is happening."

Laku, who earlier on shared that he only attended theater events organized in the PoC and

not the events that were organized in the government-controlled areas, has since "started leaving

my community to go to the government-controlled area to visit a friend who is not from my tribe

but the one I met in the theater event in Juba." Malish shared something he never would have

done prior to the event:

> I have had an opportunity to visit Wau and I made sure I met with two of the people I met at the event. That interaction with these people in their own community also gave me a good experience about other people. My colleague introduced me as his friend. For me as a Dinka, that was good enough.

Moreover, Bebi already shared how he now moves from his community to the PoC community

on a joint garden project, as well as noting that, "When we came back to Bor, we started going to

the PoC to visit our colleagues who we met in Juba. Even the PoC community has started

coming to town for business opportunities."

As clearly stated in Chapter II (Premaratna & Bleiker, 2010), bridging the divisions created by conflicts requires shifts in the way people think about themselves and their enemies. The above participants' reflections show the personal growth away from the "us" vs. "them" narrative and that the commitment to connect together after Juba held steady. There was a progression from individual relationships to forming collective engagement in peacebuilding processes in their various communities as a second theme that emerged from reflections past the event, which is described next.

From Personal Relationships to Engagement in Peacebuilding Processes

As described in Chapter II, reconnecting old and building new relationships in societies that have experienced prolonged conflicts requires processes that can restore trust and minimize fear, while promoting bold and intentional ways to reconnect (Sentama, 2009; Waldman, 2009). Based on the participants' reflections shared above, it is clear that relationships between the various communities in South Sudan were laden with the weight of the history of strife, and that one-on-one connections among those from different tribes occurred during formal and informal activities at the Juba event. Yet, we know that relationship building that provides the foundation for long-term peacebuilding is not a one-time event.

Achieving long-term sustainable peace requires not only comprehensive but also enduring processes that address the local needs and Indigenous cultures of those involved. This subsection describes interviewees' reflections, illuminating growth from personal relationships to collective engagement in peacebuilding efforts. Here too, the nature of community engagements, as reflected on by interviewees, were analyzed.

The Nature of Community Engagements

Remarkably, three quarters of participants shared their continued efforts in connecting with "the other" and attempting peacebuilding efforts in various communities. These efforts actually illustrate that there is, based on this Morning Star Forum Theater experience, a possible ripple effect of theater as a tool for peacebuilding in communities experiencing conflicts. The voices of the participants, and not the funders and organizers, give credence to this post-event engagement.

Chalo, who had previously shared how his Juba experiences prompted him to move forward past the divisions, opened up in the following way:

> The Morning Star events made me think about South Sudan before its independence from Sudan. I thought about Dr. Gerang's struggle for the country and thought he would be disappointed if he was to come and see how we have turned the freedom he fought for into bloodshed between ourselves. I knew there and then that I wanted to make a difference. So, during the festival and towards the end, myself and a colleague from Upper Nile thought of ways to continue building relationships between the Dinkas and the Nuers. We came up with an idea of organizing peace festivals between the Dinkas and Nuers and these went on for a long time.

Similarly, Munki shared another way of moving forward with peacebuilding efforts across the country's divides, responding:

> I think the Morning Star event was like starting fire in a forest. Once that fire is out there it is difficult to put it out and even if you put it out, whoever passes by will know that there was fire at least for some time. We all realized that we are the ones to make a difference in the conflict situation in our country. So, when we came back, we supported a local theater group called Malakal Theater Group to perform plays on peace in our community. The group used to perform in the PoC in Upper Nile and now we have encouraged them to perform in town, a government area.

Tareka, from the Kuku ethnic group, also emphasized the work ahead that started from the connections at the theater event:

The events were a perfect forum to begin working together for peace. On the last day of the event, we discussed many ideas on how to stay connected and spread the message of peace. One of the ways that emerged was the formation of some clubs and associations to reconnect our communities. In these associations most of us who were in Juba come together from time to time. In these clubs, we call each other brothers, sisters and friends.

The formation of different associations was echoed by interviewees from Jonglei, Upper Nile, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and Western Bahr el Ghazal. Some of the clubs named during the interviews included the Bor Youth Arts Association and Creative Nile in Jonglei, Western Bahr el Ghazal Arts Union in Wau, Aweil Arts Club in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and Rumbek Students for Arts Association in the Lakes region. The existence of the various associations speaks to the intentional way to continue connecting and engaging in peace processes.

The efforts carried forward by these associations would translate the intention into actions. Six interviewees shared stories that demonstrated their active and ongoing involvement in peacebuilding processes with the various associations. Tabani shared a robust account of his active community building efforts with those he met at the event:

In Wau, we collaborate with the arts association to address the issue of early marriages or forced marriages. In upper Nile, I work with Aban (pseudonym) to raise awareness about the dangers of early marriages. Aban, who was married off at the age of 17, attended the Morning Star performances in Malakal PoC and gained the courage to challenge elders about the dangers of the practice. She has become like an ambassador in the fight against early marriages in her community.

Keji, from the Murle tribe, shared his experience of continued efforts to connect and organize community events with the people he met at the theater events, especially those in Bor region:

Morning Star showed lots of positive things and we wanted to continue that process in our community. When we came back from Juba we started Community Theater and this has brought a lot of positive signs for peace between the camp and the town. We have been in and out and in the community and in camp trying to create communication lines with people that are staying in camp and also with the people in town. We have seen many people coming out sharing their stories with us also visiting some villages around and trying to come together and stick together finding ways of getting new mechanisms for peace. So, it has been positive since the events.

Earlier, Keji shared how he left Juba with the realization that the youth needed to be more engaged in order to change the negative practices promoted by elders and politicians. So, he purposefully set out to work with young people:

> We work with the youth because they are active and were involved in social activities such as football and the theater as participatory approaches. I see residents in town more welcoming to residents from camps. Camp residents can come to town for business opportunities. We have gone ahead to form the Creative Nile Mobile Theater organization in Bor with people who were in Morning Star theater events and our performances happened during social gatherings such as football and religious events. We want to cover more communities with messages of peace.

Malish, a Dinka man from Northern Bahr el Ghazal, agreeing with three other Juba attendees to form an alliance:

> So far, we are just five but hopefully by the end of this year we shall be more. We still do informal communications amongst ourselves through phone calls or WhatsApp or see each when we are able but hope we can form an organization. In future, we shall get funding to organize similar events such as the Morning Star Theater for Peacebuilding. This is something very important.

The above excerpts illustrate collective engagement in peacebuilding processes in the various communities as described next. Evidently, people created individual relationships, but they also went beyond the individual level to collective processes to address issues of contention between various groups. The Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding event set a ripple effect motivating ongoing peace processes in the various communities. However, interviewees shared some of the obstacles they encountered, from community resistance, to distance, and then the pandemic.

Obstacles to Personal Relationships and Community Engagements

Although interviewees spoke about ongoing relationships with individuals they connected with during the event, these were not free of obstacles. Most of these obstacles shared were related to community resistance and lack of funding, as described next.

Community Resistance. Resistance originated from community members who were not at the theater event. The longstanding norm in various communities was that different groups did not mix, period. The new norm for individuals who attended the Morning Star event was to mix with intentionality. From the lens of the interviewees, community members simply could not understand or accept what was/is going on.

Chalo, a Dinka from Upper Nile, reflected that when he and his new theater friend went around together, his people asked me whether I thought that the town was "the Republic of Dinka." Continuing, he noted:

> More questions which were hot and hard for me were about the role of the Dinka Council of Elders in the political situation in the country. Munki [his new friend] would immediately answer the questions for me, for example, by saying that Chalo does not represent the Dinka Council of Elders. He is my friend.

The suspicion was not one-sided. Chalo added:

> My people too questioned why I was spending time with Munki when he was from the enemy. One day we were walking in town and a Dinka woman said, 'That friend of yours brings me bad memories.' I asked her why and she replied that his necklace reminded her of the Nyero boys who killed her relatives because they were wearing the same necklace. So, I turned and asked my friend, Munki to take off his necklace which he did.

Then Laku, a Shilluk man who lives in the PoC in Upper Nile and was not free going to the town before the event, shared that after Juba it was not easy for him to associate with people from the other community:

> At first, whenever members of my community would see me going to town, they would ask what is wrong with me but I tell them that the theater event taught me a lesson of not simply rushing to conclusions but first to establish the truth.

Malish also was challenged with uncomfortable questions while visiting a colleague in another community.

> Although his people respected me because I am his friend, they remained curious about what was happening in my community. They asked me if there is food, if we have government jobs, if there was peace and my answers were no and no because we were all affected by the 2013 and 2016 violence. But they respected me and just like I said, Morning Star Theater was awaking a call.

Despite the obstacles of community resistance, collective resolve, and commitment to continue in positive relationships with "the other" in order to make a difference in their various communities is clearly evident from these reflections. The prevalent ways in which participants connect is through WhatsApp, a popular medium of communication in the region. Others make telephone calls, while others use professional avenues to meet in person. Although community-related resistance affected personal relationships, as well as larger community engagement in peacebuilding efforts, there were other obstacles as well.

Lack of Funding: An Obstacle to Relationship Building. Ten of the 12 interviewees emphasized the lack of funding and the need to secure funding in order to support peacebuilding efforts in their communities. This is not surprising. As described in Chapter II, there is an exaggerated presence of funding agencies in South Sudan. In fact, it was within that same landscape of donor presence that AECOM International implemented the Morning Star Theater for Peacebuilding was situated.

As described in Chapter I, Morning Star Program was discontinued, not because there was no more work in the peacebuilding sector but the funding cycle at that time ended, thus requiring a new strategy by the donor. Interviewees' reflections reveal an explicit or implicit expectation for continued and additional funding for similar events. Laku, for one, noted:

> We always thought that they were going to continue across South Sudan … because it can bring communities together and allow them to share their ideas about the conflicts and peace.

Nyamed similarly shared, "I am always checking to see when they will be performing again. We got good ideas from the Morning Star. We can organize similar events in the PoC but we have no funding." Chalo was forthright when he said, "What we lack now are the funds to support our work to take the festivals deep in the communities."

Malish shared that himself and his team aim at forming a national organization to work in the field of peacebuilding and trauma healing but quickly added, "In future, we shall get funding to organize similar events such as the Morning Star Theater for peacebuilding. This is something very important for our country."

Keji laments the funding impact on the Creative Nile project, saying:

> I believe that we will help to create some reconciliation and people will come together and reconcile as one community and accept each other. However, there are many areas we have not reached. We are working hard to get funding to reach some far and hard to reach areas to make people realize the importance of living peacefully and in harmony.

Then Bebi, from Jonglei, affirmed as well that:

> We need funding and good network. What I know is that people who are in Juba things are fine and can communicate but like for us in Bor, there lack of funding is affecting our connection. There is also challenges with poor network. We cannot do much without money.

Funding, or the lack thereof, is viewed as an obstacle to ongoing post-event peacebuilding efforts. The call for events similar to Morning Star was echoed by 10 of the 12 participants. Yet the lack of funding hindered those efforts.

The Pandemic. The final obstacle noted in these interviews affecting the ongoing relationship-building and community engagement was COVID-19. Bebi and Misha raised the pandemic as presenting a restriction on movement. Coincidentally, these two participants come from the same state. It is not clear whether the pandemic was more impactful in their state than others. But according to Hill and Abuoi (2021) on COVID 19 vaccine distribution in Jonglei State, especially in Bor, they state that the COVID-19 situation was getting out of hand.

Section Three was revealing. Participants experienced post-event relationships and were intentional about doing so. Participants spoke clearly about the ongoing personal relationships and community engagements in peacebuilding in the various communities. Participants' stories demonstrate enhanced understanding and trusting "the other." It was clear that community

resistance obstacles are there but would not stop personal relationships from growing, as individuals are willing to support one another when faced with such challenges. It was clear that participants were engaged in community peacebuilding efforts in one way or another, although lack of funding stood out as an obstacle. With this evidence of relationship building *during* the Juba event and engagement on individual and community levels *post*-Morning Star Theater event, how do participants themselves view the power of theater as a tool for peacebuilding in post-conflict settings like South Sudan? This question is partly answered in their (participants') stories next.

Section Four: A Collective Voice on Theater as an Approach to Building Peace

The overarching purpose of this study is to explore the role of theater for peacebuilding in post-conflict settings by capturing and analyzing narratives of participants, specifically those involved in Morning Star Forum Theater in South Sudan. The primary interest was to examine if, and in what ways, participating in the Forum Theater events foster interpersonal relationships over the short- and long-term with "the other."

Study participants were asked to share their reflections on whether they saw value in the theater event as an approach to peacebuilding in South Sudan. If yes, what was it about the event that they found most impactful? As will be seen, participants shared reflections that captured the positive impact of general attributes of theater, as discussed in Chapter II's review of existent literature. In addition, participants specifically reflected on the design of the Morning Star event and made suggestions on how theater could have been even more impactful. This data may well inform the design of theater for peacebuilding in the future.

General Reflections on Theater and Peacebuilding

All 12 participants recognized and appreciated the value of theater and those who have

had the opportunity to do so, have gone ahead to introduce theater in their own work and

communities. The observations made spoke to the participatory nature of this type of theater,

Forum Theater, and its ability to provoke emotions, going beyond words.

In an extensive reflection on the role of theater in general and his experience with it as an

approach for peacebuilding in South Sudan, Tabani noted:

> I believe theater is a school able to introduce an idea, educate and give back to people and
> people can feel that the ideas are theirs. Through theater we address issues related to
> corruption, misuse of power, all these we communicate them through dramas. We use
> drama to bring people together. It is the easiest way that people can use to address issues
> related to life in their community. It is a tool for people, which means that if one puts an
> idea and presents it to the audience, once the audience loves it, they will tell even those
> that would not be present, and many more people will get the message … In Juba here we
> asked the SSTO to train secondary school students from three schools on how to use
> theater to address many issues. The training is about how to choose a situation and an
> idea, put it in a script, dramatize it and address an issue. I want to see how this project
> develops.

What he saw transpire at Morning Star stayed with Bebi, who reflected, "whereas sometimes

people do not understand written texts, theater is a practical experience that remains with

participants during and after theater." Based on his Juba experience, Keji credited theater as an

effective tool for peacebuilding, sharing a post-event experience:

> The Koc Deer community had issues but I have worked with my colleagues through
> theater and their issues were resolved. Their community was having grievances where
> both of them fought over marriages and cattle and most of them were preparing fights
> against each other and we intervened with help from Church and Development, we
> performed to the community and their leaders. We called them to come together and gave
> them chance to look back and see how they can make up and get together. The
> communities are now together and no more issues of grievances.

