Not ‘Just’ a Kid: Knowledge Politics and Youth Peacebuilding in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa

By

Alina Katharine-Bortolussi Dixon

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Queen’s University

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Abstract

Despite the fact that young people are critical actors in, and significantly impacted by conflict, often times their expertise and insight is overlooked and undervalued on the basis on their age. Yet such exclusion is significant given that the decisions made in the post-conflict environment have a direct impact upon the opportunities that young people will have and the environments in which they will grow up. In this dissertation I explore the knowledge politics of peacebuilding as it pertains to young people to uncover the role that young people have to offer to the broader study and practice of peacebuilding, and thus what is lost by way of their exclusion. Emphasizing the creative, everyday nuances of young people's lived experiences, this project adds to calls to acknowledge the ways that peace is conceptualized in the narratives of youth that they themselves create and embrace. The methodological approach of this project is grounded in the situated knowledge of youth and attempts to challenge a normative understanding of peacebuilders that undervalues the role of young people. Specifically, I look to the more organic and creative mediums of narrative literature, social media, and music as spaces where youth peacebuilding knowledge is constructed. The purpose of this research is to explore 1) the different ways that knowledge about peacebuilding and young people is created and sustained, and 2) the usefulness of the emerging debates on the concepts of the 'everyday', 'agency', and 'hybridity' to adequately capture the contributions and challenges of youth peacebuilding activities. Ultimately, I conclude that an acknowledgement of youth peacebuilding knowledge as *legitimate* knowledge calls into question the broader structures of power that have sustained a normative, liberal approach to peacebuilding. Reconciling youth peacebuilding knowledge with a normative framework necessitates adopting a more fluid and iterative notion of 'successful' peacebuilding. While such a goal may be incompatible with the current static

modus operandi of international peacebuilding, I stipulate that it is within the *process* of *producing* youth peacebuilding knowledge that the greatest insights can be gleaned.

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List of Abbreviations

CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DDR	Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
GALCK	Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya
IR	International Relations
LGBTQIA2+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Alley, Two-Spirited
MDG	Millenium Development Goals
NAP	National Action Plans
NATO	North American Trade Organization
NGLHRC	National Gay and Lesbian Human rights Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NYARWEK	Nyanza Rift Valley and Western Kenya Network
PCS	Peace and Conflict Studies
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Organization
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (formerly United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VPN	Virtual Private Network
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

Introduction

Young people often have an intimate relationship to conflict in a myriad of ways. Not only are they at times direct combatants in conflict, but they can also occupy a variety of other indirect roles whether as porters, cooks, 'wives', or a range of other significant positions (UNICEF, 2007). Moreover, even when young people are not directly engaged in or victimized by conflict, violence has profound implications on their social worlds and lived realities long after fighting has officially ceased (Betancourt et al., 2012; 2014). This is because conflict and violence brutalizes everyday social practices and behaviours, cultural and cognitive maps and frames through which sense is made of the world, and common-sense language, ideas, and beliefs (Brewer, 2018). This is particularly significant for young people who are still in the process of making sense of their social worlds and their own roles within them. Consequently, not only are the outcomes of peace processes particularly relevant for young people, but more importantly they are stakeholders in their own right (albeit rarely acknowledged as such), with unique and important perspectives to contribute to decision making processes. In other words, young people are knowledge producers that have a valuable role to play in both the practice and theory of peacebuilding.

In this project I explore the knowledge politics of peacebuilding as it pertains to young people to uncover the role that young people have to offer to the broader study and practice of peacebuilding. Throughout this project I explore the ways in which conflict and peace are not only gendered, but also 'youthed' to investigate the extent to which peacebuilding activities could be better grounded in young people's realities (Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015; Drummond-Mundal & Cave, 2007). This project therefore contributes to the emerging body of knowledge that recognizes the many ways in which young people are intimately and actively

embedded in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding despite not being valued as such (Podder, 2014; Denov & Bucitelli, 2013; Azmi, Brun, & Lund, 2013; Levey et al., 2018). It sheds light on the complexities of youth lives that are lost through common binary characterizations of post-conflict youth as solely victims or a destabilizing force. Emphasizing the nuances of everyday lived experiences is consistent with a theoretical study of the everyday that has been utilized elsewhere in similar contexts to demonstrate how peace is conceptualized and hidden in the narratives of youth that they themselves create and embrace (Agbiboa, 2015; Baines, 2015; Berents, 2015).

The primary topic of this project is liberal peacebuilding, specifically a radical critique of liberal peacebuilding as a set of discursive practices. Here I am drawing on Bacchi and Bonham's (2014) interpretation of Foucault's use of 'discursive practices' to refer to "those practices of knowledge formation by focusing on how specific knowledges ("discourses") operate and the work they do" (p. 174). In this sense discourse is distinct from *language* insofar as it includes more than the *words* that are used and seeks instead to capture the knowledge and power that is exerted through the *use* of language. From this perspective "words, materialities and practices hang together in a specific, historically and culturally situated way (as cited in Bacchi & Bonham, 2014, p. 191) so as to suggest that there are a great many 'truths' or claims to knowledge that can be reflected in different discourses. The important aspect to analyze therefore, is "the discursive practices, that entrench particular singular realities as "the real"—"what is being done and what, in doing so, is reality in practice made to be"" (as cited in Bacchi & Bonham, 2014, p. 191). In other words, I understand discursive practices to be the ways in which specific discourses are acted upon, circulated, and become dominant, and the impacts of

either on other forms knowledge or ways of being. Essential to this understanding is the notion that power is inherent to the manner in which discourses are made useful in a particular context.

The particular geographic context that this project is concerned with is the Great Lakes region of East Africa. This is done for two specific reasons. Firstly, East Africa is used as a case study throughout this project to understand how a liberal peace discourse plays out in a particular space. Broadly, the African continent is a relevant space to examine peacebuilding approaches given the global focus on the continent for formal peacebuilding initiatives. The UN Peacebuilding Commission, an intergovernmental body that supports peace efforts in conflict affected countries, has provided a disproportionately large amount of its activities to the continent. In 2022, of the roughly $231 million that was distributed through the Commission, roughly $135 million (almost 60% of all funds) was designated for the African continent (United Nations, 2023, n.p.). Moreover, of the 37 countries that received support through the Commission, 23 were located in Africa (United Nations, 2023, n.p). East Africa in particular has been host to some of the most extensive peace operations, including the current operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (currently one of the UN's longest standing and largest peace operations), past and current operations in Sudan, and in Uganda and Rwanda from the early to mid 1990s.

East Africa is also a useful space to discuss peacebuilding and its alternatives because it presents a snapshot of a variety of different forms and histories of conflict. For instance, while there is on-going violent conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), now relatively stable countries such as Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda have all experienced conflict in the not so distant past. These range from the violent reign and overthrow of Idi Amin in Uganda in the 1980s, the genocide in Rwanda in the early 1990s, the anti-colonial struggles in Kenya in

the 1960s and on-going resource struggles in the DRC. There is also value in studying the *region* of East Africa as a whole for the shared histories and porous boundaries that have, and continue to shape the nature of peace and conflict. For instance, as Prunier (2008) demonstrates, conflicts in the Great Lakes region cannot be separated by the arbitrary national borders that have been imposed upon by colonialism. Rather, the shared histories of East African countries has often led to spillover effects from conflicts in one country to another, to the extent that the notion of isolated national conflicts is profoundly limited (Prunier, 2008). Regional dynamics to conflicts in the Great Lakes region are also in addition to the shared history of colonialism in the region, with countries such as Kenya and Uganda having one shared territory as part of the British East Africa Protectorate. As such, while anti-colonial and independence struggles in each country was unique to its population, there is a shared experience of Western imperialism amongst many of the countries in East Africa.

The second rationale for using East Africa as a case study is to undertake a form of 'speaking back' to a liberal peace paradigm. This is to say I look to *different* spaces of youth agency and voice as they occur more organically [than?] to challenge some of the fundamental assumptions built into the liberal peace paradigm. While I will discuss these assumptions in more detail in the following sections, it is important to note here that I am deliberately not engaging with liberal peacebuilding's current efforts towards young people. Rather, I am looking to different spaces in East Africa in an effort to make visible young people where they are and to serve a challenge function to liberal peacebuilding's current *modus operandi*. The intent of this approach to is to make clear what is missing and left out of normative liberal approaches to youth peacebuilding and to highlight a few of the ways that young people are actively engaged in the reconciliation and reconstruction efforts of post-conflict contexts.

My project marries an emphasis on the everyday with recent calls to create a more centred, intentional place for youth in reconstruction by looking to their own voices and perspectives (Borer, Darby, & McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Rimmer, 2007; Onono, 2013). Such a combination elucidates the structures and environments that youth themselves understand to either facilitate or inhibit their ability to act as peacebuilders. This is a critical component because in order to understand young people's capacity for change and action it is necessary to understand the environments that shape their agency (McIntyre, 2005). The methodological approach of this project reflects this in being grounded in the situated knowledge of youth and conceptualizing youth as active knowledge creators in their own right. This perspective challenges normative understandings of peacebuilders that typically undervalues the role of young people.

Research Problem

Despite the intimate relationship between young people and conflict, they are often denied access to, or are far removed from the political negotiations, transitional justice activities, and formal peace-building conversations of the reconstruction period (Jacob, 2015; Martuscelli & Villa, 2018). Having grown up in a conflict setting, they may also be unlikely to have the experience and political capacity to utilize any openings that do exist for their participation in formal processes (Oosterom, Maran, & Wilson, 2019). As a result, young people are often undervalued and underrepresented when they *are* able to gain access to and participate in these activities (Ensor, 2012; Ochen, Jones, & McAuley, 2012). The exclusion of young people is significant given that the decisions made in the post-conflict environment have a direct impact upon the opportunities that young people will have and the environments in which they will grow up. To exclude young people from the peacebuilding process is therefore to exclude their

perspectives on the very decisions that are intended to be in their best interest. Furthermore, as Watson (2015) argues, excluding young people not only makes for ineffective peacebuilding, but also threatens the stability and success of reconstruction and rehabilitation of a community over the long term.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge the significant strides that have been made towards greater youth inclusion in peacebuilding. At the level of the UN, 2015 marked a considerable shift towards greater recognition of the role that young people have to play during and after conflict when the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2250. This Resolution recognized that "young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security" (United Nations, 2015, n.d.) and is marked by a commitment to five key pillars: participation, protection, prevention, partnership, and disengagement and reintegration. Members states of the UN are called upon to "increase, as appropriate, their political, financial, technical and logistical support, that take account of the needs and participation of youth in peace efforts, in conflict and post-conflict situations, including those undertaken by relevant entities, funds and programmes, and other relevant bodies (…) and actors at regional and international levels" (United Nations, 2015, n.d.). Resolution 2250 represented the first time the UN formally recognized the role of young people in peacebuilding and helped to concretize youth peacebuilding within international norms.

Prior to and since this recognition at the UN, scholars within the academy have long been speaking to the important role that young people play in post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. For instance, Siobhan McEvoy-Levy has done considerable work with young people in both Northern Ireland and Israel (focusing on the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict) and has continually been a proponent of the vast positive potential young people have to

shape peaceful resolutions after conflict (2012; 2014; 2015; 2017; 2018). There has also been considerable study of the way young people use music to promote peace such as by Pruitt's (2013) research in Northern Ireland, Studies such as those by Lopes Cardozo, Higgins, Maber and others (2015), Cromwell (2011), and Bush and Saltarelli (2000), amongst many others have examined the intersections between youth agency, education, and peacebuilding to suggest that young people exist in a much more nuanced space than can be captured by a reductive victim-violent dichotomy. Attention towards the positive potential of grassroots peacebuilding for greater youth inclusivity has also been studied by scholars such as Del Felipe and Wisler (2007), Gillard (2007), Ahmed (2017), and Trajano (2017). The importance of youth peacebuilding has been recognized within international organizations as well such as the United States Institute of Peace (Ebenezar-Abioloa, 2023), Amnesty International (2022), UNICEF (2017), Peace Direct (2019) and many others.

Thus, it is not the case that young people are all together and uniformly excluded from peacebuilding. However, as a foundational claim for the rest of this project, I assert that when the *manner* and *shape* of their inclusion is more closely examined, there are critical limitations that for the purposes of this project, constitute exclusion. This nuance is important to highlight at the onset because the vast gains that have been made towards better acknowledgement of the role of young people must be acknowledged. However, the approach that this project takes is to interrogate the broader discursive structure in which these gains have been made. In conclusion, I offer a radical critique of youth peacebuilding in this project as a way to advocate for even greater and more meaningful inclusion of young people in peacebuilding.

To this end, there is a growing recognition of the need to continue to push for great youth inclusion and to make space for more robust participation in peace processes. At a theoretical

level, arguments in favour of including young people in peace processes are increasingly supported. One argument to this end is that current protectionist discourses around young people are inadequate because they render young people 'absent-present', a state in which they are talked about aplenty but rarely heard from directly (Brewer et al., 2018). Taking this argument further, Agbiboa (2015), Azmi, Brun, and Lund (2013), and Oosterom, Maran, and Wilson (2019), amongst many others have stipulated that young people have unique insights into conflict and peace that are reflected in their own, everyday practices of building peace.