Nyamed reflected on the power of theater in provoking a range of emotions and that,

"When stories are presented through performance they make people begin to think that

somebody knows my situation. It is more than words and speeches."

Malish, in noting the good relationships that emerged from the theater festival, reflected that, "Theater has the capacity to revive the broken relationships and so any peace programs should incorporate theater in their efforts."

In the same vein, Munki affirmed that the Juba experience "made me realize that theater can actually reconnect us to live peacefully in South Sudan." Laku also credited the interactive nature of theater by observing, "You can only know people through working and connecting with them. Theater can promote these interactions. From the event, I learnt that I can trust people even those from the Dinka community."

The participatory approach employed by Forum Theater captured Tareka's attention:

> Actions speak louder than words. I can confidently say that theater can be used as one of the best methods in the world where people are living in conflicts. It combines the actions and words, and makes people experience real-life challenges and solutions. The opportunity to allow the audience be part of the performances and share their ideas makes everyone part of the solution.

Not a single participant in this study expressed doubt about the value of theater in peacebuilding. The common elements such as working together, the power of provoking powerful emotions, the capability to cause onward transmission of the information past the event, and the ability to promote ownership of the process were collectively identified.

The Morning Star Forum Theater Design

There were certain elements of the actual aspects of the Morning Star event that participants considered most impactful, beyond simply the nature of Forum Theater. These elements were vested in the schedule of the five days, with the mix of formal and informal interactions that made the event powerful. It was also about the structure of mixing individuals from different states. Participants' reflections on the design of Morning Star theater event would illuminate more on these elements.

Starting from the Grassroots: State Level Events. The Morning Star Theater events started with events at the state-level before bringing all the six communities together at the national gathering. The initial state-level activities were organized jointly in communities that were not sharply divided, but separately for communities that were openly divided. The latter applied mainly in states that house PoCs. Seven interviewees underscored the role state-level events played in preparing them for the national level event in Juba. Chalo noted:

> The events that took place at state level kind of prepared us to meet with others. When we finally met in Juba, we were focusing on one goal, that of building peace. We already had ideas about the plays and the issues in these plays. You yourself have already seen what is wrong and what needs to change to bring peace.

> Similarly, Keji also emphasized, "When the SSTO performed in Bor town, it reached us,

the youths. So, when I heard that they were planning a festival in Juba, I was like, I have to go, and I really wanted to attend the festival."

Keji's reflection too captures the inclusive nature of the Morning Star Forum Theater as events targeted all sections of the population, enabling different groups such as the young people, who are not always part of peacebuilding processes to take part in the process. Keji was particularly delighted by the fact that the youth were involved, a rare chance to be part of the peacebuilding efforts.

The Duration of the Event. In addition to state-level events preceding the national event to build early relationships and confidence in the process, the Morning Star Forum Theater events, both at state and national levels, lasted for five days. At the state level, the mornings were used for rehearsal while the afternoons were set aside for the performances to the audience. At the national event in Juba, all participants who came from the states stayed in one central place and attended throughout the five days. Mornings were for preparations and rehearsals, and typically afternoons were for the performances. In addition, there was free informal time during

meals and in the evenings. In the evenings, individuals were encouraged to come up with activities to share. It was during this informal time that individuals shared activities such as traditional dances, as was reflected on in the previous sections.

Creating the full five-day event, as illustrated in the schedule (Appendix G), and staying together in one place the entire time provided opportunities for full participation and enhanced the chances for relationships at both formal and personal level. Five interviewees commented about how spending the week together and the range of activities impacted them. Chalo spoke earlier about "the week we stayed together. I saw challenges in my perceptions about others … I had to make changes in the way I understood the conflicts in South Sudan." The week provided the time and space to do deep reconsiderations.

Munki considered the event to be "comprehensive and allowed full participation." With further specificity, he noted:

> The performances were not only entertaining but educative. The plays depicted the current situation in our country. The speeches were not just from the organizers but from the audience as well. I think the informal conversations were achieved because we stayed together longer and I don't think it would happen if you bring people together for one hour and leave.

In a similar vein, Misha expanded on the overall design of the five days:

> The way the event was organized was strategic and yielded good results. That was seen in how the participants worked together throughout the week. It was demonstrated through the joker sessions. When questions were asked every individual ended up suggesting positive solutions. In the shortest period of the event, we all connected and came up with various ideas to work together.

From these comments and others, it became clear that staying together for five days through a mix of formal and informal activities was considered a valuable aspect of the design. One day would not have provided the same opportunity.

Participation Supported. Forum Theater by its very design requires and enables full participation of the audience. Creating sufficient opportunity through a mix of activities during the event enabled the audience to fully engage, according to interviewees. Bebi affirmed that:

> The designers of the events provided enough time for everyone to participate. I went on stage many times to give my opinion on the next course of action on many plays. Being on stage offering my opinion on how the play should proceed created a sense of ownership and it felt like I was part of the solution of the issues that were presented.

Being together from Monday through Friday also struck Laku as important for his involvement:

> We were put in small groups to work with those we had never met with. We watched plays, danced and ended up exchanging contacts. I was in the audience and I also liked to act the role of a spect-actor to give my own suggestion on how the plays should progress. [*Spect-actor is a big component of forum theater approach*].

Tareka too appreciated the opportunities to participate fully:

> What I saw is that whenever individuals from the audience made suggestions on these plays, we became part of the solution. We saw our ideas in action and that made people realize that the situation can really change.

Tareka's reflection brings out the importance of promoting ownership in peacebuilding processes, as discussed in Chapter II. The promotion of local ownership in building peace plays an essential part in ensuring long-lasting peace in a post-conflict setting.

These above reflections illuminate the importance of the time spent and the feeling of being part of the processes. Moreover, the inclusiveness in the processes also emerged as an important aspect, hence positioning theater as a potentially effective tool that can be used in processes aiming at localizing peacebuilding. Nonetheless, the time factor contributed significantly to the ways in which individuals fully participated.

Involvement of the Ordinary People. For peacebuilding processes to be sustainable, they cannot ignore the ordinary population and only address the elites (Lederach, 1997; Llamazares, 2005). Equal emphasis should be put on grassroots involvement to allow ordinary communities, both as individuals and organized groups, to take part in the peacebuilding efforts.

Interviewees' reflections on the design of Morning Star Forum Theater above, specifically the structure of building from the grassroots up to the top level/elite, speak to the event's potential to amplify local people's involvement in peacebuilding processes, regardless of their level of education or formal authority. Nyamed, for example, commented:

> You know like for the people who have not gone to school to attain some level of education, theater really communicates things well because written things sometimes very few people end up remembering but in terms of theater, it still stands out as the best way of reaching out to most of the hard-to-reach communities. After people have acted and then they start interactions with the audience, that is when the debate is really good and the impact is felt.

The organizers intentionally used the official language as well as the various local languages to promote local grassroots participation. Tabani mentioned this in noting:

> The mixing of local languages and English was special as we were free to speak the language of our choice. People were part of the event fully. Individuals were free to make contributions to the stories in the languages they chose and each language was heard.

Reflecting similarly, Malish commented that he had seen many peace initiatives prior to the Morning Star Theater event with minimal results. One of the reasons for that, he assessed is that:

> It is usually a few individuals, in most cases the educated or chiefs, who are involved. But theater brings many people together both the educated and not educated. In one week, we were able to make good positive relationships across the different communities.

In conclusion, Misha commented:

> Among the many various peace processes in South Sudan, that event was more successful because it connected people who were disconnected before. I remember how divided we were at the beginning but how close we were on the final day.

Fundamentally, participants appreciated the design of the Morning Star Forum Theater event. Of specific mention, elements pointed out included preceding local level, sufficient time of formal and informal activities, participatory involvement for a cross-section of the population, including grassroots members and multi-linguistic engagement. Starting from the state level prepared individuals to meet with members of communities in prior conflict, "the other," in the festival. At the same time, interviewees recognized that the use of both English and local

language allowed people to understand and feel at home. Finally, the time frame contributed to the experience as participants emphasized the fact that spending a whole week together, allowed ample time to interact formally and informally. Nevertheless, study participants also acknowledged the need for improvement as they provided numerous suggestions that can make theater for peacebuilding more effective.

Suggestions to Make Theater Events Even More Impactful

The evidence of participants' appreciation of the value of theater for peacebuilding in general and the design of the Morning Star event in particular is robust. Participants drew from the Juba experience to assert design elements to make future events effective. As explained in Chapter I, South Sudan is a diverse country with many different ethnic groups, each with distinct culture including languages. Interviewees' suggestions built off the positives they experienced in Juba and emphasized the importance of further localization of the issue, the use local languages, while participants' main suggestions spoke to frequency and coverage.

Six of the 12 spoke to the importance of tailoring the event into local context and the need for this existent design to be replicated in the future. Chalo observed, "When theater is tailored to the needs of the community, it can be effective. For example, the Morning star theater plays addressed common issues affecting all of us." Chalo added that, "Theater events should be organized in local languages." Bebi too emphasized the importance of local languages as he stated, "Plays should be translated in local languages such that everyone can easily understand them and start a process of reconciliation and peacebuilding through performances."

A thorough review of interviewees' suggestion about tailoring theater to the local context points to the need for more than just allowing participants to take part on the stage, but to involve them in preparations of the event too. While the Morning Star Forum Theater event addressed

issues relevant to the context, the plays were pre-prepared by the SSTO team. As such, the issues addressed were similar across all states and later on in Juba. Addressing similar issues was perfect for the audience targeted, as the events were intended to connect communities across the country. Even so, participants suggested early-stage involvement, including the selection of the issue.

Tareka from Central Equatoria emphasized that, "Theater can be good if the plays are made by the people themselves to use their talents and not to take there already finished products." Then Chalo, from upper Nile added "theater events should be organized by the local people themselves to be more impactful." And Nyamed from Central Equatoria added yet another aspect of tailoring solutions, by performing the traditional or local mechanism used in settling disputes by noting:

> It is important to use local mechanisms in theater. Various communities have traditional ways they use to reconcile. For example performing the role of traditional chiefs in solving disputes is a local mechanism for peace in many communities in South Sudan. For instance, in the Dinka community, the elders set rules to guide wrestling competitions so that people do not fight. This is good and in my opinion, performing the role of the chiefs is a good way to send a message about their role in making peace in their various communities.

More Frequent with Wider Coverage. Participants' voices suggesting the need to make theater more frequent with wide coverage were clear. All 12 emphasized the need for more events and a wider presence in more communities. Chalo suggested, "Theater events should be organized in many communities," and then Laku from Upper Nile emphasized that:

> It is just that the events were not repeated because we always thought that they were going to continue across South Sudan. It is a good approach for peace building in divided communities that can bring grassroots communities together and allow them to share their ideas about the conflicts and peace but it should not happen once.

Nyamed made note of how he has been waiting for more events, "I am in touch with some of the individuals I met in Juba especially people from the SSTO. I am always checking to see when they will be performing again."

Sadia was even clear on how frequent events similar to the national festival should be when she remarked, "What happened in Juba should be made an annual event." Yet to make theater regular and expand the coverage, Tareka made a suggestion that addresses the system that:

> There is need to take dramas in schools as a way of sustaining the momentum. You see dramas in schools shall help to build a new culture of seeing each other as South Sudanese and not through the tribal lenses.

It is evident that participants appreciated the design of the Morning Star Forum Theater event, specifically its relevancy and inclusiveness. However, the participants' call for more frequent application of theater with wider coverage underlines the point that building peace in a war zone takes a long time. In addition, participants' suggestions for more localization, including in choosing the issue and the need to perform local peacebuilding mechanisms, underscore the importance of decolonizing peacebuilding processes.

In summary, Section Four presented interviewees' own perspectives on the value of theater as a tool for peacebuilding in post-conflict settings specifically South Sudan. Clearly, all participants acknowledged theater in general and the unique way the Morning Star Forum Theater event was designed as potentially capable of facilitating peacebuilding processes in divided communities. They also acknowledged the need to make theater even more impactful with emphasis on further localization, expanding the spread, and repeating the processes frequently.

Conclusions of the Findings

This Chapter presented the findings from a narrative inquiry with 12 participants who were involved in the Morning Star Theater for Peacebuilding events that took place between 2018 and 2019 in different communities in South Sudan. Section One presented what participants chose as their most powerful memories of the Morning Star Theater Event. Participants' unique contexts in terms of their own ethnicity and region were analyzed as possible influencers of various stories. Interviewees shared powerful memories as individuals and collectively. The major categories that emerged were the weight of history that participants brought to the event, encounters with "the other," both confrontational and hopeful, and emerging self-awareness of themselves and others. The analysis of powerful memories provided a starting point to explore in what ways participating in the theater events impacted relationship building over the short-term.

Section Two presented participants' experiences of relating to and working with people from other communities during the Morning Start event, including actual incidents as well as shifts in feelings and attitudes. All 12 interviewees shared stories of connections during both the formal and informal events, including connections during plays and performances, encounters of "us" vs. "them" that shifted from distrust to trust, and from individual turning points to collective responsibilities. The reflections clearly demonstrate a progressive arc as stories started from the point of discomfort and distrust and changed to self-awareness and understanding during the week in Juba.

Section Three focused on the core of the study's primary interest and examined if and in what ways participating in the Morning Star Forum Theater fostered relationships that lasted after the event and contributed to building peace among individuals from different communities.

All participants shared stories, which revealed that the relationships that emerged during the event continued to grow at both personal and for others at professional levels, and can be viewed through the lens of Individual Relationships as well as Community Peacebuilding.

The final Section presented participants' reflections on the value of theater as an approach to peacebuilding in South Sudan as well as specific reflections on the design of the Morning Star event. Participants saw significant value in the theater event as an approach to peacebuilding in South Sudan and they also provided suggestions on how to make the tool even more effective.

In conclusion, the analysis of findings from the narrative interviews across all the four sections of the powerful memories, reflections on experiences during the event, emergent elements of growth towards relationship building with "the other" past the event, and participants' views of theater as an approach for peacebuilding, exhibited participants' collective voice on theater and peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. Across all 12 interviews, participants described several ways in which participating in the Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding impacted their personal and interpersonal growth in relationship with "the other." Reflections illuminated personal relationships, professional relationships, as well as an emergent sense of collective responsibility towards building relationships across communities.