On a practical level, one of the most significant advancements in acknowledging the importance of youth participation in peace processes is the adoption of Resolution 2250 by the United Nations Security Council in 2015. In this Resolution Member States are urged to set up mechanisms that would enable young people to meaningfully participate in peace processes and dispute resolutions (United Nations Security Council, 2015). In addition to greater youth participation, it also encourages Member States to give young people a greater voice at the various levels of decision making. The Resolution marked the first time the UN Security Council formally addressed the role of young people in global security concerns. It further marks an important moment in the history of youth peacebuilding as it represents international recognition of the powerful and positive role young people can play in peacebuilding.

However, despite proclamations of Resolution 2250 being regarded by some as a historic paradigm shift (Karsten, 2015), several gaps remain in how it has been translated into practice thus far. For example, Sukarieh and Tannock (2018) argue that Resolution 2250 only seeks to include young people in current social and economic institutions, rather than addressing and radically transforming the fundamental injustices and inequalities of these institutions that negatively impact young people. In a slightly more direct criticism Kashwera (2020) argues that

Resolution 2250 has failed in its effort to increase inclusive representation of young people in decision-making processes (p. 136). Kashwera (2018) argues that more than anything, prevailing socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts at community and country levels have the biggest impact upon young people's decision to participate in constructive peacebuilding or engage in perpetrating violence. Again, as Sukarieh and Tannock (2018) indicate, there is little room in Resolution 2250 to work towards transforming these underlying structures.

Similarly, several authors have noted that despite the acknowledgment of young people as important stakeholders and participants in peacebuilding, and moves towards greater inclusion of young people, they are still largely marginalized from spaces of *meaningful decision making*. Bangura (2015) makes this argument in the context of post-conflict peacebuilding in Sierra Leone where young people were active participants in the conflict but were excluded from participating in the negotiations that led to the signing of the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement. Abbink and Kessel (2005) similarly explore a variety of contexts across the African sub-continent where young people's peacebuilding efforts have been thwarted or ineffective as a result of being denied a meaningful position in decision-making apparatuses. A gendered perspective is added to the argument by Matlon (2011) who argues that for many young men, their exclusion from a masculine, neoliberal global membership is tied to their inability assume the expected roles of men in their societies (pp. 382-282)[1].

One explanation for the exclusion of young people from spaces of power and decision making is that even in instances where youth *are* included in peacebuilding, they are included in an instrumentalist manner insofar as they are only incorporated into existing peace structures, as

[1] Matlon here alludes to concept of Honwana's (2012) waithood (although not stated as such) in which young people are hindered from fulfilling age-based roles of adulthood in part because of structural factors such as low employment rates, inaccessible higher education, etc.

opposed to given spaces to define peace for themselves and determine how it is to be achieved. In keeping with the examples above, Abbink and Kessel (2015) argue that in the case of young people in Zanzibar, their inclusion in political decision making was in practice a further form of *exclusion* insofar as it was primarily a method by which ruling parties sought to exert control over its youth members (pp. 55-80). To this end the authors highlight violent youth movements that are born out of a frustration with their disenfranchisement such as in the case of Kenya, Cote D'Ivoire, and Eritrea (pp. 89-109, 110-142, and 189-206 respectively) which in turn illustrates the ongoing structural constraints young people face exercising decision-making power even when they are given opportunities to do so. In this way, while young people participate in and shape the dynamics of peace processes, they are not the *architects* of these processes (McEvoy-Levy, 2006). This is not to say that young people are not engaged in *building peace*, but rather that their attempts to do so may not be recognized as such under the current canon of liberal peacebuilding.

Thus, as the liberal model of peace is increasingly acknowledged as limited and inadequate, it is important that young people have a place at the centre of considerations for the future of peacebuilding scholarship and practice. This necessitates looking to youth themselves and how they articulate their own visions for peace, regardless of whether this is done within existing structures (ie. within existing and formal peace building processes and activities) or not. Ultimately, this project will argue that contemplation over the future of peacebuilding requires recognizing young people as knowledge producers in their own right who not only *participate* in peacebuilding but are able to *construct their own ideas* about what peacebuilding is and how it should be achieved. Consequently, in looking to imagine a more youth-responsive approach to

peacebuilding, I suggest that 'peacebuilding' itself and the knowledge politics therein should be unpacked and evaluated.

Key Concepts

Before moving on to describe the purpose of this project in more detail, I would like to offer a few critical points on two main concepts of this thesis: peacebuilding and young people.

'Peacebuilding' as a concept is fluid and porous in the sense that there is no singularly agreed upon definition. A readily available definition comes from the UN and states that peacebuilding is "a complex, long-term process of creating the necessary conditions for sustainable peace". This definition has a heavy emphasis on the state, articulating that peacebuilding seeks to "address core issues that affect the functioning of society and the State, and seek to enhance the capacity of the State to effectively and legitimately carry out its core functions" and to strengthen "national capacities at all levels for conflict management" (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.). The foundations of this definition (ie. state-centrism and the *management* of conflict) will be explored in the following chapter. At this stage it is simply important to note that while the UN's definition of peacebuilding has great influence by virtue of being held by the UN, it is not universally accepted.

John Paul Lederach (often considered the 'father' of modern peacebuilding) argued for a definition of peacebuilding that encompassed more than solely the cessation of violence. Instead, Lederach (1997) defined peace as encompassing, generating, and sustaining

> "[…] the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships. The term thus involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct." (p. 20)

Lederach's definition has inspired many others to push for definitions of peacebuilding that better account for local social conditions that contribute to building peace. For instance, Autesserre (2014) defines peacebuilding as "any and all elements identified by local and international stakeholders as attempts to create, strengthen, and solidify peace" (p. 21). Others such as Turner (2015) add a more resistance-based struggle to their definitions. Turner suggests that peacebuilding involves "working within, against and around dominant institutions to address pressing problems, to resolve conflicts non-violently and to promote justice; 'making lives under difficult conditions easier[;] and restoring community and well-being" (p.131). Feminist scholars have extended Lederach's ideas in a different way, emphasizing relational and affective components of social and political relations. One seminal example of a feminist definition of peacebuilding comes from McKay and Mazurana (1999) who defines peacebuilding as including:

> "[…] gender-aware and women- empowering political, social, economic and human rights. It involves personal and group accountability and reconciliation processes which contribute to the reduction or prevention of violence. It fosters the ability of women, men, girls and boys in their own cultures to promote conditions of nonviolence, equality, justice and human rights of all people, to build democratic institutions and to sustain the environment" (p. 9).

I follow in the footsteps of these authors insofar as I conceptualize peacebuilding as existing outside the narrow confines of the definition offered by the UN. This is not to say that the focal points of the UN definition are not useful to peacebuilding, but only that they are too limited in their approach, particularly when it comes to making space for the contributions of young people. Thus, as will be expounded in the following chapters, I assert that everyday and feminist approaches to peacebuilding offer the most inclusive spaces to imagine peacebuilding done differently. This perspective of looking beyond the normative again reinforces the central

element of this project which is to look to less conventional spaces of youth agency in order to divorce the very meaning of 'peacebuilding' itself from its liberal, institutional roots.

Throughout this paper I will make reference to 'youth' and 'young people' as interchangeable terms. I use the term 'young people' as a broad categorization of people who exist between the states of childhood and adulthood. This transitory space can span many different age groups depending on context and circumstance, and therefore is meant to encompass a large range of ages. I use this term seamlessly with 'youth' on the basis that as a concept 'youth' is highly contested. For instance, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that a 'child' is anyone under the age of 18 (UNESCO 2017) and elsewhere a 'youth' is anyone between the age of 15-24 (United Nations, n.d. A). Not only are these ranges arbitrary, but they do little to account for the vast array of circumstances that may impact a person's ability to transition between 'child' and 'adult' in different parts of the world (or even amongst different groups in one geographic location). With the United Nations bodies alone, there is no single age range for 'youthhood' and can span from ages 10-32 (ie. UN Habitat Youth Fund (15-32), UNFPA (10-24), etc). To encompass the most inclusive range of experiences I therefore refer to 'youth' in a way that is more akin to the term 'young people'.

Research Purpose

Very broadly, the purpose of this research is to unsettle what is meant by 'peacebuilding' and the knowledge politics embedded therein with a focus on the implications for the roles of young people in peace efforts. This project sets out to offer a radical critique of normative liberal peace by using examples within East Africa as case studies to 'speak back' to a hegemonic paradigm of youth peacebuilding. More specifically, there are two guiding principles to this project: to explore 1) the different ways that knowledge about peacebuilding and young people is

created and sustained, and 2) the usefulness of emerging debates on better capturing the contributions and challenges of youth peacebuilding activities.

To begin, a central component of this research is the exploration of the ways and actors through which peacebuilding knowledge is created and sustained. Such an exploration is premised on recent debates that have revealed the limited normative framings of a liberal peace model. While these debates will be explored in more detail in the following chapter, one of the most influential discussions to emerge concerns knowledge production and politics. A 2017 special issue in *The Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* explored the issue of knowledge production in conflict studies. In the introduction to this issue, Bliesemann de Guevara and Kostic (2017) suggest that the material and ideological practices of neoliberalism influence the production of knowledge concerning the study of conflict and conflict interventions. Consequently, they propose reading the edition against the backdrop of "neoliberal marketplace of ideas" and through the lens of questioning the legitimacy of different truth and knowledge claims.

I take this suggestion from Bliesemann de Guevara and Kostic (2017) as the starting point for this project in that while I look specifically at knowledge production and politics in peacebuilding, I do so in a way that draws on broader debates and ideas about knowledge construction. This aspect is explained in more detail in the later theoretical framework section but at this stage I emphasize that I am chiefly interested in the colonial and Eurocentric nature of knowledge construction. Thus, the **first purpose** of this paper is to identify the extent of these types of dynamics in peacebuilding and the impacts they may have on young people. I do so through questioning the logics of liberal peacebuilding and examining alternate truth claims made by young people. To carry out this questioning I use post-development and post-colonial

critiques that will be outlined in more detail in the theoretical section of this chapter. However, it is important to note at this point that it is the substance of these critiques that makes up the central elements of this project. This is to say that while I will make use specific and divergent case studies from the Great Lakes region, they are woven together by a similar manner of theoretical positioning.

Young people are often framed within a dichotomy of either 'violent' or 'victims' when discussed in relation to peace and conflict (McEvoy-Levy, 2006). Podder (2015) argues that young people are rendered invisible through stereotypes such as 'victim' or 'violent' which ultimately fail to capture their everyday lived experiences and displays of agency. More recently however, there has been growing recognition of the limits of this binary, and its inability to appreciate the diversity of youth experiences. For example, Denov and Buccitelli (2013) draw on the concept of 'social navigation' to ascertain the ways that former child soldiers in Sierra Leone are able to "strategically manoeuvre within contexts of uncertainty, insecurity and other precarious circumstances including war and rapid social change" (p. 3). They stipulate that this is a useful approach because it dispels portrayals of young people as passive and powerless and instead focuses on the intersection between young people's agency, social change, and structural forces (Denov & Buccitelli, 2013, p. 3). Similarly, Azmi, Brun, and Lund (2013) examine 'voiceless political participation' amongst young people in post-conflict Sri Lanka to argue that a critical deconstruction of how we understand political and socio-political processes that impact upon young people is needed. These examples help to illustrate the need to examine the epistemic foundations of how young people's relationship to peacebuilding is understood. This is to say that in order to examine the impacts of peacebuilding on young people, it is also necessary to be mindful of how knowledge about young people is similarly constructed and maintained.

Thus, just as I draw on broader discussions of knowledge politics to situate peacebuilding knowledge politics, I also draw on these broader discussions to inform the approach to young people that this paper will take.

The next chapter will explore the normative conceptualizations of young people in more detail but at this stage one of the most important aspects to note is the universality of a 'liberal childhood'. Briefly, the introduction of United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child marked the institutionalization of socially and politically specific western, liberal vision of childhood that is marked by protectionism and vulnerability. This western orientation to how we define young people has resulted in an adult-centric approach to peacebuilding. Adult-centrism in peacebuilding is justified by a view of young people as passive and vulnerable, and therefore in need of protection, as well as lacking in decision-making capacity. Again, the connection between knowledge construction of young people and of peacebuilding will be elaborated in more detail in the follow section. I raise this connection now only to elucidate that the purpose of this thesis is to draw attention to the different ways that Eurocentric hierarchies of knowledge persistent in dominant canons of liberal, youth peacebuilding.