The data shared in this Chapter demonstrate the actual participants' voices reflecting on their own growth in relationship building between individuals who were divided, full of distrust and hostility prior to the theater event. Although the result is affirmative in the current debate, one wonders how this experience can be examined in relation to peacebuilding efforts in a post-conflict setting like South Sudan, where divisions are the norm.

Chapter V next explores how what has been learned can further inform scholarship on theater as a tool for peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. As well, the next Chapter will discuss the implications of what has been learned by practitioners engaging in this critical work in Africa and across the globe, especially in relation to peacebuilding processes.

CHAPTER V: IMPLICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Introduction

The present study was primarily intended to explore the role of theater in peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. Bearing in mind that peacebuilding is too broad a subject to explore in one single study, the present study focused on one particular domain, that of relationship building as a key aspect of peacebuilding. As explained in Chapter II, practitioners and scholars alike argue that one of the potentially effective tools to rebuilding and building relationships in a post-conflict setting is the use of the arts, including theater (Shank & Schirch, 2008; Zelizer, 2003). But, despite the convincing argument put across by scholars for theater's potential role to reimagine and restore relationships (Fairey, 2018; Premaratna & Bleiker, 2010; Shank & Schirch, 2008), most of this argument is focused either on the method itself, the performing groups, or the funders themselves. Little is focused on the experiences of individuals targeted by these events. The lack of voices and experiences from individuals targeted by these events in the current debate on the role of theater in peacebuilding formed the basis for this study.

Thus, the study intended to capture and analyze stories of relationship building from participants, specifically those involved in Morning Star Forum Theater in South Sudan. The study hoped to illuminate if and in what ways participating in the Forum Theater fostered personal and interpersonal growth towards relationship building over the short- and long-term with "the other." Through interviewing and analyzing stories of 12 individuals who participated in the Morning Star Forum Theater for Peacebuilding in South Sudan, the study has fulfilled its intended purpose. These participants' stories on the role of theater contribute to the current debate on theater as a tool for peacebuilding in post-conflict settings, and provide new insights on what else can be considered to make the tool even more effective.

This Chapter examines the findings presented in Chapter IV in relation to the existing scholarship and practice. The Chapter is divided in five sections: (a) the study findings in relation to the existing scholarship and the degree to which what was learned from this research contributes to further understanding the role of theater in peacebuilding, (b) the study findings in relation to the existing scholarship and the degree to which what was learned contributes to peacebuilding practice in post-conflict settings, (c) the study's limitations, (d) implications for future study paths, and (e) the researcher's own reflections.

Theater and Peacebuilding: Contributions to Scholarship

This section analyzes study findings in relation to the existing scholarship and the degree to which what was learned from this research contributes to further understanding the role of theater in peacebuilding, specifically the aspect of relationship building in post-conflict regions such as South Sudan. The section has been divided in four categories drawing from the findings presented in Chapter IV: It Starts with Attitudinal Shifts, Relationship-building That Lasts, and Voices from the People.

It Starts with Attitudinal Shifts

Scholarship reviewed for this study tells us that building lasting peace in post-conflict settings requires diverse tools and positions the arts, including theater, as an effective approach (Shank & Schirch, 2008; Zelizer, 2003). The quest for diverse tools comes in realization of the comprehensive nature of peacebuilding, which is not a mere cessation of hostilities, but processes that can attain individual and community wellbeing (Lederach, 1997; Schirch, 2013). This study was focused on relationship-building as a key aspect to peacebuilding. Undoubtedly, relationship-building alone is not enough to enable the achievement of personal and community wellbeing; however, it can lay a foundation for processes and practices in other

spheres of peacebuilding, such as collaborative projects, institutional building, and diplomatic efforts. As such, findings from this study confirm that theater is an effective tool in laying a foundation for building lasting peace.

Just as scholarship recognizes theater for its effectiveness in promoting connections among different communities, even those experiencing severe conflicts (Akashoro et al., 2010), findings from this study show that the Morning Star Forum Theater event in Juba achieved its intended goal, which was to reconnect individuals from different regions who were not accustomed to interacting or who held long-standing suspicions based on distrust and hostilities. As explained in Chapter II, the absence of interaction between groups in South Sudan is less about the miles and more about the mindsets associated with the current tension and prior conflicts between these communities (SaferWorld, 2019; Shulika & Okeke-Uzodike, 2013). What was clear from this study, however, is the fact that the connections established via the Morning Star Theater event started off on very shaky ground, as all participants shared feelings of uncertainty, suspicion, and distrust around "the other." The feeling of uncertainty was to be expected as the scholarship is clear about the divisive impact of protracted conflicts (Kumar, 1998; Sentama, 2009), but the important revelation here was the analysis of how these feelings would begin to shift over the course of the Juba event.

Interestingly, all study participants noted shifts in the feelings of discomfort around "the other" during the actual theater event. Forum Theater is considered to be a format that provides space for discussion and reflection involving both the performers and the audience (Schrowange, 2015). Consistent with this, all participants' experiences of attitudinal shifts started during the plays and performances. Plays, which were built on stories of conflicts and engaged in performances not just by the actors but the audience, enabled deeper reflections on the current

situations and creative collaborative problem solving among the spect-actors. The opportunity to engage and reflect on the situation was the starting point to experience shifts in individual attitudes towards "the other."

Literature tells us about the existence and persistence of negative attitudes between conflicting groups (Lubit & Reda, 2012). These negative attitudes lead to stereotypes and manifest as perceived impenetrable incompatibilities of values or goals between groups in conflicts. Participants in the current study were not different, as findings confirm the presence of an "us" vs. "them" narrative and with its associated distrusts, particularly at the beginning of the event. Yet, the available scholarship is primarily based on the perspectives of scholars and practitioners (Premaratna, 2015) who posit that theater, through its broad spectrum of activities (performances, dialogue, and music) enables individuals and groups to address deep-seated attitudes. This study's interviewees, actual grassroots participants, confirmed change in their attitudes during the events in Juba. Their stories were of growing self-awareness and a different feeling in the "us" vs. "them" narrative, this time not of a divisive nature but a pointer towards establishing trust-renewing connections.

Achieving trusting relationships requires, among other things, opportunities and processes through which individuals can freely work and collaborate with "the other" (Sentama, 2009; Six, 2007). These processes provide the space to reshape destructive behavior or distrust, exchanging positive signals and putting in place trust-enhancing mechanisms (Reis et al., 2000). Theater has the ability to facilitate processes through which these (suspending destructive behavior, exchanging positive signals, and putting in place trust-enhancing mechanisms) can be achieved (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994). Findings from this study indicate that personal growth and trust-building towards "the other" continued to grow throughout the event as

individuals continued to interact, leading to shifts from distrust to trusting again. As seen in Chapter IV, all participants acknowledged particular moments of experiencing shifts towards "the other."

Attitudinal shifts require an enhanced understanding of self and "the other" (Six, 2007). Spaces in which individuals can freely work and collaborate have the potential to foster the desired understanding of self and empathy for "the other" (Sentama, 2009). Theater events are one such space. Findings from this study indicate that all participants' understanding of the self and the situation changed during the event. Participants were able to recognize their prior misconceptions and started seeing "the other" in positive ways. Staying together throughout the entire week created a safe space in which individuals listened to one another and learned from one another, hence creating scenarios that challenged long-held negative beliefs rooted in the region's conflict, leading to a collective desire to re-connect even after the event.

These attitudinal shifts are the beginning of building relationship, setting the ground for positive relationship building and peacebuilding at the community level. This current study confirms that and demonstrates a developmental progression from the "us" vs. "them" feelings to emergent self-awareness, increased understanding of "the other," and then commitment to re-connecting. The study's findings actually show that attitudinal shifts that emerged during the event led to relationship-building post the event, as discussed next.

Relationship Building Continues

Building relationships that can serve as foundations for long-term peace is not a one-time event; but requires enduring processes that continue to transform individuals and groups involved (Sentama, 2009; Waldman, 2009). Scholarship informs that theater's potential to initiate lasting relationship building processes (Premaratna & Bleiker, 2010) is located in the

approach's power to transform destructive emotions, such as fear and hatred, into helpful and shared emotions, such as grief and loss. When helpful emotions become more dominant, so to speak, the desire to work towards reconciliation is ignited (Premaratna & Bleiker, 2010). That ongoing desire for reconciliation can serve as a positive force that will push parties involved to think about creative ways to foster relationships. Yet the Morning Star theater event, just like many peacebuilding events, depended on external funding that only lasts for a limited period of time.

Thus, it was important to explore the degree to which relationships that blossomed at the five-day event continued afterwards. Findings indeed indicate that relationships that started during the event in Juba have continued to this day, two years post the event. The ongoing relationship building among participants confirms that the shared space created by the theater event led to mechanisms of positive engagement between individuals who were divided before. Positive communication, active engagements, and connection with "the other" can serve as effective tools to foster interpersonal relationships (Sentama, 2009). The relationship building shared in stories from this study's participants happened in personal communication, as well as group engagements in peacebuilding efforts in respective communities.

According to literature, specifically Lederach's (1997) integrated and holistic framework for peacebuilding, individual relationships play an important role in facilitating lasting peace. However, long-term sustainable peace is achieved when individual relationships are able to influence and provide the groundwork for relationships at other levels of society, such as community, national, and eventually international. While it is unrealistic to try to establish any direct correlations between how relationships that emerged in Juba have influenced the national level system, it is not a stretch to show how Juba connections are influencing grassroots

communities. All participants noted that they have continued to engage in peacebuilding efforts between and across their various communities. This claim (the impact of individual relationships at community level) recognizes the existence of obstacles to connect, especially community resistance. What was clear from participants' stories was the resolve to building relationship as well as the tactic to tackle community resistance. The opportunity for individuals to continue engaging in relationship building post-Juba qualifies theater as an approach that can facilitate peace at the grassroots level (Oda, 2007).

Relationships that have the potential to transform post-conflict societies must restore trust, not just within a few privileged individuals, but across grassroots communities if not a nation (Sentama, 2009; Waldman, 2009). Potentially, the reality is that most of the peacebuilding processes involve just a few individuals, often the elites, and not the whole community. Even in the Morning Star Forum Theater event, it was still only a handful of individuals from six different states across the country. Yet, that handful of individuals were motivated to take peacebuilding processes back to their communities, alluding to a possible ripple effect of community-based theater as an effective tool for peacebuilding. Strategic peacebuilding processes should not only transform individuals but also empower them to take the processes to other people.

Peacebuilding scholarship (EMU, 2011) emphasizes the need to organize processes that empower individuals and groups involved in the conflict to be ready take risks and engage in joint projects that can help to promote better understanding, subsequently enhancing relationships. Participants' experiences post-Juba illuminate precisely this, their ability to either overcome the fear of the other or make bold decisions to cross the borders of conflict to make peace. Participants' courageous decisions to continue relating with individuals from "the other"

despite community challenges is a testament of the empowering nature of theater as a peacebuilding tool.

The Voices of the People

As noted previously, much of the scholarship affirming the value of theater as a tool for peacebuilding rests on the testimonies of scholars and funders. Current scholarship posits that the arts in general and theater in particular are effective tools for peacebuilding in post-conflict settings, yet little of this scholarship is validated by the people meant to benefit from these events. While this study's findings similarly confirm the role of theater in peacebuilding, perhaps its most significant contribution is to hear directly from the voices of the people targeted by these (theater) interventions.

The present study intended to bridge this gap by inquiring directly from individuals who were the intended "targets" of the theater intervention. Moreover, some peacebuilding scholarship, particularly that which carries a decolonizing peace orientation (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013), emphasizes the need to fully involve, if not to let the people intended to benefit take charge, of the peacebuilding processes (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). The involvement of the "grassroots beneficiaries" is not just in the process but also hearing their voices about the effectiveness of these efforts. Thus, this present study's contribution.

The same scholarship that praises theater as an effective tool for peacebuilding also acknowledges the need for further examination of the supposed role (Akashoro et al., 2010; Fairey, 2018; Shank & Schirch, 2008). While the absence of participants' voices is a noticeable gap, so is a hesitation to fully claim theater's effectiveness, with some scholars suggesting that the *so-called* potential is engineered by the funders (Akashoro et al., 2010). Donors do expect tangible results in peacebuilding work, such as reconciliations. Relying on scholarship based on

funders' perspectives on the role of theater in peacebuilding complicates analysis by forcing it to conform to donor expectations, complicating and delimiting other and perhaps the most genuine insights from the people themselves.

These study participants too believe in the effectiveness of theater in peacebuilding processes. Consistent with much scholarship (Premaratna, 2015; Schrowange, 2015), participants praised theater's potential based on its attributes, most specifically, inviting participation, creating shared spaces to work together, enabling the re-living of powerful emotions, developing the capacity for collaborative problem-solving, and promoting ownership of the process among the people served. Remarkably, all study participants expressed in the affirmative the value of theater in peacebuilding based on their experiences with the Morning Star Forum Theater. Their additional insights voiced by study on designing theater to be even more effective and relevant are discussed in the section on implications to practice.

Hearing from the grassroots people served is consistent with the current debate about decolonizing approaches to peacebuilding and the scholarship about it. The decolonizing peace debate emphasizes the importance of meaningful engagement of the people served in peacebuilding efforts (Fontan, 2012; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). Meaningful engagement can only be achieved when the people served are part of the processes, finding solutions and sharing perspectives on the impact of the many processes. The external support, which is definitely essential, should aim at supporting the people to address their issues rather than dictating to them on what they imagine is the best solutions (Fontan, 2012). Findings indicate that participants of the Morning Star Forum Theater event and the study enjoyed being part of an event that aimed at restoring relationships. The ongoing peacebuilding efforts past the event are

their own local initiatives and their voices about the impact of the event on relationships with the other are their own perspectives.

This study makes a contribution to the debate in that it provides a starting point to hear from grassroots individuals targeted by and directly benefiting from the theater events. Findings show supporting evidence from study participants that their experiences of a theater event for peacebuilding impacted their interpersonal growth towards relationship with "the other." As peacebuilding literature informs (Lederach, 1997; Sentama, 2009; Waldman, 2009), relationship building is a key component of peacebuilding. The voices of the people have not only illuminated the effectiveness of theater but inform us about the lived experience of encounters with "the other" during and after these events. While it is important to know that theater can transform relationships and sustain them after the actual theater event, it is equally important to recognize the restraints such as the weightiness of history as people enter the shared space and the need for sustained contact over time. This extends the analysis of theater's positive role through all angles including the positive impact and the important factors to consider.

Theater and Peacebuilding: Contributions to Practice

This section analyzes the study's findings in relation to the existing scholarship and the degree to which what was learned from this research contributes to peacebuilding practice in post-conflict settings. Although participants' observations about the powerful nature of theater align well with the general attributes of theater as reviewed in Chapter II, findings earmark important aspects that practitioners need to consider when designing future theater events. This section examines the findings that speak to the key aspects of designing theater events for peacebuilding in general and relative to relationship building in particular. The section has been

divided into three subsections of the nature and design of plays and performances, the theater

events for peacebuilding, and implications for peacebuilding practice in post-conflict settings.

The Plays and Performances

As explained in Chapter I, the Morning Star Theater plays were based on the Morning

Star curriculum. The curriculum itself is based on Eastern Mennonite University (EMU's)

STAR, which draws its strength from multidisciplinary fields of trauma and education, justice,

meaning making, conflict transformation, and resilience (EMU, 2011). As such, the Morning

Star theater plays were carefully constructed with stories that address all the important aspects of

the curriculum in order to facilitate individual and community wellbeing. Specifically, the plays

emphasized the relationship between historic trauma and conflict, meaning-making and conflict,

and justice and creative approaches that transform conflicts.

Findings showed that the stories contained in the plays facilitated deeper reflections on

the current tensions between groups and provided the space to reimagine their roles to reconnect

across groups. Individuals were able to identify themselves not only as victims but also as

perpetrators, for example, when Chalo referenced the play on Munki.

> I used to think that the only way to deal with 'the other' is through revenge. But the play
> about a young boy who joined the military to avenge his parents challenged me. I learned
> that through revenge, I do not only hurt the enemy but I also hurt myself.

As explained in Chapter I, the Morning Star program had been implementing peacebuilding

activities through workshops. It was through these workshops that the issues contained in plays

were identified.

As noted in Chapter I, the Morning Star curriculum, even in its conventional approach, is

praised for its transformational impact on individuals and groups. As scholarship alludes,

fostering positive relationships among conflicting parties starts with individual transformation

(Waldman, 2009). Moreover, the STAR itself has been popularly used in more than 60 countries

(EMU, 2011). Similarly, findings indicate that individuals experienced the Morning Star Theater plays as transformative; for example, when Tareka said, "I have been to theater events before but that was the first time that I understood that even I have a role to play to unite our communities." This can imply that the development of theater plays for peacebuilding requires thoughtfulness in packaging of messages because if the topics are not carefully selected properly, the theater events could simply be another short-term entertainment stage.

Boal's Theater of the Oppressed and Forum Theater in particular is traced in Brazil's decolonial struggles during the late 1950s (Coudray, 2017), enabling spect-actors to take back self-determination and local control over their own destiny. Similarly, this study's findings indicate that plays based on the Morning Star peacebuilding model made it possible to focus on real issues while engaging the audience in finding ways to address the issues that were familiar, local and powerful. The plays told stories in full circle, from a violent act to trauma to violence to conflict in repeated cycles. This helped individuals to understand how the conflict has taken root in their everyday lives and continued to divide communities, hampering the attainment of peace. The flexible and adaptive nature of Forum Theater, plus its ability to engage grassroots people served (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994), alludes to the decolonizing potential of the approach. Individuals were able to relate to plays based on real issues in South Sudan as the people experienced them, such as cattle raiding, early marriages, revenge killings, tribalism, and nepotism, among others. In line with the current debate about decolonizing peace (Fontan, 2012), emphasizing the need for practitioners to identify local solutions with the local people, it is apparent that theater has the potential as an effective tool.

In addition to the actual plays, findings show that individuals' attitudes were able to shift, and relationship building emerged during performances themselves. As explained in Chapter II,

the Morning Star Theater applied Boal's Forum Theater approach with its potential to facilitate change based on its ability to provide a collaborative and safe space for group discussion, individual reflection, and rehearsals of desired change, involving both the performers and the audience (Schrowange, 2015). Likewise, findings suggest that through this iterative process of active participation in the performances, individuals not only observed but proactively contributed by making suggestions and asking questions. Participants credited the Morning Star participatory approach because of the way it was able to promote safe space for all to work together and facilitate ownership of the collective processes for change. There is no question that Boal's Theater of The Oppressed and Forum Theater has the ability to facilitate the desired change and meaningfully involve the local people.

Therefore, as a tool for empowering people to address histories of tension and conflict, this study can confirm theater's effectiveness and it should have an active place in peacebuilding efforts, especially those strategies targeting the grassroots level.

The Theater Event Itself: Structure and Length

Findings indicate that the design of the event itself, specifically the structure and length, contributed to the success of the event. The Morning Star events in Juba lasted for five days, and that week was preceded by state level (locally based) community theater events. Individuals came to Juba weighed down by the past, suspicions and perceptions nurtured through conflict and violence. During the week, individuals were enabled to interact on a personal level and as findings suggest, individuals' attitudes started to shift over the course of the week.

Scholarship is clear about theater's potential role in promoting collaboration and connections among divided communities (Premaratna, 2015). However, while there is emphasis on long-term processes, little is said about the actual length of time needed to provide sufficient

space and time for growth and attitudinal shift. It would be premature to recommend a specific duration of theater, a precise number of days or scheduled events, simply based on this study. And each culture and locale might well be different. However, findings underscore the importance of providing enough time for individuals to meet, interact, and understand each other to allow attitudinal change. Events that facilitate deeper reflections over time are more likely to provide the opportunity for personal and community change than the ones that are rushed through as a one-shot effort.

In addition to the length of the event, the nature of the schedule itself emerged as a relevant factor in this study. The week-long schedule involved both the formal and the informal activities. The formal activities included rehearsals and performances. The informal activities were the conversations during meals, dorm games, and interactions in the evenings after performances. Findings indicate that some individuals' attitudes shifted during this informal time through impromptu encounters with people from other communities in happenstance ways. The provision of enough time during an event creates room to hold informal activities during which individuals can mix freely without being restricted by the formal agenda. It is through these free interactions that attitudinal change can take place.

Sustainable peacebuilding processes are not those that focus on the elite groups only but those that involve ordinary population (Lederach, 1997; Llamazares, 2005). This study's findings emphasize that argument. Emphasis must equally be put on grassroots involvement to allow ordinary communities, both as individuals and organized groups, to take part and in some ways take charge of the peacebuilding efforts at the most local and meaningful level. The Morning Star Theater events started from the grassroots (state) level and then moved to the national level. At the state level, participants of the events were diverse groups including men, women, young

people, the less educated, as well as the elites. Findings from this study suggest that the bottom-up structure created room to organize an inclusive process, amplifying local people's involvement regardless of their level of education or formal authority.

Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013) remind us that people who are part of the conflict have the ability to identify and create the necessary processes for peace, referring to this type of peace as "an everyday and emancipatory type" (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013, p. 769), through which solutions are carefully identified by the people themselves. Findings from this study suggest that theater can be an effective tool to promote such kind of local ownership, enabling the people to take charge of the process.

Implications for Peacebuilding Practice

Despite the positive testimonies about the role of theater in peacebuilding in general and relationship building in particular, the study's finding shed some light on additional aspects that would make future theater events even more effective. Participants' voices emphasized more localization, more frequency with wider coverage, and availability of continuous and sustainable sources of funding.

Theater and Decolonizing Peacebuilding Processes

The debate about decolonizing peace directs practitioners to move from the liberal peace processes, which assumes building peace through a "linear, mechanistic building of peace as an aggregation of parts built through a liberal framework" (Fontan, 2012, p. 30). Instead, peace builders should embrace processes that can promote and meaningfully engage the people most directly impacted. Moreover, literature informs us about the fundamental necessity of directing peacebuilding efforts on all three tiers of the society—lower, middle, and top (Lederach, 1997). In South Sudan, most peacebuilding interventions have been confined to the top tier, with

minimal engagement with grassroots and local communities. The over-concentration of

peacebuilding efforts on the top tier is recognized through the achievement of important strides

such as formal agreements. No wonder, most of the peacebuilding processes in South Sudan are

considered to have often been mistargeted (Moro et al., 2020; Reeve, 2012; SaferWorld, 2019).

Findings from this study would indicate that theater as a tool has the potential to bring on board

the hardest hit groups into a meaningful engagement in ways that Tier One diplomacy cannot.

The success of peacebuilding interventions focused solely on the top tiers is unlikely to

bring about real sustainable change because they neglect the very people most affected by the

conflict—the grassroots communities. This is true in the case of South Sudan. The achievement

of several important agreements has done little to redress the ongoing alienation and hostilities

between several communities (SaferWorld, 2019). This speaks to the need for full and

meaningful engagement of the people served in peacebuilding processes as vital (Mac Ginty &

Richmond, 2013). Findings from this present study illustrate that theater has the potential to

cause such engagement. All participants acknowledged the Morning Star Theater's ability to

engage with the ordinary people despite their levels of education, age groups, or gender.

Facilitating lasting peace requires inclusive processes and theater is an approach that can be

employed to achieve such a process.

It is important to note that although the Morning Star Forum Theater event was

recognized for addressing issues that were crucial to the local population, these issues were

selected prior to the events by the organizers, hence perpetuating the trend of Western-funded

International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOS) dominance in the peacebuilding sector

in South Sudan (Moro et al., 2020). The dominance of INGOs themselves is not a problem, but it

is important to recognize that active engagement of the local people is not simply as recipients

but should be as the designers of the processes. In fact, this study's participants expressed the

need for full involvement in the early stages of the process, including selecting the issues that

perpetuate the conflict as well as solutions. An example was when Nyamed emphasized the need

to perform utilizing local peacebuilding approaches, ones that are familiar to the community:

> It is important to use local mechanisms in theater. Various communities have traditional
> ways they use to reconcile. For example, performing the role of traditional chiefs in
> solving disputes is a local mechanism for peace in many communities in South Sudan.
> This is good and, in my opinion, performing the role of the chiefs is a good way to send a
> message about their role in making peace in their various communities.

Thus, the flexible nature of Forum Theater to adapt to and create room to perform practices that

are familiar to the participants invites comfort with, as opposed to imported and perhaps strange

practices. Thus, the ability to allow the use of local and traditional approaches to makes theater

strategic in the pursuit to decolonize peace. Besides, the ongoing peacebuilding efforts by

participants of the Morning Star Forum Theater events is a demonstration that the people

themselves can engage as part of the makers of the needed peace in respective communities.

More Frequency, Wider Coverage, and of Course, More Funding

Peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan just like in many post-conflict and low-income

countries tend to be isolated, discontinuous, and lack follow up (Bennet et al., 2010). The

Morning Star Forum Theater event, the focus of this study, followed that typical pattern as it was

discontinued due to shifts in the donor's funding priorities, which is also typical in international

peacebuilding efforts. Yet scholarship equally informs that building peace in societies that have

experienced prolonged conflicts, such as South Sudan, requires long-term and enduring

processes. Findings from this study would strength the latter argument, as participants raised

concerns about the inadequacy of the frequency of and isolated nature of the theater events.

Moreover, peacebuilding scholarship on South Sudan reveals that despite the presence of

many actors in the field and many interventions, the processes were ineffective and slow (Reeve,

2012). Findings from this study suggest that theater is not ineffective but to be optimally effective it would need to be continuous. All participants noted the need for greater frequency of theater events with wider national coverage in order to make a lasting impact. While participants acknowledged the substantial growth in individual relationship building with "the other," they also noted that a one-time event is not enough to transform communities or a whole society. Based on findings from this study, it is tempting to say that the relationships between individuals who attended Morning Star Theater events grew significantly, however, it remains to be seen how these personal steps and shifts will translate to the wider communities.

The last but definitely not least of the practice-related findings is attention to the funding of peacebuilding efforts, including theater. Peacebuilding processes in post-conflict settings, often in under-resourced countries, are largely dependent on external funding sources. South Sudan is no exception (Bennet et al., 2010; Reeve, 2012; SaferWorld, 2019). Most of these funders follow specific cycles and their priorities change overtime; for instance, the Morning Star Theater for Peacebuilding stopped though the conflict was far from being solved. As mentioned earlier, short-term and sporadic processes are not enough to cause lasting peace in a country like South Sudan, where large scale conflicts have lasted for decades. All participants from this study pointed out the need for regular and continued funding to support the ongoing peacebuilding efforts in their various communities.

The call for sustainable funding is not at all intended to perpetuate the dependency on external resources, but rather to highlight the fundamental necessity of utilizing the available resources in a manner that can provide self-sustaining continuity. It is clear that funds directed towards capacity-building of and by local people in the use of theater in peacebuilding can potentially generate locally owned processes that require minimal or no external funding at all.

As such, while funding to repeat is key, funds to build local capacities and resiliencies is even more important as it can lead to self-sustaining peacebuilding processes.

Theater and Peacebuilding–A Developing Framework: Interpersonal Level

This study's findings actually not only contribute to the current debate about the effectiveness of theater as a tool for peacebuilding in post-conflict settings but also reveal the progressive nature of relationship building—from uncertainties and feelings weighed down by history and how those would shift over the course of theater events, during and after the event. The developmental nature of the various stages in relationship building point to a possible framework that peacebuilding practitioners interested in the use of theater can begin to consider. The framework is provided in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1

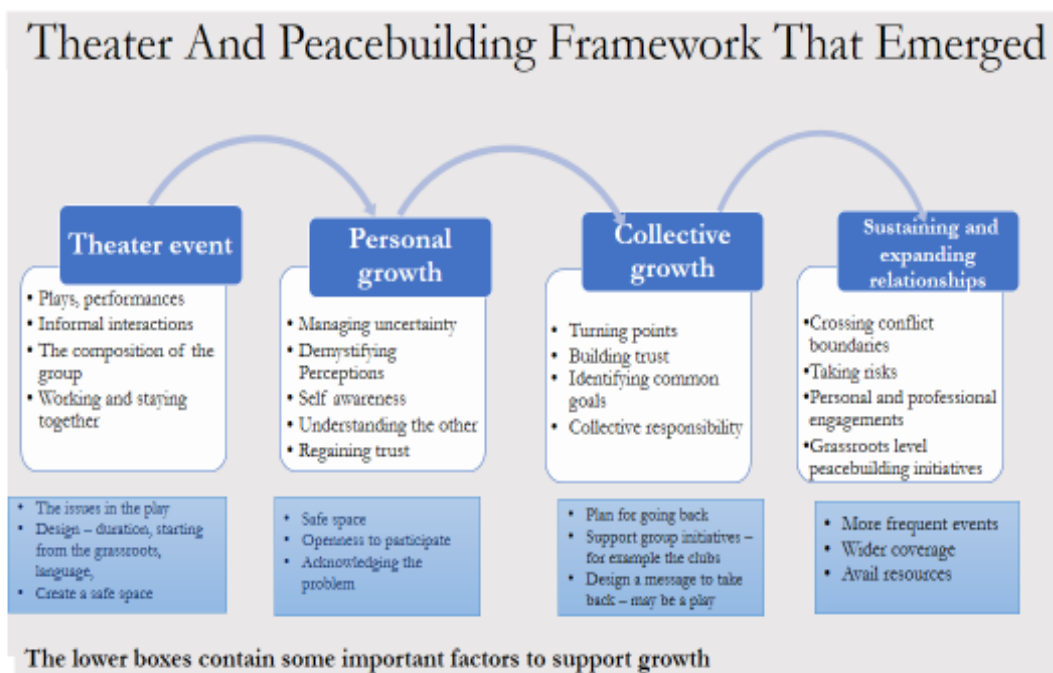*Theater and Peacebuilding Framework – Interpersonal Level*

Figure 5.1 shows the progressive nature of relationship building between individuals who were involved in the Morning Star Theater event during and after the theater event. Study findings show that both the formal and the informal aspects of a theater event contributed to participants' positive experiences of the event. One of the implications to this finding is that peacebuilding practitioners must carefully choose the issues of the play and design supportive formal and informal spaces for participants to benefit and grow. In fact, if possible, practitioners should involve the targeted participants directly in choosing the issue, a suggestion that emerged clearly in the study. In addition, findings indicate that a design of the event supported personal growth. Specifically, allowing ample time enabled individuals to reflect on themselves, on the situation and begun to understand "the other" in more accommodative manner.