I acknowledge that 'young people' cannot be taken as a homogenous concept and that young people's experiences are shaped by a myriad of factors including gender, race, socio-economic status, and local and regional politics, amongst many others. The importance of this acknowledgement is unpacked in more detail in the following chapter. However, it is important to note at this point so as to emphasize that the purpose of exploring a variety of youth peacebuilding experience is not to locate one singular form of alternate knowledge to contrast with a liberal peace. Instead, the purpose of this project is to expose the *variety* of ways that *different* young people are engaged in peace processes and the tensions, similarities, or

resistances that may exist therein. Thus, again the unifying element of this project is derived from the manner of critique offered in relation to the liberal peace paradigm. This is contrast to centering each chapter around similar themes such as agency, hybridity, or the everyday. While these elements are indeed of varying importance to multiple chapters, they are not the key feature of inquiry throughout. In other words, while there are similar *themes* discussed throughout this thesis and can be viewed as significant *parts* of this project, the *whole* itself is defined by the unity in the *form of critique* that is provided. The whole itself comes in the form of a continued critique of the knowledge politics and subsequent power relations embedded within liberal peacebuilding, as it plays out across a variety of settings.

Speaking to knowledge and knowledge production more broadly, this is to suggest that no one *singular* knowledge is adequate to address situations as complex as (re)building peace after conflict. Rather, I suggest as a foundational assumption that there are multiple, overlapping, and often contrasting knowledges that exist at the same time in a particular situation. Thus, this project seeks to account for those that are ignored, silenced, or suppressed (such as that from young people). The purpose of challenging a liberal canon of youth peacebuilding is therefore not to *replace* it with something else, but instead to highlight its *limitations* and to expose what lies outside of these limits. In essence, I hope to bridge emerging debates in peacebuilding with debates on how young people are conceptualized, specifically how they are understood as active agents of change and knowledge production, to challenge the limitations of the epistemic assumptions of the current normative peacebuilding model.

This brings me to the **second purpose** of this project which is to explore emerging debates in peacebuilding to explore their usefulness to more youth-inclusive avenues. Part of this builds on the epistemic roots and explores the ways that these foundations are reified or

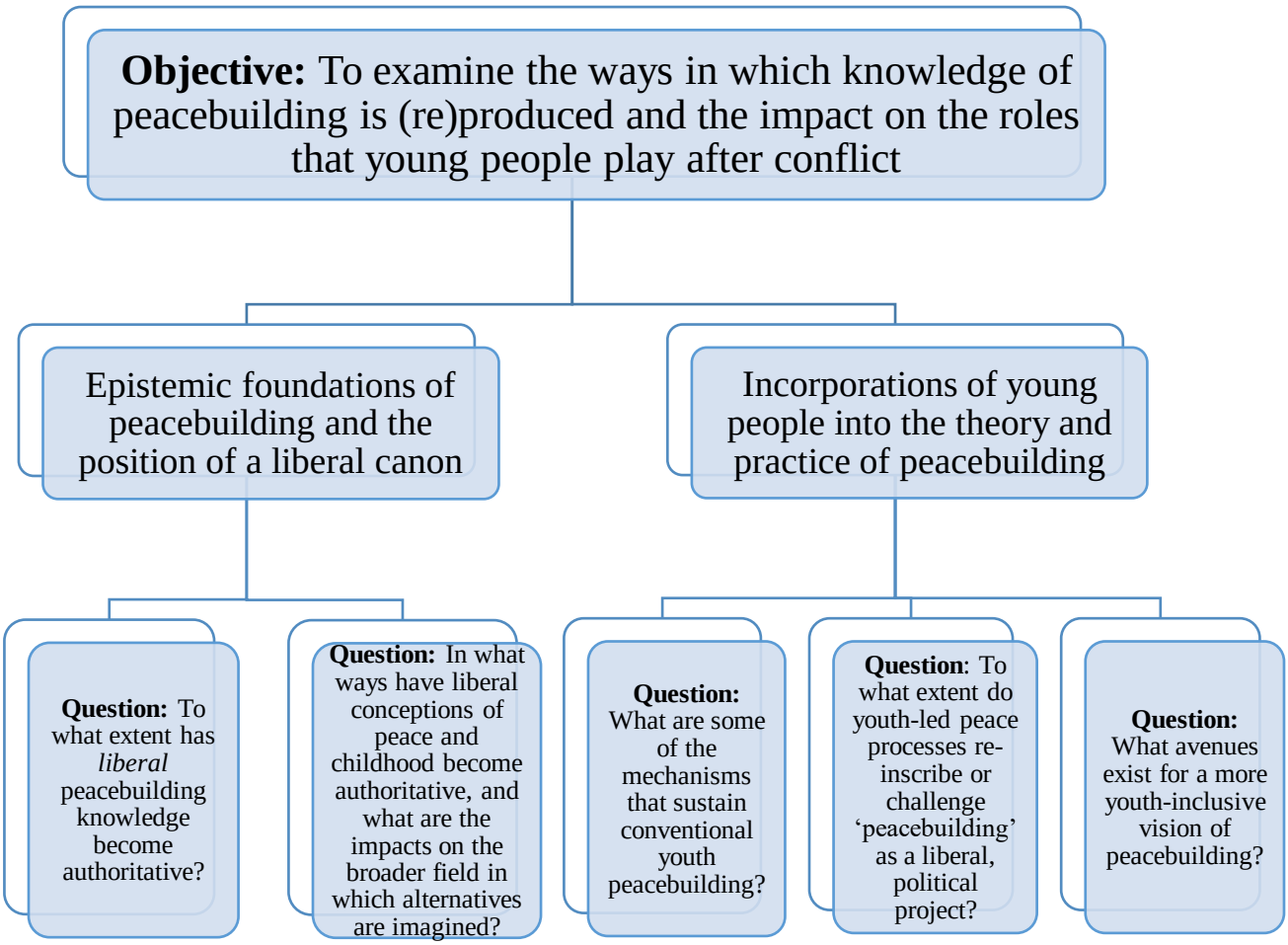
challenged in emerging debates. As detailed in the final section of this chapter, the debates I examine relate to concepts of the 'everyday' and the 'local', 'hybridity', and 'agency'. The intent is to understand the extent to which youth-led activities fit within the lexicon of peacebuilding and in particular, what their relationship is to the liberal tradition. Doing so involves examining the extent to which youth-led activities share commonalities with the liberal tradition but also looking at where they depart. This follows from arguments that youth-led processes are in some cases a reaction to or resistance against the limits of liberal peacebuilding (McEvoy-Levy, 2017; Tomac, 2020) and requires exploring in what contexts and how young people transcend, resist, or co-opt the assumptions and goals of liberal peacebuilding. My hope is that from this examination I will be able to comment on the extent to which youth are engaged in activities that are vital for building lasting peace yet are not captured within traditional, liberal conceptions of peacebuilding. Although liberal canons will be a focus, my intent is not to re-centre these canons but rather to unsettle them by looking at what they miss or ignore.

While a fundamental assumption of this project is that youth are generally excluded from peacebuilding, I also acknowledge the potential to disrupt this assumption. This is to say that in questioning and ultimately expanding how peacebuilding is understood, it may be uncovered that young people are not exclusively or uniformly excluded from peacebuilding. However, such a finding would also be significant insofar as it can help give shape to the different ways that young people are included or excluded from peacebuilding. Moreover, in extending the limits of what can be considered 'peacebuilding', the overall goal of this project is to locate the spaces where youth *are* included. While there may be instances of youth inclusion in normative (liberal) peacebuilding, I hope to uncover the limits to this type of inclusion and alternative, youth-led forms of peacebuilding.

Research Objectives and Questions

In the broadest sense, the objective of this paper is to examine the ways in which knowledge of peacebuilding is (re)produced and the impact on the roles that young people play after conflict. Within this broad objective there are two more specific objectives (for a visual representation of the relationship between objectives and questions see figure 1 below). The first relates to the epistemic foundations of youth peacebuilding and the hegemonic position that a liberal canon currently occupies. The second relates to the emancipatory potential of emerging debates in the field of peacebuilding.

Figure 1: Research Objectives and Questions



Firstly, this project begins from an acknowledgement that both 'youth' and 'peacebuilding' are historically and politically grounded in Western, liberal traditions. As the central element to this project, I explore these foundations with the intent of unsettling and decentering the liberal canon as it relates to either concept. In other words, I focus on liberal traditions of peacebuilding and youth not to reaffirm their authority, but to better understand the extent to which they operate as the normative and dominant canons.

On this point I am drawing on inspiration from the postmodern and postcolonial traditions of interrogating Eurocentric hierarchies of knowledge. For instance, Cowen & Shenton (1995) argue that what is now called 'underdevelopment' has intellectual origins that are fundamentally European, despite often being cited as first emerging in reference to the Global South (particularly with Truman's 1949 address often said to have ushered in a 'new' era of development). Similarly, just as Escobar (1995) challenges the very meaning of development and argues that the development process is socially constructed in a way that is guided by Western interests, I look at the extent to which peacebuilding and youth can be interpreted in the same way. I am therefore starting from the assumption that liberal traditions are not objective and value-free, but rather are forms of situated knowledge shaped by particular historical and political circumstances.

The notion that all knowledge is situated and embodied draws from the works of Haraway (1988), Lowe (2015) and Rist (2007) and their efforts to unsettle liberal, positivist approaches to knowledge and development. From this perspective the authority of the liberal peace model as it pertains to youth, and the extent to which it has been universalized cannot be viewed as neutral or inevitable but rather that its prominence has been actively created and

sustained. I therefore explore the evolution of liberal peacebuilding and what it has suppressed, ignored or failed to consider along the way, particular as it pertains to young people.

The research questions associated with this objective are as follows. Firstly, I question the extent to which liberal youth peacebuilding knowledge has become persistently authoritative. Secondly, I question the ways in which a liberal peace and liberal childhood have shaped the lexicon of youth peacebuilding and the implications on the broader field in which alternatives are imagined. The third and final research question explores the mechanisms through which the conventional youth peacebuilding is sustained. By asking how liberal foundations are reified in contemporary approaches to peacebuilding these questions seek to address not only the ways that a particular model of peacebuilding (the liberal peace model) has become normative, but how this position is sustained and continually reproduced and the implications for constructing alternative approaches.

Secondly, this project is focused on the more transformational and emancipatory approaches to youth peacebuilding that exist in contrast to a liberal model. Investigating this aspect involves examining how young people themselves are conceptualized and the extent to which broader understandings of young people influence how they are incorporated into the theory and practice of peacebuilding. In other words, the objective is to understand how youth-led activities fit within the lexicon of peacebuilding and in particular, what their relationship is to the liberal tradition. Doing so involves examining the extent to which youth-led activities share commonalities with the liberal tradition but also looking at where they depart. This follows from arguments that youth-led processes are in some cases a reaction to or resistance against the limits of liberal peacebuilding. Thus, I seek to examine the different ways that young people transcend, resist, or co-opt the assumptions and goals of liberal peacebuilding, and potentially set their own

peace agendas through their own means. My hope is that from this examination I ultimately will be able to comment on the extent to which youth are engaged in activities that are vital for building lasting peace yet are not captured within traditional, liberal conceptions of peacebuilding.

A second set of research questions revolve around how the politics of knowledge production shape how youth-led processes are represented and understood. In other words, if we are to recognize youth-led peace activities (that are outside the boundaries of a liberal conception of peace and peacebuilding), as 'legitimate' forms of peacebuilding, what would this mean for 'peacebuilding' as a liberal, political project? The two research questions addressed here are as follows. Firstly, to what extent do youth-led peace processes re-inscribe or challenge 'peacebuilding' as a liberal, political project? Secondly, what avenues exist for a more youth-inclusive vision of peacebuilding?

Research Importance

It is now commonly accepted within peacebuilding circles that a liberal approach to building peace often fails to successfully meet its primary objectives (Barnett, Fang, & Zurcher, 2014). The inability for a liberal peace model to prevent a re-ignition of violence, (let alone to address the underlying structural dimensions to conflict), to install 'functioning' institutions, or to promote a stable democracy has prompted considerable criticism. Among such critiques is the argument that liberal peacebuilding is primarily a top-down, elite-driven exercise that is brought to local populations with little regard for their input (Thiessen & Byrne, 2018; Liden, 2009; Brewer, 2018). Criticisms such as this are likely what led De Coning, in the introduction to a 2018 special issue of *International Affairs*, to state that "the era in which peacebuilding was synonymous with pursuing a liberal peace end-state is coming to an end" (p. 301). Thus, part of

the importance of this project lies in its contributions to a reconceptualization of peacebuilding. In this project I look to contribute to a body of literature that questions the internationalization of peacebuilding and suggests that state-building exercises, institutionalism, security reforms, and other liberal norms are ill-suited focal points to building sustainable and meaningful peace. This is not to say that these aspects are not *also* important for building peace, but that to have them as the *sole* or *primary* focus has proven largely inadequate to meet the needs of post-conflict communities.