As presented in Figure 5.1, the subsequent stage in relationship building that was revealed from the findings is that of collective growth. Results show a growing sense of collective growth whereby individuals begin to look at each other as a community and as individuals within communities. This emergent collective growth led to sustaining and expanding relationships. It is at this stage that actions such as taking risks to collaborate across conflict boundaries begin to happen.

In addition to the performances themselves and the event's duration, other design aspects such as the bottom-up approach and the use of accessible languages should be seriously considered by peacebuilding practitioners. These factors enable the creation of a safe space that invites participation and promotes deeper reflections. It is from the deeper reflections at the personal level that collective growth can emerge. In the schema of peacebuilding, collective growth is an important step but not enough to sustain relationship building in post-conflict zones. Sustaining growth beyond the theater event also requires adequate preparation for going back

into the community. Such preparation may include the formation of grassroots associations and supportive mechanisms. Lastly, frequency and widespread diffusion of theater events, and availing resources to support the emerged initiatives were also pointed as important elements in maintaining and expanding relationships. Maintaining and expanding relationships points to theater's potential to impact peacebuilding at various levels across all domains.

Theater and Peacebuilding: Large Scale

As presented in Chapter II, there are three different society levels that need to be targeted by peacebuilding efforts to achieve lasting peace (Lederach, 1997; Llamazares, 2005; Waldman, 2009). These are the official domain in which international diplomacy and government agencies operate. The middle level, which involves local leaders as key actors whose position is to serve as intermediaries between the elite tier and grassroots levels. The third level is the grassroots level, which promotes the involvement of local communities both as individuals and organized groups as key actors in the peacebuilding efforts. Findings from this study point to theater's direct impact on the personal and interpersonal domain, while focused at the grassroots level.

Yet, we know that achieving a holistic and integrated peacebuilding process requires targeting four essential categories: the personal, interpersonal, structural, and the cultural (Lederach, 1995; Waldman, 2009). One level and one domain are simply not sufficient. While the interpersonal category is central to this study, it is also clear that the positive relationships that emerged from this theater event will not endure unless they impact other levels, notably the middle and the top tier, and as well, at the same time influencing other domains of structural and cultural. In consideration of the comprehensive nature of peacebuilding, it is premature to assert that one single theater event can effectively impact at all the three levels and across the various domains in such a short time. However, based on the revelations from this study's findings, it is

not premature to suggest that the Morning Star Theater event will have an impact beyond the

personal and interpersonal categories, and in other domains as well.

Lederach's (1997) integrated model for peacebuilding was used to explain the

complexities of peacebuilding processes in Chapter II. Figure 5.2 shows the different conflict

systems that need to be targeted by peacebuilding efforts.

Figure 5.2

Peacebuilding Integrated Model
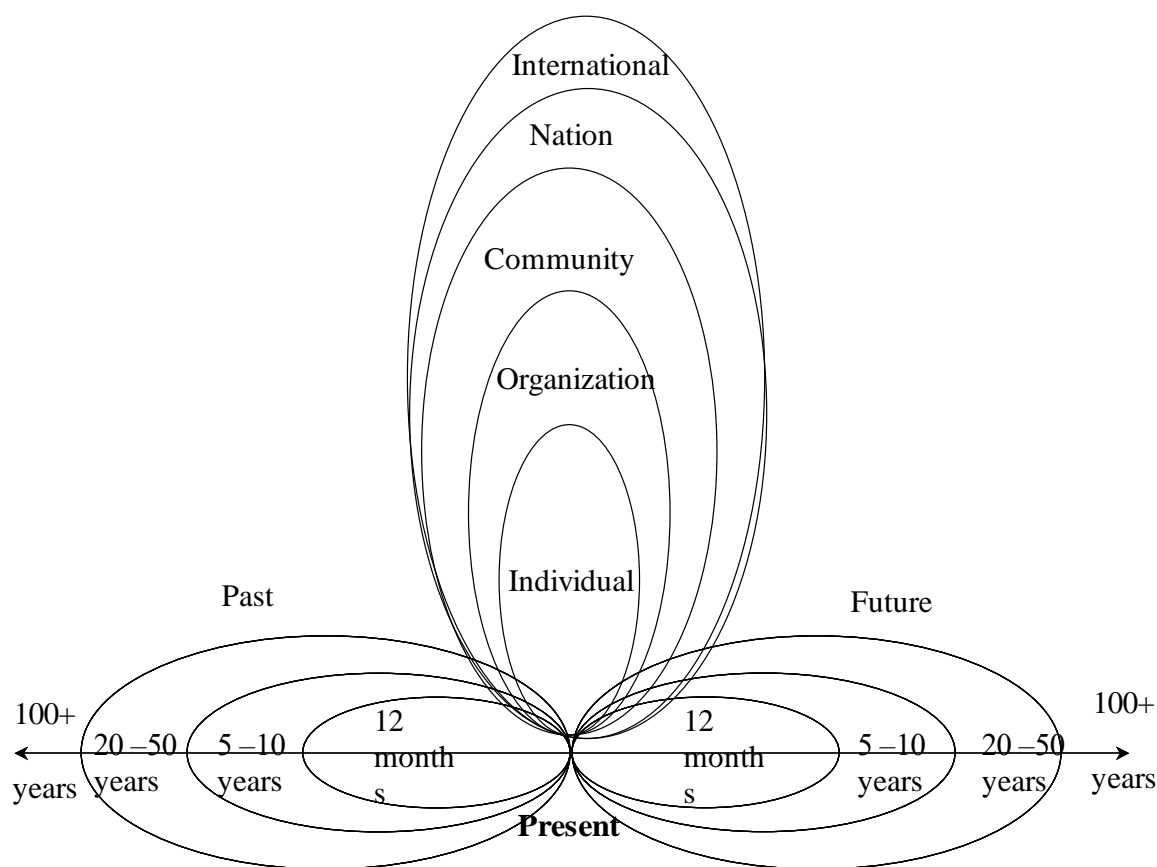
Note: Copyright © USIP in Lederach's Building Peace (1997), used with permission.

The peacebuilding integrated model illustrates the levels at which peacebuilding efforts must be

focused to transform the various systems of conflict (vertical). The labels on Lederach's (1997)

framework are changeable to fit the different situations. The framework also illustrates the

fundamental necessity to review the causes of conflict at the multiple levels from the past in order to work into the future (horizontal). Let us consider the current study's findings with this model in mind.

Building integrated peace requires an extensive view into the past and the present and involves a wide range of actors at various levels of the society (Lederach, 1997). The model is clear about the need for peacebuilders to work towards transforming systems of conflict at individual, community, organization, nation, and international levels. Likewise, the model points out the importance of reviewing the causes of conflict through its stages, working from the past to address the root causes, its impact on identity and narratives, addressing the current issues while focusing on the future. Lederach's (1997) peacebuilding model underscores the complexity of and the relationship between all levels targeted by peacebuilding processes in post-conflict settings, implying that the processes focusing on impacting one level and in a specific domain should aim at influencing other levels as well as other domains. The next section draws from study findings and implications to demonstrate how theater can contribute to achieving holistic peacebuilding.

Clearly, findings from the current study demonstrate that there were enhanced positive relationships between individuals who were involved in the Morning Star Theater event. It is important to consider the ways that relationships developed from the Morning Star event itself and/or future theater events can be strategically organized to impact the various society levels while influencing various domains in a holistic manner. In order to illustrate the possible ways in which theater can influence various levels across domains, we shall work with the South Sudan situation learnings and study's implications using Lederach's (1997) integrated model in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3

The Role of Theater in Peacebuilding Through Lederach's (1997) Integrated Model
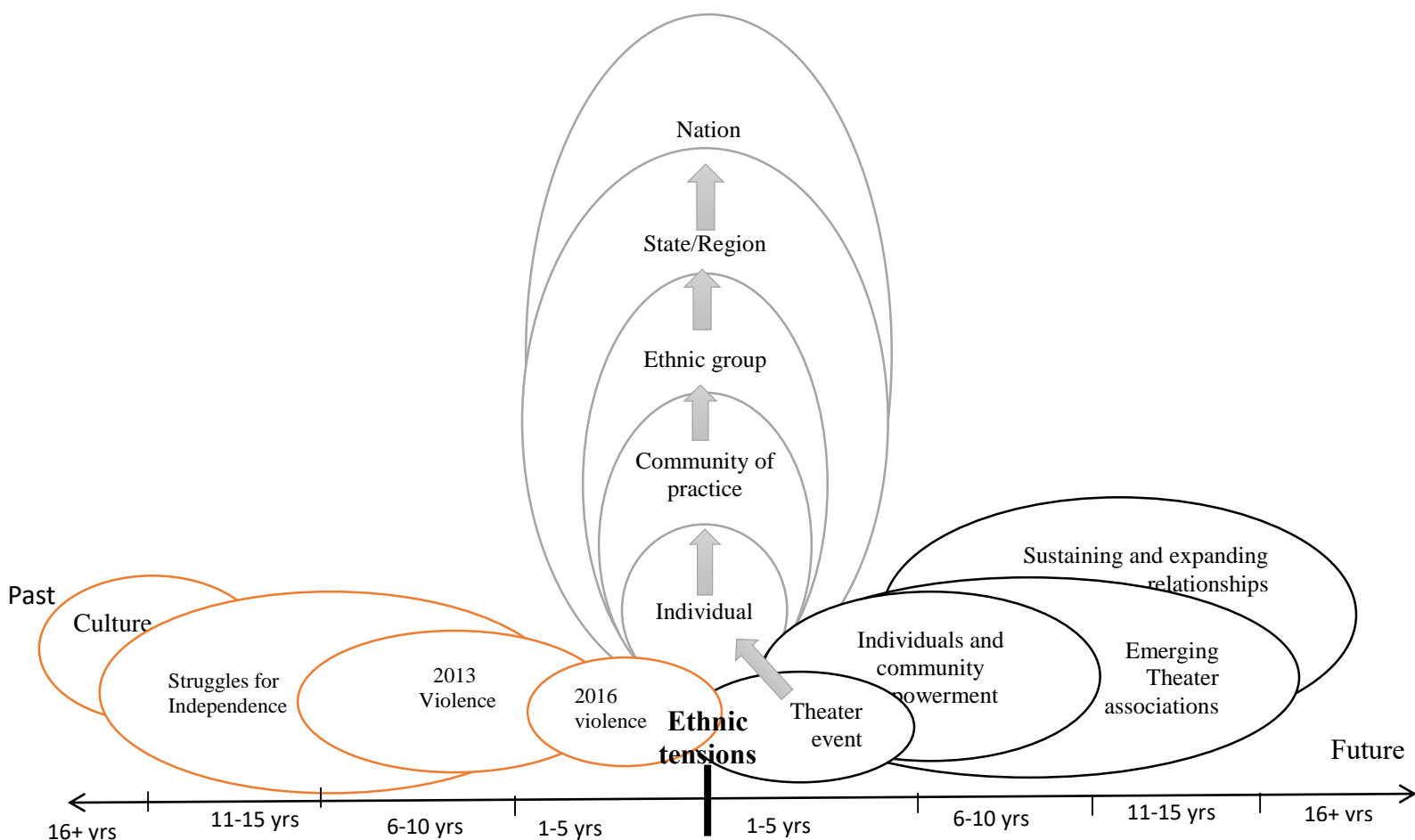
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Drawing from the study's findings and their implications, it is possible to apply theater to

holistically influence the various systems of conflicts. Let us examine theater's impact on the

vertical levels of society—from the individual to the national level. Study findings indicate that

individuals' perceptions of themselves and of "the other" changed positively. The same

individuals have settled back into their respective communities both as individuals as well a

community of practice. The same individuals continue to relate with each other and across ethnic

groups. The nature of their relationships has a direct impact on the large community as respective community members slowly begin to accommodate and trust "new friends" from other ethnic groups. The results reveal that this group is committed to influence attitudes among their communities. As Herath (2016) suggests, positive attitudes can potentially lead to peaceful societies, hence resulting into lasting peace. Theater's ripple effect potential to transform conflicts is illustrated by arrows, which represent shifts in attitudes through the different systems and levels in Figure 5.3.

Let us now consider the horizontal aspects of the model to examine the past, the present, and work towards the desired future. Literature informs us that South Sudan has been experiencing conflicts for decades now. The 2013 incidents sharply divided the country across ethnic lines. The Morning Star Theater event aimed at reconnecting divided communities, hence placing ethnic tension front and center. Study's findings indicate that participants of the theater event were able to reconsider the past, especially the 2013 incidents, reflect on the present differently, and collectively commit to work towards better relationships among each other for a better (desired) future.

Achieving reconciliations requires transformative and empowering peacebuilding processes while building local capacities (Waldman, 2009). Findings from this study illustrate that individuals not only re-built or created new relationships, they also acquired knowledge and skills to embark on peacebuilding processes in their respective communities. This implies that theater has the ability to facilitate transformation, and empowerment while building local capacities, which is a fundamental aspect of building lasting peace. The emergence of several associations across the country shows that theater's ripple effect is not only through the attitudinal change by a few individuals but also through organized efforts to facilitate social

change. When these associations are supported to engage in meaningful work in their respective capacities, the result of these engagements will be impact on the larger systems, including culture and perhaps structure. In this way, participating in the theater event impacted other domains and various levels.