I look to youth as important knowledge producers because they are intimately connected to conflict and are commonly the centre of debates within a society or community in and after conflict. Moreover, looking to young people as knowledge producers and peacebuilders also carries an important opportunity to contribute to a shift away from a victim/violent dichotomy of young people. The foundational assumption of this project is that young people have the capacity to build peace on their own terms and in their own ways. In doing so I reject several existing assumptions about young people in and after conflict.

Firstly, I move away from instability arguments such as the 'youth bulge' theory[2] (as described by Sukarieh & Tannok, 2018) insofar as my motivations for youth inclusion are not based on the fear that failing to do so may result in further violence. This is because such a fear still regards people as *inherently* violent and thus their 'natural' violent tendencies need to be quelled. Instead, I follow McEvoy-Levy (2006) in suggesting that young people are neither inherently violent *or* peaceful, but rather make active and informed decisions to pursue either role depending on their circumstances. Such a view holds young people as agents with decision

[2] The youth bulge theory very broadly stipulates that societies with high youth populations are at an increased risk of conflict and violence if young people are not adequately engaged by their social and political structures.

making authority, and an awareness of the broader contexts that they exist within. While it is therefore important to acknowledge young people's agency and to see them as capable actors in their own right, it is also important to temper claims to young people as *the* agents of change. To idealize young people as agents of change *in absence* of a critical examination of complex reality and structural inequalities that may limit their capacity for change risks romanticizing their capabilities. Thus, in the context of this project there is a need to balance an acknowledgement of young people's agency with an analysis of the systems of power that structure peacebuilding more broadly.

Viewing young people as agents who navigate their life circumstances in a deliberate way also challenges the logic of including young people based on a moral obligation to 'protect'. As will be described in the following chapter, protectionist rationality undergirds much of a liberal conception of childhood and thus young people more broadly. Following from this logic is a tendency to regard young people as passive and in need of safeguarding. It would be unrealistic to suggest that young people are never in need of protection. However, the totalizing and universal nature of protectionism has become problematic insofar as it has left little room for serious consideration of the circumstances and ways in which young people exercise their agency. Thus, I look to Jacob's (2015) declaration that there needs to be "an examination of the politics of protection" insofar as either "causes us to reorient our frame of reference in thinking about security to asking who should be secured, how they should be secured, and who should do the securing" (p. 15).

Lastly, I take McEvoy-Levy's (2011) claims that additional frames of youth as a development asset and as rights holders are also inadequate reference points. Regarding a

development perspective, McEvoy-Levy (2011) argues that an emphasis on youth as the future[3] misses the valuable talents, skills, and perspective that youth have in the present. Moreover, she highlights that this perspective also suggests "that people who are not able to cross the boundaries that mark the transition to adulthood will never be fully human, or at least not fully a part of society" (p. 166). McEvoy-Levy (2011) further suggests that rights-based frameworks are inadequate insofar as children's rights (and human rights more broadly) are not only hard to enforce during and immediately after times of conflict, but they are also highly politicized and therefore insecure. In other words, while a rights-based framework can be useful on a normative front, it is highly limited in its practical enforcement.

Following from the limitations of these different frames, the importance of this project also relates to its capacity to add to a more nuanced understanding of young people. The intent is to have this project hold space to regard young people as the *best* people to make decisions about peacebuilding, rather than foreign 'professionals', government officials, and other 'elites'. I am not suggesting that these latter groups have no place in peacebuilding. I only suggest that their roles should at no point come at the expense of or overshadow the important contributions from young people themselves.

What separates this project from other research within critical peace and conflict studies is its explicit focus on locating avenues towards greater inclusion of youth. Thus, it contributes to a reconceptualization of peacebuilding in which young people are both the targets, as well as active participants. It provides support to an emerging body of knowledge that highlights how young people have significant contributions to make towards the decisions that directly affect them. This is not to say that I focus solely on positive contributions, but rather I hold the premise

[3] For examples see Kosic & Tauber (2010) and Diouf (2003).

that all contributions from young people are significant albeit in different ways. As McEvoy-Levy (2006) states:

> "A complete picture of the effects of a conflict, and the specific reconstruction and reconciliation challenges, requires as detailed and inclusive conflict narratives as possible. And as key actors, youth must be consulted. Youth who have had active roles in violence (pre- and post-accord) are not "lost generations"(s), broken, brutalized, irredeemably disaffected from society, or lacking in political skill or insight. The coping strategies, survival techniques, and knowledge that youth develop under conditions of war or protracted political violence equip them for active roles in building their societies' futures and ought to be harnessed in official peace-building processes. [...] youth have vital knowledge of the real effects of war on the ground, the grass-roots dynamics of the post-accord period, and also creative and critical responses to violence." (p. 297)

Thus, the significance of making peacebuilding more inclusive to young people is that irrespective of the roles that they play, young people are important purveyors of knowledge that can help construct effective peacebuilding mechanisms.

Theoretical Framework

In the broadest sense, this project follows the theoretical traditions of post-development post-modernism, and post-colonialism. More specifically, I draw on the contributions that these lenses have made to the field of development studies in terms of interrogating Eurocentric hierarchies of knowledge within ‘development’. For instance, the work of Arturo Escobar (1995) has been seminal in this regard insofar as he challenges the very meaning of development and argues that the development process is socially constructed in a way that is guided by Western interests. This interpretation is significant in that it has opened space for alternative readings of development to emerge such as Prashad’s (2007) historical account of development from the perspective of the Global South. I contend that the same approach can be used to examine the

concepts of ‘peacebuilding’ and ‘youth’, and the relationship between them. This is to say that a starting point for my project is the assumption that while a liberal approach to both peacebuilding and youth is dominant, it also only represents one canon of interpretation. It is this type of analysis and critique that is focused on challenging assumed centers of knowledge production that unites each of the elements of this work.

In this way I also draw on the fields of de-colonial theory and critical studies to explore the relationship between knowledge and power. One idea that informs this study comes from Zein-Elabdin’s reading of development as a characteristically colonial discourse. Zein-Elabdin (2011) sheds lights on the relations of power and dominance that are inherent to development, thus situating their argument within the Foucauldian tradition of deconstructing knowledge claims and unpacking normalized ‘truths’. Zein-Elabdin argues that the objective in understanding development as a colonial discourse is to open up space to disrupt its authority and such a process is “instrumental for breaking apart the dominant single vision of social meaning” (pp. 222). When the same logic is applied to constructs such as ‘peacebuilding’ and ‘youth’ it is therefore possible to expose the authority of these constructs and consequently the way their authority impacts the agency (or at minimum the recognition of agency) of young people in peacebuilding. While I do not set out to make the same *argument* as Zein-Elabdin, I do intend to follow the same argumentative *rationale* whereby I unpack what is meant by ‘peacebuilding’ and ‘youth’ in much the same way that Zein-Elabdin deconstructs ‘development’. I explore some of the ways that these constructs carry with them particular relations of power and domination and the impacts of these relations.

I also draw on the notion of ‘coloniality’ and its relationship to modernity as articulated by Quijano (2000) and Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006). While colonialism was a historically

distinct period of time, coloniality refers to the underlying logic of all Western imperialisms (Quijano, 2000) and Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006) argue that coloniality represents the 'darker side' of modernity. This is to say that coloniality and modernity are part of the same coin and thus are inseparable (Quijano, 2000). Lowe's (2015) analysis of the relationship between Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa demonstrates this point to the extent that she argues that the very conditions of possibility for modern day capitalism are founded in (and continually reproduced by) racialized conquest and violence. In particular she states that "The contemporary moment is so replete with assumptions that freedom is made universal through liberal political enfranchisement and the globalization of capitalism that it has become difficult to write or imagine alternative knowledges, or to act on behalf of alternative projects or ways of being" (p. 175).

For instance, in speaking more specifically to the realm of peace and peacebuilding, Choudhury (2007) argues that justifications of violence against "lesser races" are inherent to the history of liberal universalism itself and as such the old order of imperialism has been carried forward and subsumed within the human rights regime. She animates this point through a discussion of the wars on terror in Iraq in which violence against Iraqis was justified to the extent that they were first identified as human rights abusers. She also argues that this is significant insofar as the rhetoric of human rights in this case provides not only justification for this violence, but also obscured the underlying military occupation. Similarly, in the case of Somalia, Razack (2004) highlights how peacekeeping is intertwined with civilizing narratives of instruction and discipline of the Third World. She argues that "the overriding frame of the encounter is one of the civilized North and the barbaric South. Some individuals inhabit this frame as confident colonizers, others simply begin unselfconsciously as people who have set out

to ‘do good.’ Either way, a racial hierarchy is installed” (p. 187). In both instances the outcome is a distancing similar to that of Said’s (1978) Orientalism insofar as the production of the ‘neutral’ and valiant peacekeeper is intertwined with the production of that which is to be peace-kept. Here I refer to Said’s (1978) argument that the production of the Orient was as much about the West as it was about the ‘rest’ in the sense that the West came to know and define itself through the production of the ‘other’. Similarly, here the ‘peacekeeper’ or by extension human rights are defined in relation to the objects that they seek to act against.

Thus, in this project I am critical of liberalism to the extent it reproduces the subjective, political, and epistemic borders that are structured by colonial differences (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006, p. 208) However, in critiquing the liberal peace model in this way, my intent is not to wholly reject the principles of democracy, human rights, and rule of law, amongst others that the liberal peace model seeks to establish. In this sense I draw inspiration from Choudhury (2007) who, in speaking to the limitations of the universality of human rights, does not advocate for an abandonment of the principles of human rights all together. Rather, she argues that “a new, parallel universalism needs to be articulated, one that is based on the struggles of subordinated peoples rather than on nationalisms which have homogenized the various “inchoate, undirected, and unequal” discourses of liberation” (Choudhury, 2007, p. 19). A fundamental aspect of this project is therefore to reimagine who peacebuilders are, as a way to trouble what it means to be ‘peace-kept’ and to extend ‘peacebuilding’ outside the normative, liberal frame.

This project draws on the above sentiments by attempting to unveil and explore the potentially ‘darker side’ of liberal peace as it relates to young people. This is to say that the starting point for this project is not only that the liberal canon of youth peacebuilding has been

actively created and sustained, but that similarly to how coloniality represents the darker side to modernity, there is a 'darker side' to the liberal peace model as it pertains to young people. Uncovering this 'other side' is the primary subject of investigation throughout this project. Thus to summarize, the central element of this project is a critique informed by post-development, post-colonialism, and post-modernism that looks to expose the 'other' side of a liberal peace paradigm by illuminating multiple, potentially contrasting knowledges and power relations therein that make up a liberal approach to peacebuilding.

As a final point, although this project is firmly rooted in post-colonialism and post-development, issues of race and racism as identities and subjectivities are not the main point of inquiry for the following analysis. Instead, and as outlined above, I centre the notion of coloniality, or the maintenance of colonial relations of power, as the unifying aspect of this work that draws on these theoretical perspectives. This follows from Liden's (2015) use of post-colonialism to study peacebuilding in which he asserts that peacebuilding is "a form of imperialism in denial". Post-colonialism, as asserted by Liden (2015), is useful to "challenges the distinction be-tween the 'liberal' and the 'non-liberal other', the 'modern' and 'traditional', and 'domestic' (or 'local') and 'international' (or 'global')" that, as will be elaborated on throughout this thesis, make up a liberal peace approach. Race and racism are thus at play throughout this work insofar as they make up the colonial structures of difference that define a distinction between knowledge production in the Global North, and the Global South as a site of where knowledge is *implemented.* It is this form of benevolent racism, in which African countries are assumed as sites in need of external support, that will be showcased as an intrinsic aspect of the liberal peace paradigm. On-going neo-colonialism from this perspective takes the shape of an

imperial legacy that informs sets of discursive practices (described in more detail in the following chapters) that denies the imagination of peacebuilding alternatives.

Methodology

No fieldwork was carried out as part of this project. The impetus for this decision was largely based on the restrictions placed upon the project by the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020. In light of these restrictions the project was adapted from a photo-voice project in northern Uganda to a theoretical and conceptual paper focused on the Great Lakes region, more broadly. The decision not to conduct virtual fieldwork (ie. phone or video interviews/ focus groups) was made largely because in order to establish the relationships required to carry out the project, a short preliminary field trip dedicated solely to relationship building would be necessary. Moreover, the original project emphasized meeting participants in spaces that defined their daily lives, partly out of respect to participants but also to help facilitate discussions about their daily lives in the same context that they take place. Thus, the emphasis on spatial context would not be possible in a virtual format, thereby compromising a central component of the project. There was also potential to conduct the project through proxy researchers on the ground. However, without pre-existing and established relationships this was also not a feasible option. An additional compounding factor was the potential inaccessibility of the required technology for the intended participants or proxy researchers.

Although the decision to move forward without fieldwork was largely a reactive one, there are also opportunities and benefits to foregoing in-person, on the ground research. First and foremost, it acknowledges and accounts for my own subjectivity as a researcher. As a white woman from an established academic institution in the Global North, my presence conducting research with a marginalized population in northern Uganda (as was initially planned) would

inherently and inevitably reify the social location of the Global South as a space to be researched by Global North researchers. This is not to homogenize and discredit all research in the Global South conducted by white, educated researchers, nor is to say that equitable and anti-oppressive research can only be conducted by members of one's own social community. Rather, it is merely to acknowledge the fundamental limitation that would be imposed upon my research as anti-oppressive and decolonial if field work was carried out. A key to anti-oppressive and de-colonial research is an emphasis on partnerships and reciprocity (Potts & Brown, 2005). One framework for partnership building includes ideas such as a shared vision, shared leadership and decision making, longevity and on-going communication and engagement, and equal buy-in and ownership, amongst others (Karim-Haji, Roy, & Gough, 2016).

All this is to say that research that focuses on a mutual exchange of knowledge, equitable and sustainable collaboration, and reciprocal and appropriate benefits for all parties can be highly beneficial for researchers from both the Global North and the Global South. Indeed, it would be inaccurate to assume that *all* research between the Global North and South is *inherently* unequal *merely* because of positionality and identity politics. Instead, I am suggesting that in order for such research to be done in a way that does not reinforce exploitative and orientalist hierarchies, certain conditions must be met. In reexamining this project in light of COVID related restrictions, I came to acknowledge that I was limited in my ability to meet these conditions and therefore to conduct anti-oppressive and de-colonial field work. Consequently, refocusing this project to a theoretical and conceptual exploration has also been an attempt to conduct more ethical research given that parameters that I as an individual was faced with.

This project in its current and revised focus is an attempt to engage in anti-oppressive research by 'reversing the gaze' as described by Potts and Brown (2005). These authors question the underlying logic that is reproduced in many field studies as follows:

> "Choosing to be an anti-oppressive researcher means choosing to do research that challenges dominant ideas about research processes as well as research outcomes. This means that each step of the research work is carried out in a socially just way. For example, anti-oppressive research questions why we so easily think of researching those who are marginalized by reason of race, class, ability, gender, and so on while it is so difficult to think about researching dominance. "Reversing the gaze" on whom and what gets studied can be an important first step in anti-oppressive research." (p. 260)

Choosing to retain a focus on the Global South by way of East Africa was done in an effort to study the impacts of Global North knowledge production in terms of the on-going colonial relationships that are maintained through a liberal peace approach to peacebuilding. In this sense I am most interested in issue of dominance as its relate to the perpetuation of colonial relations of power in which the Global North is assumed as the paramount site of knowledge production, and the Global South is viewed as the site of intervention. This approach is consistent with the understanding of discursive practices that I use throughout this project that is centered on the *impacts* and *consequences* of discourse, and how power is manifested in and exerted through various discursive practices.

Furthermore, Potts and Brown (2005) argue that a research question should be founded in questions of what is and isn't explored and who is and isn't under scrutiny (p. 264). Thus, the decision to unpack the knowledge politics of youth peacebuilding is an attempt to avoid reproducing notions of the Global South 'other' as an object to be studied, and rather examining where and how knowledge of the 'other' in this context is produced, as well as its effects. To this

end an intentional effort was made throughout this project to seek out and privilege materials produced by young people themselves. In addition to engaging with the scholarly debates related to youth peacebuilding, this project is also focused on weighing such materials against the type of knowledge young people themselves have put forth. As will be described in the following section I look at novels, Twitter, and Hip-Hop music specifically as mediums where young people produce ideas about their futures after conflict. Moreover, seeking out these types of materials was also a deliberate way to look outside the normative confines of liberal peacebuilding and to look at different spaces where knowledge of peace is created and sustained by young people. In following the methodology of this thesis, these are also mediums that are accessible to a wider audience and does not require a level of knowledge 'extraction' that more typically types of data collection (ie. Interviews, focus groups, etc.) may be subject to.

Structure

This dissertation is structured as a midway point between a traditional monograph and a manuscript-based project. This is to say that while there is a broad theme that unites the entirety of this project, each chapter explores its own unique facet. Each chapter will speak independently to a different literature base (and therefore have its own smaller literature review) and will investigate one specific feature of the broader topic of the knowledge politics of youth peacebuilding. The last three chapters demonstrate this structure most clearly as each chapter explores one emerging debate related to youth peacebuilding (the 'everyday'/'local', hybridity, and agency). In this way each chapter does not always explicitly build on the preceding chapter but overall the chapters work to provide an in-depth analysis of the overall objectives as outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 1 is a historical exploration of 'peacebuilding' and 'youth' as constructs that have been imbued with social meaning. I focus on some of the ways that these concepts have been mobilized in both theory and practice. The main intent of this chapter is to offer a rich historical narrative on the extent to which liberal peacebuilding as it pertains to youth has come to be authoritative and hegemonic. A central tenet of this chapter is the assumption that young people remain largely excluded from meaningful participation in peacebuilding. This assertion is supported by the cases provided by McEvoy-Levy (2006), Honwana (2012), Bangura (2015), and Berents, (2015) amongst others. This is not to say that are youth are wholly excluded from peacebuilding, but rather that there are significant limitations to the manner and extent to which they are included. Thus, the main argument of this chapter is that while there is growing theoretical acknowledgement of the importance of youth inclusion and peacebuilding (and the myriad of ways that young people are actively engaged in peacebuilding albeit while not recognized as such), in practice the contributions of young people to peacebuilding remain marginalized.

Chapter 2 is a scoping review of academic peacebuilding literature. It explores the extent to which the liberal canons of peacebuilding and youth are present in contemporary peacebuilding literature. Through a scoping review of peacebuilding literature from the years 2016-2020 inclusive, I investigate peacebuilding's 'master narratives' and the implications on young people. As well I explore the knowledge production process itself within the academy and its effects on how young people in Africa and the Great Lakes region in particular are approached. Through this analysis I also examine the current avenues that exist in peacebuilding literature for potentially more inclusive approaches to the field of study.

In chapter 2 I draw on the theoretical contributions of Edmondson (2018), Autesserre (2014), and Lowe (2015) to argue that the limited frames that normatively define youth and peacebuilding cannot adequately account for young people's actual participation in peace activities and rather result in simplified and essentialized representations of the role of young people. By defining young people solely through the lens of 'victim' or 'violent' the ways that young people may be both or may transition between either in a fluid and shifting manner are overlooked. As Podder (2015) notes, these frames are limited insofar as they obscure young people's positive agency and contributions to peacebuilding. Consequently, I argue in this chapter that representations of young people and of peacebuilding are reflections of certain knowledges rather than universally applicable truths. I also argue that the master narratives that exist are based on colonial assumptions of knower and known.

Chapter 3 focuses on the concept of the 'everyday' or the 'local' in peacebuilding. In light of the findings from the previous chapter regarding the slippage between theory and practice, this chapter examines a theoretical position regarding the everyday that may help to better capture and understand the diverse ways that young people participate in peacebuilding. I draw on a framework provided by Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015) that encompasses three main pillars of making peacebuilding more youth-inclusive. These pillars are grounded in the ideas that peace is narrated by and through youth, that structures can either inhibit or facilitate positive contributions to peace by youth, and that peace and conflict are profoundly 'youthed'. A central, unifying feature of this framework is the usefulness of the concept of the 'everyday' in acknowledging the peacebuilding efforts of young people that fall outside the realm of formal, state and expert-led initiatives. Thus, this chapter also draws on Millar's (2020) critiques of the

everyday in peacebuilding in order to round out and evaluate the claims made by Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015).

Chapter 4 examines the concept of 'agency' in youth peacebuilding and looks to complicate what is understood as 'political' action. A central focus is on the extent to which youth activism affects meaningful and transformative change given the normative assumptions and structural constraints related to youth and youth peacebuilding. I ground the discussion around the notion of an 'African Spring' and the extent to which the optimism for widespread social change following the Arab Spring has been sustained. I examine Tweets that use East African social movement hashtags in a range of locations. The hashtags focused on are #CongoIsBleeding (Congo) #Repeal162 (Kenya) #FreeStellaNyanzi (Uganda). Overall, I argue that 'success' of social media campaigns such as the three listed here is best measured not by their ability to overthrow and change authoritarian regimes, but for what young people gain in the process of contributing to such campaigns.

In chapter 4 I make use of the concept of 'waithood' from Honwana (2012) that stipulates that that there is a tension between a reality in which young people are "actively engaged with society and the polity outside mainstream institutions and partisan politics" and the discursive frames that continues to portray young people as apathetic and a 'lost generation'. I pair this with the concepts of 'techno-sociality' and the internet as a 'rhizome' to argue that there is a fluid process of negotiation that takes place online that provides a space where young people can connect with a larger network of similarly minded people. I argue that is through the process of connection and the practice of exercising voice that social media such as Twitter can offer a useful tool for young people to access their agency in environments that may give them few similar opportunities.

Lastly, chapter 5 explores the intersection between 'hybridity' and Hip-Hop music. I utilize a feminist-relational agenda to argue the following. Firstly, that Hip-Hop is an organic form of hybridity that naturally blends young people's relations to both the local and global. Thus, when understood as forms of hybridity, Hip-Hop music draws attention to the broader structures that young people are responding to in their lyrics. Second, I argue that Hip-Hop is a space that is created by and for young people and largely remains a space where young people have a relative degree of freedom of expression. Although this freedom leads to disagreements, these tensions help to reveal a more nuanced picture of the dynamism of what it means to be a young person in a particular context. Lastly, I argue that as a form of self-expression and a medium through which to explore one's own identity, Hip-Hop can help break down some of the binaries regarding 'youth' and 'authenticity' that are intrinsic to but also limit the effectiveness of hybrid peace arrangements.

Chapter 1: Historical Overview of 'Peacebuilding' and 'Youth'

Introduction

This chapter provides a historical overview to the foundational concepts of this research: 'peacebuilding' and 'youth'. I explore the transformation of knowledge over time as it relates to these two concepts with an emphasis on the relationship between theory and practice. In doing so I pay particular attention to the rise of the liberal peacebuilding model as authoritative. I focus on the liberal model not to re-inscribe its centrality, but rather to examine the extent to which it has shaped the contemporary and normative approach to youth peacebuilding. In this sense, and following in a post-colonial perspective, I examine liberal peacebuilding with an eye to what it has silenced, suppressed, or ignored. As established in the introductory chapter, a central tenet of this chapter is the notion that young people largely remain excluded from meaningful participation in peacebuilding. Thus, this chapter will argue that while there is growing theoretical acknowledgement of the importance of youth inclusion and peacebuilding (and the myriad of ways that young people are actively engaged in peacebuilding albeit while not recognized as such), in practice the contributions of young people to peacebuilding remain marginalized *in part as a result of the foundational assumptions built into the current liberal model of peacebuilding*.

The remainder of this chapter will proceed as follows. Firstly, I will briefly outline the theoretical lens through which I am approaching this historical sketch. While it is firmly rooted into the broader theoretical framework described in the introduction of this dissertation, it will establish in more detail several key theoretical pieces, including the role of discursive colonialism and the relationship between knowledge and power. I then give overviews of the history of both peacebuilding and youth as analytical concepts. In regard to peacebuilding, I

highlight a few key moments that have shaped peacebuilding knowledge and given rise to a specific liberal vision of peacebuilding such as the 1992 UN Agenda for Peace and the rise of the 'local turn' within the academy. Through tracing this history, I shed light on the underlying logic of protectionism that have become inherent to a liberal model of peacebuilding. Protectionism is then used as a bridge to begin an examination of 'youth' and 'childhood' as discursive constructs. In this way this chapter sets out to establish liberal peacebuilding as a discursive space. In the latter chapters I will examine this space through case studies from East Africa to speak back to and *challenge* the assumptions of liberal peace.

I explore the liberal traditions of childhood and youth again, not to reinscribe their centrality, but to explore their limits. In particular, I highlight the roles that the victim-violent dichotomy and theories such as the youth bulge or youth crisis (all of which I argue are borne from protectionist logic) have played in shaping a highly limited and exclusionary approach to young people. In turn, I argue that such an approach to young people lies at the root of much of their exclusion from peacebuilding. I detail this relationship in more detail in the final portion of this chapter in which I explore the collision of youth and peacebuilding knowledges.

Theoretical Approach

The approach I have taken to this historical overview is informed by the application of post-colonial development theory to the study of youth peacebuilding. Most importantly, I come to this overview with the assumption that there exists a dominant development theory which is characterized principally by its maintenance of uneven relationships of power (as will be detailed below). It is this maintenance of unequal power that I claim can also be reflected in youth peacebuilding. Thus, a starting point of this chapter is that peacebuilding acts as a subset or form of 'development'. Indeed, peacebuilding is closely tied to the aid and humanitarian field, which

is intimately and historically tied to development. In other words, a relationship exists between peacebuilding (as a branch of humanitarianism) and development and therefore the same logics that can be found in the broader development apparatus are also located in youth peacebuilding. Thus, the objective of this chapter is to act as a grounding point for the rest of this thesis insofar as it establishes the object of critique, being the discursive constructs that underpin liberal peace, that will then be interrogated in the latter chapters. I now turn to an explanation of the theoretical logic that underpins this chapter specifically.