The extensive review of the past, present, and working towards the future can be seen in some of participants' own voices, for example when Malish reflected on the long-lived cultural practice of dowry and realized that it "has turned into a revenge system," and commits to work towards changing it. Or when Laku realized "that the people in the event were not responsible for what happened to his group in 2013" and learned to separate those incidents from every individual outside of his tribe. We saw a Nuer woman recognizing a Dinka man as "my relative." We saw how Chalo and Munki dared to continue their relationships despite resistance from their communities. We heard about a Dinka man who dared to attend a burial of an individual he met during theater events confidently saying, "Believe it or not, I went for his funeral. Can you imagine a Dinka at a funeral of a Murle! Even his people could not understand how I could go there. But I was confident." We also recognize shifts in the wider communities as they start to respect "outsiders;" for example, when Malish visited a different community and, "They respected me because I am his friend," while some individuals have been able to move freely from one community to another. A simple way to illustrate theater's ripple effect can be viewed in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4

Theater's Ripple Effect on Peacebuilding on a Larger Scale
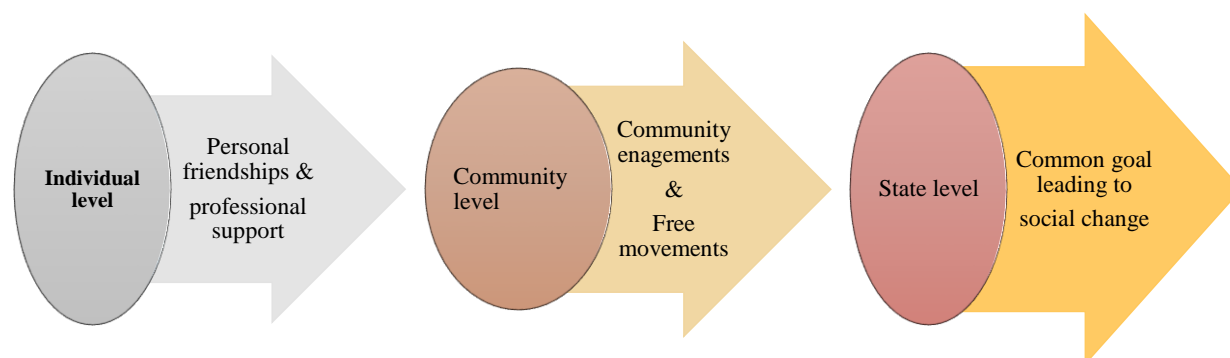
Perhaps it is too early to assert that there are already good relationships between the various communities represented at the Morning Star Theater event. But as several participants recognized, building better relationships is happening. After all, lasting peace is achieved through the long-term view of peacebuilding processes involving among others community empowerment to enhance sustainable peacebuilding initiatives (Lederach, 1997; Ropers, 2002; Waldman, 2009). The assertion that theater can effectively impact various conflict systems is made in full recognition of the broadness of peacebuilding, which requires a variety of efforts involving a wide range of actors (Lederach, 1997). Certainly, no single approach is sufficient to impact the various systems of conflicts single handedly. Moreover, gaps created by conflict require different forms of interventions; for example, the provision of materials to cover basic needs. But it is beyond doubt that theater can in fact be applied as an effective complimentary tool to other peacebuilding efforts.

Despite the need for a long-term view and of course a variety of other factors, it is essential to recognize that if a handful of individuals (12 participants of the study) can boast about the positive relationships that exist between themselves and other individuals who were involved in the Morning Star Theater event, when it is approximately two years after the event, it

is also possible to believe that positive relationships will be widened in the next couple of years. The realization of the ripple effect of relationship building beyond individuals who were directly involved in the theater events makes theater an effective tool in peacebuilding, even though the process may take long. The existence of positive relationships at the various levels can serve as a foundation for other peacebuilding efforts to take place.

Study Limitations

The study had a number of limitations that affect its generalizability. The first limitation is related to the broad nature of the subject under study. As mentioned earlier, peacebuilding as a concept refers to a wide and diverse range of processes at different tiers that address conflict at various levels including root causes, impact, and the prevention of reoccurrence (Schirch, 2013). It is also clear that peacebuilding efforts must by necessity target different domains of structural, personal, cultural, and relational (Sentama, 2009). Despite the fact that these domains are all interlinked and relevant, the current study only focused on examining how a particular event impacted on the relationship building aspect. This in no way is intended to suggest that the relational domain is more important than the others. However, it was the focus of this study based on the researcher's interests and the nature of the Morning Star event under exploration. The Morning Star Forum Theater event aimed at reconnecting groups experiencing alienations as a result of the conflict, with a hope that better relationships would fundamentally provide a foundation for peacebuilding processes in other peacebuilding domains.

The second limitation grew out of the researcher's positionality in relation to this research. As fully discussed in Chapter I, the researcher was part the Morning Star Program's leadership, which was responsible for funding and other managerial aspects of the event. Hence, it is unclear to what degree participants' repeated insistence on the need for sustained funding

was influenced by her position; although, it was precisely because of her experiences with Morning Star that she had access to the participants with whom she had cultivated a trusting relationship. Thus, the implications for future practice that focus on ongoing funding for continuity in theater events may be partially identified due to the lens of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

The third limitation of the study relates to investigating one single peacebuilding event in an environment that is overcrowded with other peacebuilding processes. As explained in Chapter II, South Sudan, like many other post-conflict settings across the world, is a recipient of, a participant in, and beneficiary of a wide range of peacebuilding processes especially at the top tier and within all domains. The same participants who attended the Morning Star Theater events and participated in the study have likely attended or participated in other peacebuilding processes in South Sudan over the past years. Although the inquiry was specific about participants' experiences during this particular event, the Morning Star Forum Theater, it is not clear what the impact of other processes might have had on these individuals and the positive assessment they voiced about the value of theater in peacebuilding. Therefore, it is important to credit the impact of the Morning Star Forum Theater event, while recognizing other peacebuilding efforts happening among these communities, and not to attribute too much "power" to any one single activity.

Finally, South Sudan has characteristics of many post-conflict zones across the country; and it also has unique characteristics due to tribal, religious, and economic factors. To the degree that decolonizing perspectives remind us to recognize the importance of the local culture, there definitely may be aspects of the theater event and its impact which are specific to South Sudan and cannot be generalized to other conflict zones say, perhaps in the Middle East or Latin

America. A decolonizing perspective warns us to be cognizant of the importance of and criticality of local culture and thus, generalizability may not be appropriate.

Implications for Future Studies

This study's findings further affirm the position that theater has a positive role to play in peacebuilding in general and relationship-building in particular in post-conflict settings. Yet, findings open up other areas that if investigated can likely contribute further to the debate about the role of theater in peacebuilding.

To begin with, findings suggest the emergence and existence of positive relationships between individuals who were not accustomed to relating at all. All participants noted personal growth and attitudinal changes with regard to relating with and to "the other." However, each story was shared independently, limiting the opportunity for comparison. It would be important to go a step further and understand how the supposed relationship is mutual by interviewing dyads. Similarly, several stories spoke to common incidents, for example, collaborations on joint activities. It would be illuminating to speak to the same individuals who spoke about similar incidents to understand whether joint collaboration is contributing further to peacebuilding and how it was experienced similarly and/or differently by the participating parties based on their gender or their ethnicity or locality.

In a similar vein, participants spoke passionately about their new attitudes and commitments towards "the other." Yet we know that sometimes people are prone to project in ways they would like to act and behave around others. It would be interesting to find out from community members in locales where participants of the Morning Star Forum Theater event live whether any change in attitude or behavior is noticeable or how such changes are impacting others.

Moreover, all participants revealed stories of ongoing engagements in relationship building in one way or another. This particular revelation actually positions theater as a potential tool with a powerful ripple effect over time. However, the current study did not explore the "ripple" in terms of interviewing individuals who have been involved in subsequent peacebuilding activities organized by those who were at the theater event. It would be interesting to go further at the grassroots level and gather stories from individuals whose relationships might have been impacted as a result of peacebuilding processes that emerged from the Morning Star Forum Theater event, in essence, to illuminate the theater's ripple effect.

Likewise, it is important to acknowledge that peacebuilding is a multidisciplinary field that draws from political science, psychology and trauma healing, anthropological approaches, conflict resolution and conflict transformation, and justice seeking, among others. As such, it may be challenging if not impossible to generalize experiences of individuals from a theater event through a single lens. While this study specifically examined relationship building, future studies can endeavor to take particular views, for example, the role of theater in trauma healing and peacebuilding, or the role of theater in addressing justice needs in post-conflict settings.

Finally, as a comprehensive process, peacebuilding addresses the conflict at various levels including the root causes, the impact, and the prevention of reoccurrence (Schirch, 2013). At the same time, these processes (peacebuilding) target different complex systems of personal, structure, and relational domains (Sentama, 2009). This study only focused on how one particular event impacted the relationship domain. As such, it is not clear about how effective theater can be when applied in processes aiming at transforming systems. Future studies can explore the role of theater in other domains such as structure and culture.

Reflections

This section presents my reflections on the process of conducting this research and concludes Chapter V, the final chapter of my dissertation. Based on my curiosity, this has been a rewarding experience and yet filled with more wonder.

In the first place, I was part of the Morning Star Forum Theater event that was being examined. I had witnessed first-hand the excitement from those who were present at the time, but I was hesitant to say whether the event was successful beyond those five days of creativity and collaboration. I was not able to tell whether excitement and connections made during the event contributed to peacebuilding over the long-term, which is my personal and professional passion. This research allowed me insights beyond what I had expected; it helped me to see individual growth from prevailing distrust and hostility to becoming "best friends" as they themselves described it.

When peacebuilding practitioners put their minds and efforts to support certain groups, it is always difficult to know whether we are making an impact or not. Even when projects include built-in monitoring and evaluation processes, these are typically driven by implementers to justify every dollar given by the funders. This current research was conducted as an independent scholar and the opportunity to see and hear from ordinary grassroots people that the events in which I had played a part actually helped them reconnect and build relationships with "the other" over time was a great joy for me personally. It has reinvigorated my commitment to such peacebuilding work professionally.

At the same time, the process got me thinking about how much effort is needed to transform a society that has experienced long-term conflicts. The individuals who attended the Morning Star Forum Theater event and eventually participated in the study had shared positive

reflections on their experiences. There is no doubt that their perspectives and attitudes changed. Their relationships with "the other" grew and blossomed and all is good. But hold on, how many am I talking about? The numbers are so small, and the conflict is so deep in a country of 10.06 plus million. How much can these individuals influence the larger perspectives and attitudes in their respective communities in order to influence the conflict situation at the national level? While it is true that the study helped me to appreciate theater as an effective approach, even theater processes will definitely require more efforts—more funds, more people, and more time. The process helped me to appreciate that I may be part of a peacebuilding process, but I may never get to see the big societal results. That does not mean my efforts were wasted.

The interviewing was yet another moment filled with much delight. Listening to participants' stories of relationship-building, stories of crossing boundaries, stories of overcoming bias, and stories of personal growth filled me with a mix of emotions. As a researcher, I was in the unique position of knowing and relating some participants' stories with others. I struggled to hold back my desire to tell some individuals that I had heard a similar story from so-and-so. I had to control that desire as I conducted the interviews. Inside of me, I felt waves of positive feelings because I could feel something good was happening between those groups. I was excited that these individuals had grown so much. It was amazing to hear. Yet, I was aware that as long the conflict situation in the entire country remains unresolved, these individual efforts and changes will be inadequate. That is the uncomfortable reality.

Moreover, it so happened that the research project took place at the time when I was no longer in the country where the study was taking place—South Sudan. Although I was certain about the contacts I still had in that country, I was worried about the possibility of people

refusing to participate in the study unless there was some kind of financial or material gain. To my pleasant surprise, people actually were interested in the study. This taught me to reassess my assumptions; it is wrong to generalize that all people will only participate when there is financial gain. That lens may be influenced by my years of work with funders and donor groups. I learned something different from this study. People are genuinely interested in taking part in processes that can lift their voices and reshape their thinking, even when there is no direct financial gain.

That said, I realize that I disappointed a number of participants who had hoped that I could influence the return and continuation of the Morning Star Forum Theater events. This is a hope that unfortunately I was not able to fulfill. Many times during the interviews, I felt my own frustration as I listened to stories about their struggles and efforts to reconnect their communities and yet there was/is nothing I can do to support them. I even thought about going back once this study is completed to support their efforts to continue building peace in their small but important ways. I went in as a researcher, but I left thinking more as a peacebuilding practitioner and global citizen, and if given a chance, I can see myself going back to support these individuals. There is a great potential through these emerged efforts that can grow and be built by those who seek the change and not external agencies.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Protocols

Step 1- Email the SSTO

Dear SSTO,

This is.., the former Director of Morning Star program in South Sudan. I am doing a Doctoral program in Leadership and Change at Antioch University. One of the requirements of the program is to conduct research and write a dissertation. For my research project, I am interested in exploring the experiences of individuals who participated in theater events that SSTO helped to organize on behalf of the Morning Star program.   My research is intended to understand if and how the theater events could have impacted on the relationship building among people from the above various communities.

As you may recall, the theater events brought together individual performers and participants from six different regions (Aweil, Bor, Rumbek, Malakal, Wau and Pibor), plus the Central region (Juba) where the festival took place.

I am writing to request your assistance to identify individuals who attended the theater events to participate in my study. As I recall, you have active theater networks in all these regions through which you can contact individual participants. I would like to ask if SSTO would please post the attached summary about the study and invitation to participate on SSTO social networks. My email is…

I am available to talk with you more through (WhatsApp, phone or exchange more emails) to answer any questions you might have. My research is taking place over the next several months, and I hope to conclude the research gathering phase by the end of April 2021. I shall appreciate if you can send out the message in a timely manner.

I look forward to hearing from you all very soon

Best regards

Ph.D. Candidate Graduate School of Leadership and Change, Antioch University

Still in Step 1 - Information to post on the SSTO Social networks

Subject: Invitation to participate in a study on theater and Peacebuilding

This is an invitation to participate in a study on theater and peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. It is specifically addressed to individuals who participated in the Morning Star Theater events for peacebuilding 2019 in the various regions of South Sudan. The research is intended to explore participants' experiences in the theater events and their reflections and if/how the theater experiences have contributed to peacebuilding processes in the country.

The involvement would be one-hour conversation via phone or WhatsApp. The study is being conducted by (name), former director of the Morning Star Program in South Sudan. (Name) is

now doing her Doctoral studies at Antioch University and focusing her dissertation on understanding the role of theater in peacebuilding.

If you would like to know about this opportunity to share your experiences, please contact the researcher through… The interviews would be scheduled during March and April 2021.

Step 2 - First call/text with individuals who shall contact the researcher
Thank you for contacting me about the study on theater and peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. As you may have heard, my name is… and I am the researcher on this project. I worked closely on the Morning Star Theater Program and I am very curious about how participants reflect on that experience. I am Ugandan by background and am deeply committed to exploring peacebuilding in our war-torn region. I would welcome the chance to follow-up with you. We can also schedule to talk on a different day and time that is convenient for you. What do you prefer?

Step 3 - Follow up call with individuals who want to hear more
I am glad you interested in the study. I shall start by explaining a bit more about the study and give you a chance to ask questions and then you can decide whether or not you want to participate. I was the Director of Morning Star program in South Sudan from 2015 to 2019. You may remember me from some of the theater events for Peacebuilding that were implemented in your region or in Juba. I am currently doing my PhD in Leadership and Change at Antioch University in the U.S. One of the requirements of the program is to conduct research and write a dissertation. For my research project, I am interested in exploring the experiences of the individuals who participated in theater events that SSTO organized on behalf of the Morning Star program. I am not doing the research on behalf of the Morning Star program but rather, as an independent graduate student.
As you may recall, the theater events brought individual participants from six different regions (Aweil, Bor, Rumbek, Malakal, Wau and Pibor), plus the central region (Juba) where the festival took place. I am interested in the experiences of participants. I am curious about the most impactful aspects of participating in the event and on your reflections about in what ways involvement in the theater events impacted connection with and building relationship across the different communities. I hope to set up one-hour interviews with approximately a dozen participants representing different ethnic groups.

Let me stop here and give you the chance to ask questions. After which you can decide now or later if you are interested in participating in the study and if so, we can schedule the time for the interviews between now and the end of April 2021.

Step 4 – The second call / Interview
First of all, I want to thank you for your willingness to participate in my study. Before we start the interviews, I am required to give you more information about the study, then explain your role and all other ethical considerations. I want to make sure that you have all the necessary information to enable you decide about whether or not you consent to participate.

Step 5 – Interview date
Read out and explain the consent form before conducting the interviews

APPENDIX B: Consent Form

Name of Principle Investigator: (name)
Name of Organization: Antioch University, PhD in Leadership and Change Program
Name of Project: Theater and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Settings: Reflections on Experiences by participants of Morning Star Program in South Sudan

Introduction
I am (name), a PhD research student in the Leadership and Change program at Antioch University. As part of this degree, I am completing a dissertation research on the use of theater n peacebuilding processes in post-conflict settings. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of theater in peacebuilding focusing on relationship building. I am analyzing individuals' experiences from a theater intervention for peacebuilding that was organized under the Morning star program. I am inviting you to participate. You may talk to anyone you feel comfortable talking with about the project and take time to reflect on whether you want to participate or not. You may ask questions at any time and you may also stop at any point during the process.

Purpose of the Research Project
While there is growing interest in the role of theater in post-conflict zones, there is limited information from participants involved in these events. The current debate is from implementers. The purpose of this study is to understand how and in what ways did participating in theater events impacted individuals' experiences towards building relationships with the other.

Project Activities
This project will involve your participation in WhatsApp or telephone interview with me and I will record the conversations of our interview. These interviews will take approximately 30 - 45 minutes and shall be conducted via WhatsApp or normal telephone calls. In about two weeks after the interview, I shall request you to review a summary of the interview which I can send to you via an email or which I can read for you via WhatsApp call to ensure that it accurately reflects your story and experiences. This review should not take more than 40 minutes.

Participant Selection
You are selected because you participated in the theater event that was organized by Morning star program. You participated in all the activities at state level and national level. You may choose not to participate in this project if you are not prepared to talk about your experiences since that event.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate. You may withdraw from this project at any time. You will not be penalized for your decision not to participate or for anything of your contributions during the project.

Risks
I do not anticipate that you will be harmed or distressed as a result of participating in this project. You may stop being in the project at any time if you become uncomfortable. Should there be a need for follow up support as a result of the interview, there are community organizations born out of Morning Star that offer psychological support in South Sudan that you can approach. These include the Trauma

Education Initiative-SS' (TEI-SS) and or Best Service Trust.

Benefits
There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation may help me as a researcher and other peacebuilding practitioners to learn about the role of theater in peacebuilding.

Reimbursements
You will not be provided any monetary incentive to take part in this project.

Confidentiality
All information will be de-identified, so that it cannot be connected back to you. Your real name will be replaced with a pseudonym in the write-up of this project. I will be the only person with access to the list connecting your name to the pseudonym. This list, along with any tape recordings will be kept confidential.

Limits of Privacy Confidentiality
This project involves submission to my university as a PhD requirement. As a result, I cannot assure you that what you say will be private. However, I shall ensure protection of your identity by not disclosing your real name.

Generally speaking, I can assure you that I will keep everything you tell me or do for the project private. Yet there are times where I cannot keep things private (confidential). I cannot keep things private (confidential) if I find out that
- a child or vulnerable adult has been abused
- a person plans to hurt him or herself, such as commit suicide,
- a person plans to hurt someone else,

There are laws that require many professionals to take action if they think a person is at risk for self-harm or are self-harming, harming another or if a child or adult is being abused. In most states, there is a government agency that must be told if someone is being abused or plans to self-harm or harm another person. Please ask any questions you may have about this issue before agreeing to be in the study. It is important that you do not feel betrayed if it turns out that I cannot keep some things private.

Future Publication
The dissertation shall be published in a public domain, which means future researchers and practitioners shall have access to the information contained herein.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw
You do not have to take part in this project if you do not wish to do so, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without your job being affected.

Who to Contact
If you have any questions, you may ask them now or later. If you have questions later, you may contact me at... If you have any ethical concerns about this study, contact…, PhD, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Antioch University Ph.D. in Leadership and Change, Email: …

THE REMAINDER OF THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

DO YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT?

If you accept to proceed with the interview, I take it that you have willingly accepted to participate in the study. Do we agree to proceed with the interview?

DO YOU WISH TO BE AUDIOTAPED AS PART OF THIS PROJECT?
By agreeing to proceed with the interview I take it that you agree to be audiotaped and allow the use the recordings as described in this form in my project.

Print Name of Participant_____

Date _____
      Day/month/year

To be filled out by the person taking consent:

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the project and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this Informed Consent Form was fully read out and explained to the participant.

Print Name of person taking the consent:…

Signature _____ Date _____

                    Day/month/year

APPENDIX C: Copy Right Permissions

Copyright Permission for Figure 1.2.

Map of the ethnic groups of South Sudan was used with CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0) permission.

Copyright Permission for Figure 1.3

Permission to Use STAR Copyrighted Materials Request Form

To: Director, STAR Program
Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR)
1200 Park Road
Harrisonburg, VA 22802
From: Shiphrah Mutungi Akandiinda _____
I request permission to
      ☐ reprint   ☐ photocopy   ☐ digitize

      ☐ adapt ☐ translate

      [X] incorporate into: ☐printed course materials ☐online course materials

         [X] a dissertation/thesis/ book ☐a website publication

the following material:

Author/creator:_ Jan Jener and STAR Team for Eastern Mennonite University

Title: STAR Multi-disciplinary Framework (Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual) Framework

Description of material: The frame work explains well the multidisciplinary nature of the STAR model and there is a section in my PhD research that can benefit from a visual model of this nature. Page #(s):_One

Purpose: In a PhD Dissertation at Antioch University. _

Format: The STAR framework shall be used to explain the origin of Morning Star

Number of Copies: N/A
Distribution/Access: Open access once the dissertation is published

I understand that I will:
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My Name is Shiphrah Mutungi Akandiinda. I am a PhD student, writing a dissertation at Antioch
University. I am writing to request permission to reuse Lederach's (1997) Peacebuilding Integrated
Framework. My dissertation is about the role of Theater in Peacebuilding in Post-conflict settings:
Reflections on Experiences by Participants of Morning Star Program in South Sudan. It will appear **in
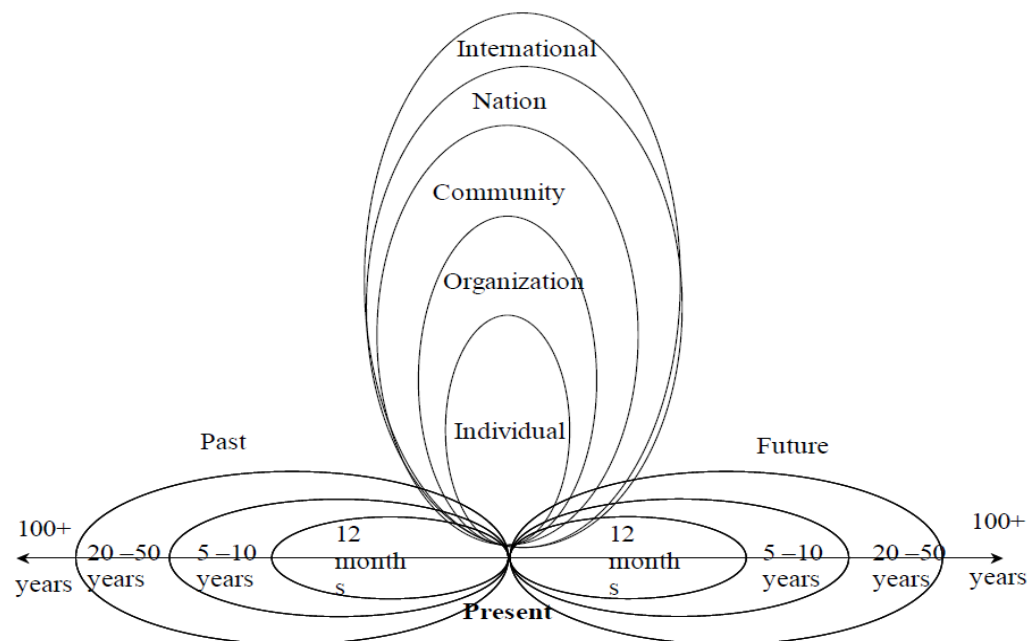these places**:

a. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. ProQuest is a Print on Demand Publisher

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access archive https://etd.ohiolink.edu/

c. AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive. AURA is an open access

archive. https://aura.antioch.edu/

The Authors of the framework are: Maire Dugan's nested paradigms (1996) and John Paul Lederach's
Integrated Framework for Building Peace (1997) in Building Peace, Page 80. The figure will appear in the
dissertation as follows:

Peacebuilding integrated model. Source: Lederach (1997). Building Peace.

Permission granted via the following email:

Mon, Sep 13,
3:25 PM

to me

Dear (name)

Thank you for your email and interest in USIP Press publications. You have our permission to reproduce the material for use in your dissertation as outlined in your request.

Sincerely,

(Name)

Sales, Rights, and Marketing Specialist
United States Institute of Peace
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USIP.org | Twitter | Facebook | Newsletters
Watch the new "About USIP" video
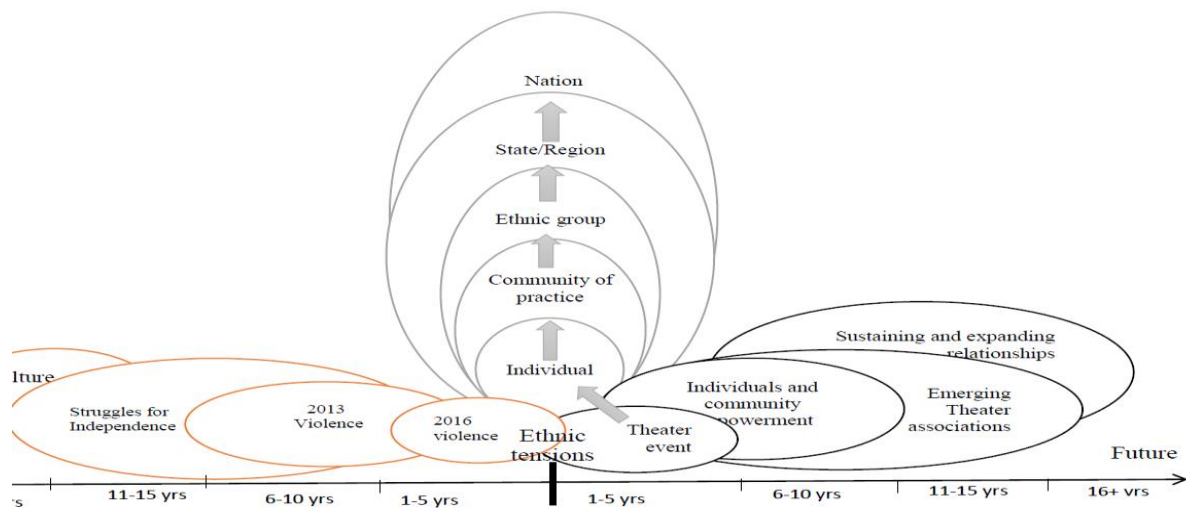
Permission for figure 5.3

Re: Requesting to Use Figure 7: Integrated Framework for Peacebuilding

My Name is Shiphrah Mutungi Akandiinda. I am a PhD student, writing a dissertation at Antioch University. I am writing to request permission to reuse Lederach's (1997) Peacebuilding Integrated Framework. My dissertation is about the role of Theater in Peacebuilding in Post-conflict settings: Reflections on Experiences by Participants of Morning Star Program in South Sudan. It will appear **in these places**:

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c. AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive. AURA is an open access

archive. https://aura.antioch.edu/

The Authors of the framework are: Maire Dugan's nested paradigms (1996) and John Paul Lederach's Integrated Framework for Building Peace (1997) in Building Peace, Page 80. The figure will appear in the dissertation as follows:

To be used in the following manner:

The role of Theater in peacebuilding through Lederach's (1997) integrated model

Permission to use figure 5.3 granted in the following email:

Fri, Dec 10, 3:19 PM (2 days ago)

to me

Dear (name),

You have our approval for your second request below as well.

Sincerely,

(Name)

Sales, Rights, and Marketing Specialist
United States Institute of Peace
Making Peace Possible

APPENDIX D: Brief Bio Data about Study Participants
(All names are pseudonyms).