Power relations in development.

To begin, I rely on Rist' (2008) history of development to elucidate two main points. Firstly, Rist (2008) highlights how ways of thinking about and understanding development inform particular discourses of development which have in turn guided and justified the practice of development. This is significant to the relationship between theory and practice that I emphasize in this chapter insofar as it highlights the importance of conceptual framings to real-world practice. I will return to this idea later in the chapter but is important to highlight here at the onset. Secondly, Rist (2008) demonstrates how 'development' (both in practice and theory) has endured as a type of "religion of modernity" despite its failures because of the ability of its practitioners to continually reframe development as something new and innovative while maintaining focus on a central theme. As such, this paper agrees with Rist (2008) to the extent that despite its changing faces, inherent to development is the production of inequalities and exclusion. Where I differ from Rist (2008) is in his assertion that development's central theme is expansion of market relations and the production of commodities. Instead, I take from Radcliffe's (2015) understanding of coloniality as the long-standing patterns of power that define

relations and knowledge production. I thus stipulate that it is the maintenance of colonial, hierarchical relationships that define development's core.

To the extent that I rely on Radcliffe (2015) and her statement that "social difference and development thinking are better understood as outcomes of coloniality's relations" (p. 38), I also accept Zein-Elabdin's (2011) argument that development is an orientalist and colonialist discourse to the extent that while the discourse of development may transform, the underlying system of relations remains the same. However, in recognition that development discourse (and by extension theory) is not homogenous, I add the caveat that a *dominant* development discourse is orientalist and colonialist but has provoked responses in direct opposition to these premises. The elaboration of the relationship between knowledge, power and discourse by Said (1978) and Escobar (1995) is central to understanding how colonial relations are maintained through discourse and the politics of representation that produce a body of knowledge about the Third World 'Other'. In other words, an important contribution is the understanding of development as a discursive field that produces permissible modes of thinking and being while dismissing others. Here the concept offered by Mohanty (as cited in Radcliffe 2015) of discursive colonialism is useful insofar as it is used to describe the reification of "social (especially racial-ethnic) categories and inscribing meanings on diverse bodies and by generalizing and denying colonized social difference" (p.15). This is important in understanding post-colonial contexts insofar as it offers a way in which to examine how discursive framings of the Global South are perpetuated in ways that maintain uneven relationships. In particular, the notions of the professionalization of poverty and 'rendering technical' offered by Escobar (1995) and Li (2007) are useful in illuminating how a regime of representation is manifested that positions the Global South as a place of intervention and control. Moreover, these approaches are representative of a transition in

development theory itself insofar as it offers tools with which to unveil a dominant development paradigm that is based in the perpetuation of conditions of unequal power. As will be detailed in the latter sections, a similar trend has recently emerged within peacebuilding theory as well.

By way of this theoretical positioning, the following historical analysis will serve as a foundation for the proceeding chapters. This is to say that the post-colonial lens that is applied to the reading of history in this chapter will remain consistent throughout the remainder of the chapters. The objective of viewing the history of youth and peacebuilding in this way is to demonstrate an alternate understanding of how the current liberal paradigm came to its position of prominence, and thus to critique its central position. Moreover, the theoretical position of this chapter will help to begin to unravel how a singular knowledge, and the power therein can become universalized at the expense of other, potentially competing knowledges and sites of power. Two caveats are offered at this point. Firstly, in following Foucault (1982), knowledge as power is not taken to be absolute but rather is ubiquitous and unstable and therefore is constantly being challenged. Secondly, as per Said (1978), knowledge-power is to be taken in concert with physical and material domination. This is to say that knowledge becomes particularly powerful when articulated through material backing.

The relationship between development and youth peacebuilding.

To return to Zein-Elabdin (2011), they argue that the objective in understanding development as a colonial discourse is to open up space to disrupt its authority and that such a process is "instrumental for breaking apart the dominant single vision of social meaning" (p. 222). When the same logic is applied to constructs such as 'youth and 'peacebuilding it is therefore possible to expose the authority that either concept contains and the ways this authority limits or denies the agency (or at least the recognition of agency) of some groups. By using this

particular theoretical lens, I am responding to the assumption stated at the onset of this paper that young people are excluded, or at minimum marginalized from peacebuilding.

I do not set out to make the same *argument* as Zein-Elabdin. Rather, I intend to follow the same argumentative *process* whereby I unpack what is meant by 'child' and 'peacebuilding (and subsequently 'childhood' and 'youthhood') in much the same way that Zein-Elabdin deconstructs 'development'. I do not argue that youth and peacebuilding are *colonial* constructs per se, but rather that they can be viewed as *discursive* constructs that carry particular relations of power and domination with them. Thus, to view either concept solely as static and isolated would risk obscuring the ways and the moments in which children or youth themselves transgress the boundaries of normative construct. Instead, and as was previously stated, where there is power there is also resistance. To this end, the purpose of this chapter is not to establish a unidirectional and hegemonic authority of liberal peacebuilding as it pertains to youth. Rather, I follow Foucault's assertion that power is unstable and fluid and therefore I focus on that which dominant (youth peacebuilding) ignores or suppresses to ascertain its limits and gaps. In conclusion, I draw usefulness from post-colonial theory's assistance in looking outside the normative box, whether that box is development or in this case, peacebuilding, as a central guiding feature of this project more broadly.

A Brief History of Peacebuilding.

This section examines the establishment of a liberal peacebuilding paradigm as it functions in both theory and practice. I look to the actions of the United Nations as a grounding point for this discussion for two reasons. Firstly, the United Nations is a powerful international norm setting agency and thus is a useful starting point to discuss trends in international processes

such as peacebuilding. Secondly, the United Nations is a significant actor in peacebuilding in terms of both theory and practice, as will be displayed.

The main features of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm as it is used in the remainder of this dissertation encompasses seven main elements: security-driven, advances an economic growth centered model of development, emphasizes 'good (democratic) governance', technocratic and programmatic, state-centered, elite-driven, and based on conflict *management* strategies. Each of these elements can be seen as discursive constructs in and of themselves that together make up the discursive space of liberal peacebuilding. Therefore, in order to deconstruct and challenge liberal peacebuilding in the latter chapters, I here firstly establish some of the key components of each of these seven elements. There are several key contextual factors that help to detail the emergence of each of these components, to which I now turn

Formal peacebuilding as it has come to be normatively understood is a post-Cold war phenomenon (Millar, van der Lijn, & Verkoren 2013). This is not to say that other, informal or less acknowledged forms of peacebuilding did not take place prior to this period, but only that one specific and dominant form became internationalized following the end of the Cold War. In particular, it was the establishment of formal procedures and institutions to support the rebuilding of war-torn societies after the Cold War that helped to recognize peacebuilding as a 'legitimate' process. The Washington Consensus of the late 1980's and early 1990s, and the formation of the Bretton Woods Institutions in particular, set the institutional backdrop to a liberal approach to peacebuilding. As a set of policy proscriptions to guide reforms in post-conflict societies, the Washington Consensus helped concretize *liberal* values of free market economies, democratic governance, and Western-led interventionism as the 'standard' approach to reconstruction efforts. These values were made authoritative in part through various programs

by the Bretton Woods Institutions of the World Bank (WB) (formerly known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), most notable of which being the Structural Adjustment Programs throughout the 1990s. It is also important to note that the increasing influence of international financial institutions (such as the WB and IMF) and consequently a growing western-led interventionism established a foundation for intrusion in not only the economic systems of the Global South but also the political and social institutions as well (Rist, 2008).

It is this component in particular that resonates with the post-colonial and post-development perspective of this project as it establishes the bounds of discursive space in which the Global South is constructed as a site for external intervention. This will be articulated in more detail below but is necessary to state here that the post-Cold War era set the conditions of possibility for foreign intervention into the Global South. In particular, the implications of the political and economic history of interventionism shape the demarcation of the Global South as a space to be intervened upon by the Global North that would come to be a defining feature of the liberal peace paradigm. It is this delineation of difference that helps to showcase how old colonial relations of power are maintained, albeit under new discourses of 'peace'. This is also important to highlight because it helps to position as foreign interventionism as something that is *created* and *sustained* rather than inherent and fixed, thus leaving space for critique and challenge.

I argue that there are five key assumptions that are consistent throughout policy proscriptions and reconstructions programs, including but not limited to SAPs, of this era that are significant to the development of peacebuilding and the tracing of coloniality throughout. Firstly, post-Cold War reconstruction and development programs were shaped by an enthusiasm for the

'democratic peace theory'. This perspective asserts that democratic governance structures are generally more peaceful than other forms of governance, and that democratic nations are less likely to go to war with other democracies (Belloni, 2012, pp. 24-25). This theory is in part supported by the stipulation that the structure of a democratic states makes it harder for a head of state to declare war when compared to autocratic states (Russett, 1993). Moreover, the fall of the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War marked a renowned commitment to democratization on the world stage as the prevailing model of governance. Thus, one of the principles of 'good' governance following the Cold War was the assumption of the superiority of democratic governance structures above all.

Secondly, the emphasis on economic 'growth' centred models of development in this era situated market-based strategies as the primary vehicle through which to 'support' nations after conflict. The impositions of SAPs during this period highlights the predominance of market-based economics as an organizing principle. Conditionalities imposed upon countries as part of SAPs often included terms such as market liberalization (removal of trade barriers, increasing foreign investment, deregulation etc.) and privatization, as well as improving governance and fighting corruption. It should be noted that governance in the SAPs is based on a neoliberal formulation of market-based capitalism.

The last three assumptions are based more-so on the *way* reconstruction efforts were administered as opposed to the *content* of these efforts. Firstly, there was much enthusiasm during this era for liberalism as a 'silver bullet' to address the ills of the Third World (Brewer, 2018, p. 202). This assumption rested on the belief that "rapid liberalization would create conditions for stable and lasting peace in countries emerging from civil conflict" (Paris, 2010, p. 341) and reflects the logic at the time that conflict was ultimately created by state failure, thereby

necessitating state-led and state-centric intervention as the solution. Thus, post-Cold War reconstruction tended to emphasize peacebuilding as primarily a state-building and state-led activity. However, relying on the state as the principal unit of analysis relies on the assumption that states are a neutral, impartial, and effective instrument to implement peacebuilding. This assumption obscures instances where states are themselves as agents of violence or discrimination and does not account for political hierarchies or power inequities within a nation. As will be described in the 'Local Turn', the state as a primary actor in peacebuilding is questioned and heavily critiqued.

Secondly, reconstruction efforts of this era tended to rely on standardized, technocratic 'packages'. SAPs once again demonstrate this logic insofar as they encompassed a standard set of proscriptions (based on market-based growth) provided to countries with relatively little significance given to local histories, contexts, and most importantly, voices of dissent. In other words, post-conflict environments were seen to be *technical* issues (as opposed to socio-political) and thus could be 'solved' through means of establishing good governance, democracy, and free-market economies (Chandler, 2013). Furthermore, the post-Cold war era built on a longer standing security-development nexus in which security concerns at home in the West were believed to be intimately connected to development outcomes 'abroad'. In other words, the underlying assumption of the security-development nexus was that 'their' development will improve 'our' security and that the poverty and 'un' or 'under' development of the Global South is "a handicap and a threat both to them and more prosperous areas", as was stated in Harry Truman's '4-Point Plan' that would go on to define the coming era of international interventionism (Cowen & Shenton, 1995; Yale Law School, 2008).

Thus, standardized packages of intervention were based in a clear demarcation between those that intervene (ie. Western nations) and those that are the target of interventions (namely, 'Third World' or Global South countries). It is important to briefly amplify this point at this stage. As will be showcased in the latter chapters, liberal peacebuilding is based on a key space of difference between the intervener and the intervened upon. However, in positioning the emergence of a reliance on standardized, technocratic packages within the larger security-development nexus, the unstable bounds of this assumption become clear. In other words, tracing the roots of this assumption help to open space for an alternate interpretation. While the more challenge-oriented analysis will take place in chapters 3-5, I here note that this era of interventionism and the tendency towards problematizing post-conflict contexts as technical issues, is part and parcel of the broader discursive space of liberal peacebuilding.

Thirdly, and related, post-Cold war interventionism was largely an elite-driven process. 'Elites' here refers to foreign peacebuilders or development actors (be they UN personnel or foreign officials), as well as local elites such as military, political, or economic elites, or some nexus of the three (Wade, 2016, p.6). However, much like the reliance on the state, reliance on elite actors as the harbingers of reconstruction or peace assumes they are "interest-free enforcers of emerging international peacebuilding norms which could be universally applied (Chandler, 2013, p.19). In the case of foreign interveners of externally designed interventions the result can be projects that are "designed by people who may not have a proper understanding of local context and can encourage international peacebuilders to rely on dominant narratives and to resolve conflict from the top-down" (Autesserre, 2014, p.130). As will be described below, not only do such narratives often rely on a clear distancing between the Global North and South, but

they are also based in a falsely ascribed moral superiority of Western nations and an infantilization and 'Othering' of nations in the Global South.

The false ascription of expertise with foreign, largely Western, interveners is a critical element of liberal peacebuilding that will be reflected upon in more depth in the latter chapters. However, it is important to highlight here in order to situate how the construction as expertise is consistent with a longer standing historical relationship between the Global North and South. It is also important to point out that these dynamics are not exclusive to Global North—Global South dynamics but rather can play out within different spaces in either the North or South, or amongst different groups within the same geographic and social space. However, for the sake of brevity in this historical overview, and for the purpose of articulating discursive patterns, I limit the discussion here to the tendency for expertise to be associated with Global North peace actors intervening in the Global South.

Peace before peacebuilding & an 'Agenda for Peace'.

In 1992 the then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali published an '*Agenda for Peace*' in which the concept of 'peacebuilding' was formally introduced to the international community. This marked the general institutionalization of peacebuilding within the lexicon of global interventionism (Ryan, 2013). The *Agenda for Peace* also marked a shift in peace work insofar as it moved beyond former practices of peace*keeping* and peace*making.*

Peacekeeping is conceptualized as an external body acting as a 'buffer' between two warring factions and includes 'first-wave' peacekeeping during the Cold War and 'second-wave' peacekeeping in the immediate post-Cold war period. Involvement in first-wave peacekeeping largely centered around decolonization efforts and were permitted to use force only in situations of self-defence. Second-wave peacekeeping on the other hand expanded to include civilian

experts and specialists in addition to UN soldiers. This era of peacekeeping included notable missions in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Somalia, amongst others. In both first and second-wave peacekeeping, activities include support for the implementation of ceasefires or other peace agreements and occur *before* peace *enforcement*. Peace*making* on the other hand, is an expansion of peacekeeping insofar as it subscribes a more significant role to UN peace personnel in both the use of force and the extent of their mandate. Where peace*keeping* was a largely 'neutral' and defence approach, peace*making* saw the role of UN peace personal as essential in the restoration of peace after conflict and to assist in the transition from war to peace, thereby necessitating that UN personnel play a more active role. This role includes participation in peace enforcement as well as the potential for use of military for to achieve peace (NATO Association of Canada, 2014). Peacemaking is sometimes further broken into *diplomatic peacemaking* (political mediation) and *peace enforcement* (the use of military mechanisms to compel parties to cease fighting) (Library of Parliament, 2004). Lastly, the *Agenda for Peace* defined peacebuilding broadly as any "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (United Nations Secretary-General, 1992). While a considerable broad definition, in practice peacebuilding encompasses a range of activities that were formerly considered exclusively under the purview of states such as democratic institution building, designing and monitoring elections, and reconciliation and human rights initiatives (Library of Parliament, 2004).

It is important to acknowledge at this point that the definition of peace provided by the '*Agenda for Peace*' is, by nature of being a product of the United Nations, conceptually quite vague and does not stray far from ideologically liberal traditions. However, one aspect that *is* clear from this definition is that peace is still regarding as being in the realm of conflict

management and *prevention*. This is an important element to note for the discussion on the construction of liberal peace as a discursive space because it gives a broad indication of the limits of this space. This is to say that a liberal construction of peace focused predominately on a *negative* peace, or the absence of conflict as equating peace. As well, the definition of peacebuilding by the UN follows in the traditions of peace-keeping and peace-making insofar as it remains rooted in a post-Cold War logic that emphasizes a liberal peace paradigm. With the new focus on peace*building*, the United Nations cemented its role as a key player in the field. In 2005 the UN established the UN Peacebuilding Commission, an intergovernmental body that supports peace efforts in conflict affected countries; the UN Peacebuilding Fund, the organization's financial instrument; and the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, a support body that works to foster international support for national peacebuilding efforts.

Criticism of liberal peace and the rise of the 'local turn'.

The success of UN peacebuilding missions is contested on the basis that there is little consensus regarding how 'success' is defined, at what point it can be said to be achieved, and how it is measured. For instance, if 'success' and 'peace' are defined merely by the absence of a return to violent conflict, some (albeit not all) of these interventions may be deemed a success. If success is defined by the establishment of a functioning liberal democracy then many of these missions have failed (Barnett, Fang, & Zurcher, 2014). Moreover, if peace is defined not solely as the absence of war (or 'negative peace') but rather in terms of 'positive peace' in which the underlying structural dynamics that incited violence in the first place are addressed, most of these interventions fall short. Thus, while peacebuilding interventionism has received a modicum of success according to some definitions (largely those that see peace as the absence of war), by no definition has the liberal peacebuilding model been uniformly and unanimously successful.

The failures of peacebuilding – be they to prevent a return to conflict, to establish a functioning liberal democracy, or to address the root causes of violence – prompted criticism of the liberal order that has defined the post-Cold War era of intervention (for example by De Coning, 2018; Thiessen, 2011; and Mac Ginty, 2014, amongst others).

One of the most significant criticisms to arise is regarding the ability of liberal-based peacebuilding to adequately incorporate local views and actors. Critiques stipulate that liberal peacebuilding is primarily a top-down, elite-driven exercise, that it relies on ineffective and homogenizing universalized templates that are designed outside of the local context and implemented by foreign peacebuilders (Auteserre, 2014), and that it is brought to local populations with little regard for their input (Thiessen, 2011; Liden, 2009; Brewer, 2018). When local populations are included, Mac Ginty (2014) argues that it is often done in a 'shallow' manner in which 'buy-in' of externally designed projects is garnered from key local decision makers (as similarly argued by Bangura, 2016; Barnett, Fang, & Zurcher, 2016). Thus, local populations may be *participants* in peacebuilding but are less readily recognized as the *architects* of peacebuilding itself. From a post-colonial and post-development perspective, the limited engagement with local populations can be viewed as stemming from the construction of expertise within professional, largely Western institutions and actors. Furthermore, this aspect will have further relevance when discussing the instrumentalist nature of youth and local participation in peacebuilding.

Criticisms of the liberal peace paradigm have thus prompted the 'local turn' in peace and conflict studies in which taken-for-granted levels of analysis are re-examined and new interpretations of power, legitimacy, and responsibility are offered (Mac Ginty, 2014). This shift in the field of peace and conflict studies marks a commitment to peacebuilding that is grounded

in the lived realities of local, non-elite populations, defined by 'bottom-up' solutions, and strives for "emancipatory governance centred on the solidarity of the governed" (Randazzo 2016, p. 1351). In doing so it looks to unearth what is hidden, silenced, embodied, normalized, and depoliticized by liberal peace (Ahall, 2019). This turn in perspective also correlates to the sociological turn in International Relations that has helped to shape the field of critical peace and conflict studies by drawing attention to a range of issues that are normally underplayed or ignored by a narrow focus on governance and state-building (Brewer, 2018, pp. 202-203; Jacob, 2015). Within the most 'radical' branches of critical peacebuilding, the liberal peace model represents "an apparatus of power which attempts to discipline and normalize" and "seeks managerial solutions to fundamental conflicts over resources and power" (Paffenholz 2015, p. 350). On these bases the notion of 'transformative peacebuilding' is offered as an alternative. The transformative model "implies structural changes and the acknowledgement that peacebuilding is mainly a Western enterprise that needs to engage in a serious South-North dialogue (Paffenholz 2015, p. 350). Doing so implies a focus on 'ordinary' people and oppressed voices as well as analyses of power structures and normative assumptions (as cited in Paffenholz 2015). It is within this particular branch of critical peacebuilding that I find the most bearing with the post- and de-colonial assumptions that guide the overarching theoretical structure of this project and are is the perspective that will guide the radical critique of peacebuilding that is offered the latter portions of this thesis.

Importantly, the local turn also marks an initial engagement with the epistemological roots of peacebuilding that lends itself to explorations of other types of knowledges on the subject. There is still criticism however, that this shift has taken place largely within the realm of International Relations theory, a discipline that is still largely dominated "by mostly male

scholars from the global North" (Zaum, 2013). Thus, there remains a need to extend the transformative potential of this epistemological shift to better include actors and voices that exist outside such centres of knowledge production.

The Liberal Peace Model as Authoritative

Despite criticisms against the liberal peace paradigm, in practice it remains preeminent. One explanation of the persistence of a liberal peace paradigm stems from the relationship between knowledge production within academic spaces and the practical and institutional logics of *doing* peacebuilding. In an exploration of this relationship as it pertains to sexual violence in the DRC, Veit and Tschorner (2019) assert that large, international bodies in the humanitarian and development sectors tend to maintain practices along the status quo, to adopt mitigation over prevention measures, and thus to relegate novel and 'radical' approaches to the margins. The authors conclude that while emerging academic knowledge is used by practitioners, to is commonly done so in a way that treats this knowledge as a form of cultural capital that can be "appropriated to consolidate an organization's position" (Veit & Tschorner, 2019, p.473). The notion of cultural capital is similar to Mac Ginty's (2014) finding that although international institutions have adopted the rhetoric of the local turn in peacebuilding, in practice this is done in a highly instrumentalized manner that reifies a top-down, standardized, and technocratic approach to peace (p.549).

Bazz and Stern (2013) similarly argue that intervention organizations working on issues of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) tend towards analyses that allow them to see SGBV as remediable through security and justice reform. This perspective contrasts with one that would view SGBV as a phenomenon that is entrenched in existing gender norms and would thereby necessitate structural and cultural change. Viewing SGBV in the former way is logical to

the extent that organizations will tend towards interpretations that are favourable to the type of interventions they are able to provide, whether this is done implicitly or not. Humanitarian and development work, under which peace work is a part, is typically situated as 'neutral' or 'objective' and therefore to impose upon a society's cultural and systemic practice would be outside the very conditions of its existence. In other words, to acknowledge the root or structural causes of an issue, be it SGBV or peacebuilding, an organization may in some cases be declaring their own ineffectiveness or incapacity to address the issue at hand. Autesserre (2014) makes a similar assertion in her study of the everyday politics of international peace inventions. She argues that there is a 'natural' focus on macro structures within international institutions, stating that "diplomats and UN officials are trained to work on superstructures, such as national and international negotiations, and to seek out national-level counterparts" (p. 151). Thus, while an international organization may adopt the language of the local turn, as argued by Mac Ginty (2014), Autesserre (2014) stipulates that the very organizational logics of such institutions are fundamentally at odds with the type of locally grounded knowledge production that is at the local turn's core. The ability for peacebuilding 'professionals' to adopt this language showcases peacebuilding as an epistemological and discursive 'machine' that can mold itself to new and emerging trends while still remaining, at its core, fundamentally the same in terms of the relations of power that are left unquestioned.

It is also important to note that the entrenchment of a liberal peace paradigm also assumes certain gender norms and logics. For instance, Groves, Resurreccion, and Doney (2009) have noted the reproduction of harmful gender norms through the UN's focus on state-level priorities in its peacebuilding mission in Timor-Leste. They argue that the notion of security at the basis of UN peace operations is itself based on an iteration of the state as the sole provider of

security that has the effect of absolving responsibility to provide security within the domestic sphere (Groves, Resurreccion, & Doney, 2009). This is to say that nation-building and state-level securitization after conflict are not adequate to address the non-state and private spaces in which individuals live and experience insecurities. In particular, the authors state that a return to the status-quo or to pre-conflict structures can have the impact of re-entrenching gender inequalities that negatively impact women. Partis-Jennings (2017) extends this argument in their study of peacebuilding projects in post-conflict Afghanistan. They argue that not only did peacebuilding initiatives reify pre-existing gender norms, but the underlying militarized masculinity that informed peacebuilding further entrenched the "female state as a disempowering one" that is in constant need of protection. The findings from these authors echo similar statements that the ways in which peacebuilding policies are conceptualized and legitimized are made possible through a discursive construction of gender (for example, see O'Reilly 2016). Through this lens, peacebuilding is founded on a 'masculine logic of protection' that not only reifies the 'vulnerable' and passive woman, but that also valorizes a militarized masculinity as the primary arbiter of peace.

Thus, knowledge stemming from a liberal peace paradigm cannot be considered value-free or 'neutral' despite its universalization as such. Instead, for the purposes of this paper I posit that liberal peace and the knowledge therein is founded in a specific culture and history and therefore is not equally applicable in all contexts.

Peacebuilding and Protectionism

An important theme for the remainder of this dissertation is the use of a protectionist logic within peacebuilding (and youthhood as will be described below). As described above, protectionism is in part constructed through a militarized masculinity that undergirds the liberal

peace paradigm. However, I reiterate here that when viewed as discourse, liberal peacebuilding and this case protectionism, can be viewed as constructed modes of 'permissible' thinking and being. To extend this further I argue that under the façade of a universalist peacebuilding paradigm there are inequitable relations of power stemming from colonial and orientalist assumptions that creates a binary between the Global North and South along protected vs. protector lines. In other words, the construction of a protectionist narrative functions to dismiss and demean certain perspectives and knowledges (in this case youth).