This is a brief bio information about each of the 12 study participants**.** The list follows the chronological order of when the interview took place as follows:

1. **Chalo is** a 45 year-old Dinka man living in Upper Nile. Chalo participated in the Morning Star theater for peacebuilding at both regional and national levels. Chalo lives in the government-controlled area. Chalo's ethnic group is viewed as royal to the government. The interview took place on March 26, 2021 and was 60 minutes long.

2. **Laku** is 33 year-old man from the Shilluk Tribe. He lives in Upper Nile. As a Shilluk, Laku identifies himself as one of the opposition groups and lives in the opposition- controlled area and his movement was restricted to that community. He participated in the Morning Star Theater for peacebuilding at both regional and national levels. At state level, Laku only attended theater events in the opposition controlled area. The interview took place on March 28, 2021 and he was brief, lasting for about 30 minutes.

3. **Tabani** is a 31 year-old Lakoya Man from Central Equatoria, living in Juba. Tabani does not affiliate with any particular political group and describes himself as "a free man, I can move from one state to another." Tabani works with a National NGO addressing a number of issues including peace. He travels a lot across the country. Tabani attended events at state and national level festival. The interview took place on March 26, 2021 and lasted for almost 40 minutes.

4. **Tareka** is a 43 year-old man from the Kuku ethnic group located in Central Equatoria. Tareka lives in Juba. He works for a national NGO. He travels to different regions. Tareka attended Morning Star Theater events state level in in the field when he was in Wau for work. Tareka does not affiliate with any political group but recognizes the ongoing conflict as a political rivalry between the two ethnic groups. The interview took place on April 2, 2021 and lasted about 40 minutes.

5. **Munki** is a 34 year-old man from the Nuer tribe. Munki lives and works Upper Nile and was part of theater events at both State and National levels. Munki identifies as an opposition and perhaps active in politics. The interview took place on April 1, 2021 for 45 minutes.

6. **Misha** is a 31 year-old woman from the Nuer ethnic group living in Jonglei. In Jonglei, communities live separately from each other with some in camps or in communities depending on which part of the state you are in. Misha lives in the camp with most of other people from her ethnic group. Misha participated in the Morning Star theater for peacebuilding at state level and at the National festival in Juba The interview took place on April 17, 202 and lasted for 40 minutes only.

7. **Hatima** is a 32 year-old Bari woman from Central Equatoria. Hatima does not take any sides in the conflicts of the country as she states "for me as a Bari, am free to relate with any person in South Sudan because my tribe is not one these spearheading the conflict." Hatima participated in Morning Star events organized at state level theater and the national festival. The interview took place on April 19, 2021, and lasted for 30 minutes.

8. **Keji** is a 29 year-old man from the Murle ethnic group living in Jonglei. Keji lives in unrestricted community in Jonglei. Keji attended Morning Star events at state level and later on the national festival in Juba. The interview took place on April 22, 2021 and lasted for almost an hour.

9. **Malish** is 44 year-old belonging to the Dinka tribe from Northern Bahr el Ghazal. He was part of the theater events at State level and the national theater festival in Juba. Malish's

community is predominantly populated by his own tribe but he is aware of the resentment by many other communities across the country. He leans more towards the government as his tribe is at the top of the current regime. The interview took place on April 22, 2021and lasted for almost an hour.

10. **Bebi** is a 28 year-old man, living in Jonglei State. Bebi belongs to the Dinka group and lives in unrestricted community. He is aware of the tension between his ethnic group and other groups in his State as he is associated with the current regime. The interview took place on May 4th, 2021 and lasted for 35 minutes.

11. **Sadia i**s a 29 year-old Murle woman living in Western Bahr el Ghazal. Sadia's community, Western Bahr el Ghazal is an ethnically diverse populated and houses one of the largest PoCs in the country. Sadia lives in the unrestricted community. Sadia moved to Western Bahr el Ghazal in 2020, a year ago to pursue a degree in Education at the University of Bahr El-Ghazal in Wau. At the time of the Morning Star events, Sadia was living in Juba and Sadia participated in the events organized in Juba city plus the national festival. The interview took place on May 16, 2021 and for just about 30 minutes.

12. **Nyamed** is a 29 year-old man from Shilluk ethnic group living in Juba, Central Equatoria State. In Juba, Nyamed lives in one of the PoCs but he can move freely in Juba city. At the time of the theater events (2019), Nyamed was working as a volunteer for an international organization providing psycho social support for PoC residents. His role was to take maintain records of individuals receiving support. Nyamed helped the SSTO to mobilize participants to attend Morning Star performances at people for their performances in the PoC. At the time of interview, Nyamed was enrolled in one of the universities in Juba pursuing a bachelor's degree peace and conflict studies. The interview took place on May 16, 202 and lasted for almost an hour.

APPENDIX E: Morning Star Forum Theater Plays

A total of six plays were performed at both the state level and the national theater festival in Juba. Plays were written by four individuals who were trained by the Morning Star in 2016. The issues were identified through Morning Star's activities as the main sources of tensions between grassroots communities. The South Sudan Theater Organization (SSTO) team based in Juba trained their teams at state levels. The national theater festival was the climax of state level events. Performances were led by actors and actresses while the audience actively participated as spect-actors, an essential element of Forum Theater. Here are summaries of the various plays:

Play 1 My Tribe is hated play

This was a play about Shadrack, a 30 year-old man and a university student with a bachelor's degree in business management and is in his final year for his master's degree. He has been looking for a job for a long time and everywhere he goes the story has been the same, about his lack of experience required for the job by most organizations. He finally settles for a job as a security guard at a local company. In the first scenes, we see Shadrack working when everything is new for him. He is very frustrated with his supervisors, the majority of whom come from the opposition tribe and have not gone beyond secondary education level. He has confided in one of his colleagues (Fatima) the frustrations that he is facing and she has been very supportive of him and has been encouraging him. The situation continues as such for a long time. In another scene, Shadrack is extending technical support to colleagues in the administrative department, which angers his manager who warns him to stick to his own job – security guard, if not he will lose his job. In another scene, the Managing Director, Shadrack, Patel (Foreign investor) and staff are trying to manage a financial crisis in the organization. The owner of the organization who is a foreign investor is not happy with everyone's performance and fires all top managers. In her first staff meeting, the new Director announces that they will be reviewing most positions and encourages everyone to apply for any vacant posts for which they qualify. Shadrack is walking back to the front office and on his way, Fatima, who is a receptionist encourages him to apply for the vacant Administration and Finance Officer. Although hesitant, Shadrack applies and gets the job. In his new office, Shadrack welcomes in a guest who was his former security manager looking for a job. The play shows Shadrack welcoming his former oppressor but before that, the audience is asked to suggest the nest course of action for Shadrack at this point.

Play 2: Munki's trauma and conflict play

This play is about two siblings who swear to avenge the death of their parents after an armed group destroyed their community. In one particular scene, the two boys woke up in a bush after running away from gunshots in their neighborhood which destroyed everything and killed everyone including their parents. The only piece of information they receive while still in hiding is from an older man who was seriously hurt by the same armed men. The man who was also in hiding was from their tribe. Being older, he understood what was going on and told the boys that they were attacked by an armed group of men looking for insurgents who are hiding in their village. The insurgents belong to the same tribe as the boys and the old man, so that's why the armed men attacked the village. The old man goes on to tell the boys that the entire village was destroyed. The next scene shows the boys, devastated by the news of their parents' murder and the destruction of their community, muster all their energy to carry out revenge. In another scene, there is chanting and singing by an armed group and the next thing we see and hear is the two

boys excited about joining the group to avenge their parents. The older one tells the younger one "I am happy that we will finally avenge our parents." They are no longer the innocent and little boys we met earlier but hardliners vowing to kill as many as possible from the opposing tribe as they can. Several scenes follow and in one of these, the elder boy is seen and heard fulfilling his promise to avenge his parents' death while in a subsequent scene he is seriously injured and doesn't know where he is. By the time he becomes lucid, he is in a makeshift hospital run by an NGO and the woman who brought him in was from the so called opposing tribe. At this point, the elder brother doesn't know whether his younger brother has lived or died.

Play 3: Cattle Raiding, Revenge and Conflict play
This play was about two brothers, Malish and Musa. Musa, the older brother, lives in a rural area while Malish, the younger lives in the city and is preparing to get married. The bride's family want 60 cows as a dowry. Malish sends money to Musa to buy cows but Musa instead uses the money for his personal expenses, and then organizes his tribe mates to go cattle raiding from the neighboring community. Different actions and then reactions unfold, repeating the cycles of revenge which sadly take the life of Malish. The audience as *spec-actors* participate by suggesting alternative ways to stop the violence and bring about peace between the two tribes. Among the initiatives suggested are joint festivals that bring the two communities together. At one burial from one community, two chiefs from the two communities announce the new initiatives and everyone is celebrating.

Play 4: Kasala play
This play was about Kasala, a 16 year-old girl whose father wants to marry her off despite the fact that she is in school. Kasara is one of the brightest students at her school and she is very focused on her studies. Her father on the other hand has other plans. He is an alcoholic and a violent man. Kasara's father believes that at 16 she is already old enough to get married and he even goes to the extent of identifying a suitor for her who is 80 years old, five times older her age. He arranges the dowry and secures the funds. The story shows the role of culture in keeping families and communities trapped in cycles of *gender* based violence. The spect-actors and the audience all condemn the practice and advocate for girls' education.

Play 5: Photocopy play
A young child, Fasia is constantly bullied at school by colleagues who call him a photocopy *(because his parents are from two different tribes)*. Fasia's parents had eloped against the will of their tribes. In one scene, the chief is seen officiating at a meeting to make a decision about Facia's father for marrying from another tribe, which is considered a rival. In their culture, this offence is punishable by being killed a full view of all the community members. Fasia's relatives are also part of the meeting. In fact, his paternal uncle is very angry and suggests his brother should be killed immediately with no chance to speak. In another scene we see an elder woman intervening and pleading that they do not kill anyone because Fasia's parents had taken refuge in her house. In fact she had offered food and water to Fasia's mother. According to their culture once someone has eaten food or water from any of the community member then they are regarded as part of the community and they can't be harmed. In which case, Fasia's mother was now considered as a member of that community. Suggestions from all who acted as spec-actors called for mercy and condemned the practice.

Play 6: The play on Hatima
This is a story about trauma and conflict. It depicts Hatima, a young woman who lost her mother when she was very young and she was left under the care of her father and her step mother. Meanwhile, Hatima's step mother loses her own brother and brings her nephew Lomoro, to her home. Hatima was constantly mistreated by her step mother. To make matters worse, she (Hatima) was sexually abused by Lomoro, step mother's nephew. Hatima's step mother is always crying about the loss of her only brother. Hatima is physically hurt and not able to do her chores well. Her step mother is becoming more and more aggressive not only at home but also in the communal market where she is working as a food vendor. It happened that her brother was murdered by a rebel group led by people from a different ethnic group from theirs. Hatima's aunt looks at every one from that tribe as an enemy and decides not to deal with them in any way. Hatima is like a servant in the family. She is also discriminated against other children as all her step siblings go to school except her. She is also grieving her mother's death. She faces physical and verbal abuse from her step mother. In the market, Hatima's step mom is seen being rude to all her colleagues in the market as well as her customers and she is slowly isolated from others, which makes her think that no one understands her. Another scene depicts a frightened Hatima at the sight of Lomoro, which attracts insults from her step mom. Meanwhile Hatima's health is deteriorating and she becomes very ill. It is the neighbor who was passing by who found her unconscious and took her to the hospital. Hatima told the neighbor what happened and doctor's examination confirmed the sexual abuse. The neighbor calls Hatima's dad. At the hospital, Hatima is crying and deeply in pain. Hatima was treated and went back home. Hatima's dad is furious. Lomoro is arrested. Hatima's step mom is angry and does not believe that her nephew was guilty until the youngest kid in the family confirmed that he had witnessed the abuse. In prison, Lomoro is fighting with every prisoner. The prisoner's psychologist has seen Lomoro several times and that hasn't helped. Lomoro then asked to meet Hatima and her dad. After so much convincing, Hatima's dad went. The scene depicts Lomoro begging for forgiveness. Lomoro is also heard sending a message to Hatima asking for her forgiveness. The spect-actors suggestions were emotional including; Lomoro should killed, he should be arrested or Hatima's step mom should be sent away from home. Others were heard blaming the father for his negligence, others suggested that Hatima should be sent to her mother's family, or to school. The concluding scene depicts Lomoro still in jail and a counsellor from an international organization is providing therapy to the whole family.

APPENDIX F: Dormitory Games

In addition to the formal plays which were performed during the day, the organizers prepared dormitory games to encourage reconnections in the evenings after the formal performances. The following three were some of these games:

1- Passing the clap

This game focuses on putting the participant in the circle and let others start the clap. Then give his or her first name and stop and then continue by changing this time by remembering one name in the circle starting with one participant to clap and say his or her name after the second clap and then passing to any other by the mention of the name he or she can remember. And the game continues like that until almost all members have had the chance to participate.

2- Simbalala - ice breaker

This game starts by repeating Simbalala and all are invited to sing. It is common in all parts of South Sudan. The game continues by singing and clapping hands. The facilitator can say two by two and develop it up to three and four in the end can go up to all.

3- Construct the machine:

This game is used to bring the contact between the people in one movement starting by facilitator asking the participant to construct one machine. Any one of the machine so the participants start by giving sound of the machine and the participants have to be involved in the game by giving sounds of the part of the machine. So that makes all sounds into one machine.

APPENDIX G: National Theater Festival Schedule

The festival lasted for five days from February 8-14, 2019 as shown in the following schedule:

Time	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
8:00 – 9:00am	Introductions and Purposes	Check-In	Rehearsal	Rehearsal	Preparation for the final performances
9:00–10:00am	Official opening	Rehearsals	Performance Cattle Raiding, Revenge and conflict	Performance - Photocopy	Joint and final – Repeat of some of the plays
10:00am–12:00pm	Rehearsal				
12:00 – 1:30pm	Community Lunch				
1:30 – 5:00pm	Performance - My Tribe is hated	Performance Munki's story	Performance - Kasala's Story	6th Play - the story of Hatima	Official closing Performances, speeches, commitments and farewells
5:00–6:30pm	Informal connections				Informal farewells and meals arranged privately
6:30 – 7:30pm	Community Dinner				
7:30 –9:30pm	Dorm games and informal connections	Dorm games and informal connections	Dorm games and informal connections		