To begin, while the United Nations has played a leading role in institutionalizing and internationalizing peacebuilding, its role is far from signalling universal consensus when it comes to peacebuilding. As Barnett, Kim, O'Donnell, and Sitea (2007) warn, "we need to be very cognizant of the particular version of peacebuilding that is being institutionalized" (p. 37). This warning echoes apprehensions that the type of peacebuilding that has been universalised is grounded in the limited history and traditions of Western liberalism, which some have declared as a form of continued imperialism. For instance, the relationship between the founding of the United Nations and the maintenance of colonial relations of conquest and control, as well as notions of the 'Global South' as 'dark' spaces of conflict and chaos, cannot be ignored. The League of Nations (as the predecessor of the UN) legitimized internationalization of intervention outside Europe in name of civilization itself through it's 'stages of development' discourse (Rist, 2008). Moreover, the events leading up to the establishment of the UN including post-World War II condemnation of violence, the use of the Marshall plan for political and economic reconstruction in Europe, and the creation of NATO to create military alliances amongst Western nations were all born out of a concern to transform political relations in Europe rather than in the Global South (Rist, 2008). The UN's goals of maintaining international peace and security,

protecting human rights, delivering humanitarian aid, promoting sustainable development, and upholding international law in many ways symbolizes a new way of dividing up the world along developed/underdeveloped lines that in many ways can be mapped onto former colonizer/colonized divisions (Rist, 2008).

A similar dichotomy can also be mapped onto a distinction between those people and places that 'do' peacebuilding, vs. those who are the recipients of said peacebuilding. For instance, in speaking more specifically to the realm of peace and peacebuilding, Choudhury (2007) argues that justifications of violence against "lesser races" are inherent to the history of liberal universalism itself and as such the old order of imperialism has been carried forward and subsumed within the human rights regime. She animates this point through a discussion of the wars on terror in Iraq in which violence against Iraqis was justified to the extent that they were first identified as human rights abusers. She also argues that this is significant insofar as the rhetoric of human rights in this case provides not only justification for this violence, but also obscured the underlying military occupation.

Similarly, in the case of Somalia, Razack (2004) highlights how peacekeeping is intertwined with civilizing narratives of instruction and discipline of the Third World. She argues that "the overriding frame of the encounter is one of the civilized North and the barbaric South. Some individuals inhabit this frame as confident colonizers, others simply begin unselfconsciously as people who have set out to 'do good.' Either way, a racial hierarchy is installed" (p. 187). In both instances the outcome is a distancing similar to that of Said's (1978) Orientalism insofar as the production of the 'neutral' and valiant peacekeeper is in intertwined with the production of that which is to be peace-kept. Here I refer to Said's (1978) argument that the production of the Orient was as much about the West as it was about the 'rest' in the sense

that the West came to know and define itself through the production of the 'other'. Similarly, here the 'peacekeeper' or by extension human rights are defined in relation to the objects that they seek to act against.

Indeed, of the more 'radical' critiques from Critical Peace and Conflict Studies is the assertion that peacebuilding is the same imperialism under a new disguise. Paris (2002) in particular argues that peacebuilding represents a new 'civilizing mission' in which 'liberal democracy' is the new 'standard of civilization' around which participation in the international community is based. In this sense, just as Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006) argue that coloniality is the dark side of modernity, I argue that discourse (be it one based on civilizing or protection) can function as a tool to draw attention to the positive side of peacekeeping while obscuring (albeit not always intentionally) the negative underlying assumptions.

Childhood and 'Youth-hood'

To begin, 'youth' is a concept that is understood primarily in relation to constructions of 'child' and 'adult'. This is because 'youth' is not defined by a commonly agreed upon age range, but rather as a transitory stage between childhood and adulthood (McEvoy-Levy, 2006). For instance, within different UN bodies there is a lack of consensus about the specific age range of youth. As one example, The UN Habitat Youth Fund uses a range of 15-32 (UN Habitat, n.d.), while the UNFPA uses 10-24 (United Nations, n.d. B). A common denominator however is the understanding that youth represents a transitory period to be passed through at which point full adulthood is attained. For instance, the various UN bodies cited above specify that a departure from youthhood is marked by leaving compulsory education, finding employment, and setting up their household (United Nations, n.d. C). Understood in this way 'youthhood' can be marked by

shared experiences akin to both childhood and adulthood and thus is a period largely defined by ambiguity and fluctuation.

Youth as a discursive category is also understood relationally insofar as the transition into adulthood is marked by changing social roles and guided by social supports. This is to say that youth do not pass through this period in isolation but rather the period itself can be characterized by the changing dynamics between youth, their environments, and the societal age-based expectations imposed upon them. As McEvoy-Levy (2011) notes, the concepts of child, youth, and adult are all relative to the extent that their meanings can change over time and vary within and across cultures. Therefore, while the concept of youth is defined by ambiguity and vagueness, the concepts against which it is defined are also subject to some degree of fluidity. I center the following discussion around a construction of 'childhood' that has been made authoritative through the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) because it gives an entry point into a normative construction of childhood while also in effect defining that which it does not cover (ie. a construction of the 'adult').

The constructs of 'child' and 'childhood' carry with them a set of inherent incongruences. On the one hand, there is rising acceptance of the idea that childhood is in part shaped by the social, economic, cultural, and historical contexts in which a child exists and that a child's development process is intrinsically linked to the larger social environments the child is a part of (Pasura et al, 2012; Woodhead, 1998). However, there is also wide acceptance that there are certain universal characteristics of childhood, namely that it is a chronological period of physical and psychological development. In this sense the concept of childhood exists in two dimensions; that in general it is a period of development, but more specifically, that this development is contingent upon the particular context that a child is embedded within. Yet as stated in the

introduction of this project, the UNCRC marked the institutionalization of socially and politically specific western, liberal discourse of childhood that is marked by protectionism and vulnerability. This convention is an important grounding point for the historicization of youth because it operates as a seminal norm-setting document around which laws, epistemic debate, and agenda setting are formed. Here I expand on this history to demonstrate the entrenchment of a protectionist logic to a universalized understanding of young people that is particularly relevant for the ways in which they have been incorporated into peacebuilding. However, as I will demonstrate, this document and the ideal it proscribes are not without contention.

Marshall (2013) provides a historical overview of the logics of Western protectionism and 'child-saving' that make up the foundations of the UNCRC. She traces this history across five major international conflict periods: the colonial era of pre-WWI, WWI itself, the immediate aftermath of WWI, the interwar years of the League of Nations, and WWII and its aftermath. Some of the main themes from Marshall's (2013) overview as they relate to peacebuilding are detailed below.

Table 1: Historical Moments in International Child-Saving

Pre-WW1	-'Child-saving' largely within the domain of Christian missionaries and enmeshed in 'civilizing missions' of the colonial era -Context of an expanding state as a result of the Enlightenment and subsequent divorce of religious and state responsibilities -Emergence of state-state treaties on child labour, child migration and child trafficking
During WW1	-'Child-saving' becomes intertwined with anti-war efforts as a way to garner sympathy for the 'enemy' and promote collective action -Establishment of the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom in 1915 saw the conflation of women's and children's issues (ie. womenandchildren) -Focus on garnering international support for humanitarian work in the aftermath of the war
Immediate Aftermath of WWI	-High point in international child saving and protectionism -Establishment of Save the Children in 1919 which introduced 'ground-breaking' advertising techniques such as child sponsorship programs -Establishment of Canada Council of Child Welfare (later to become the Canadian Council on Social Development) that brought child protection within the realm of state responsibility

Interwar Years	-Child protection becomes professionalized and institutionalized in the League of Nations -Creation of the Child Welfare Committee as a subset of the League of Nations -Support grows for the notion that 'experts' could use their knowledge to better the lives of children and young people -Initial drafts of what would later become the CRC are composed at the Child Welfare Committee
WWII Onwards	-Shift in focus to children in the 'developing' world -Establishment of OXFAM in 1942 and UNICEF in 1946

An aspect of childhood that was universalized in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that is particularly significant for this discussion is the notion that children are subordinate in relation to adults and are characterized by their vulnerability and passiveness. Moreover, it demonstrates that the universalized version of childhood (here being that which is congruent with the UN's construction) encompasses much more than simply childhood as a developmental stage and is actively imbued with social meaning.

To describe the construction of childhood that was institutionalized into the UNCRC, Jackson and Scott (1999) rely on the notion of 'risk anxiety' to describe a heightened state of risk awareness in which the drive to protect childhood is part of a wider sense that the world is becoming less stable and predictable. From this perspective childhood represents a sacred and precious realm that is constantly being threatened and therefore in need of vigilant protection. Further to this point Burman (2011) argues that childhood under the UNCRC is represented as (ideally) a safe space for play and exploration *but* that such a space is dependent on adults to ensure its safety.

There are two main trends that emerge here that are similar to those of a liberal peace paradigm. Firstly, the construction of childhood born out of the CRC represents a shift of colonial legacies into child saving frameworks. Indeed, Marshall (2013) states that "child savers

moved easily from public to private ventures, and after independences, many dismissed employees of colonial institutions found in the new international humanitarianism a place where their knowledge and skills would be of use. The first operations of reconnaissance of UNICEF in Africa frequently counted on missionary knowledge and infrastructure." (p. 483). This shift is also noticeable in the post-WWII era that saw the establishment of organizations such as UNICEF and OXFAM that marked a shift to child-saving and protection as an exercise that takes place predominately in the 'developing' world.

I do not argue that organizations such as OXFAM and UNICEF are wholly misguided in their approaches, or that they do not contribute to positive work in developing nations. Instead, I include them here to demonstrate how a particular perspective on childhood has been internationalized and thus the unequal relationships of power that it is based on are too maintained. While the construction of childhood in UNCRC as a precious realm that is under constant threat and in need of protection may not be *incorrect* per se it is at best an incredibly limited perspective on childhood and children themselves.

Secondly, there is an inherent professionalization related to the realm of childhood that is made visible through the history of child-saving and is evidenced in the notion of "best interests of the child" in the UNCRC. The formation of the Child Welfare Committee is most notable in this regard for its base assumption that 'experts' would use their presumed 'objective' knowledge to better the lives of young people. Given the role of this committee is shaping some of the first drafts of the UNCRC it is easy to see the continuation of this assumption in what would come to be one of the foundational aspects of the UNCRC. The language of 'best interests of the child' is used throughout the UNCRC to stipulate that a child's welfare be of primary concern. However, in practice this often has the result of allowing individual 'experts' to make

decisions for a child based on what is presumed to be in their best interest. With the externalization of child-saving to the developing world after WWII, this principle paved the way for decisions about the best interests of a child 'over there' to be made by 'experts' that were often physically foreign to a child's specific context.

To summarize, it is evident that the particular construction of children and youth that I have detailed operates as a *hegemonic* cultural formation insofar as it operates as "not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs ["ideology"], but the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values" (Baviskar 2008, p. 109). When viewed through the analytical lens offered by Zein-Elabdin (2011), 'childhood' and 'youthhood' are thus not *solely* chronological moments of transition through one's life but can also be interpreted as a discourse in themselves, imbued with social meaning and relations of power and authority. Thus, the discursive construction of 'childhood' (symbolized here by its codification by the UN) is most significant insofar as it is saturated with relations of power and domination. In this sense, constructs such as 'poverty' or 'youth'/ 'child' are *organizing* concepts used to define and shape the reality to which they refer. In drawing on Baviskar's (2008) understanding of a Gramscian sense of hegemony, the construction of youth is not necessarily something that is stable and fixed, but rather is fragile and in need of continual defense and recreation. Indeed, it is now relatively common knowledge that childhood, and concepts that are defined against it such as youth, are to a large extent context dependent (McEvoy-Levy, 2006, p. 1-26). However, as will be shown in the following section, the application of this principle to peacebuilding is still limited.

Where Youth and Peacebuilding Collide

McEvoy-Levy (2011) describes four primary discourses that are employed when discussing youth peacebuilding: youth in need of protection, as threats to security, as development assets, and as agents of change. As will be demonstrated, the former two discourses are the most commonly perpetuated and make up a victim/violent dichotomy. Discourses of youth as development assets and as agents of change provide a contrast to this dichotomy and emphasizes the positive contributions of young people. However, both frames have limitations that impede their ability to fully capture the nuances of youth and specifically of youth in times of post-conflict peace making.

Firstly, the discourse of youth as in need of protection is born out of the same child-saving and protectionist history that was described in the previous section. The conflation of *child* protection narratives with youth stems from the fact that 'youth' occupies a similar space as 'children' insofar as they may in some cases be of the same or similar ages, as well as having some shared experiences. However, reliance on an overly protectionist discourse to understand youth in conflict and peace may obscure the ways that youth also share experiences akin to adults and adulthood. The blurred distinction between child, youth, and adult is further exacerbated in times of conflict or strife where young people themselves may assume 'adult' roles and responsibilities as combatants, porters, cooks, 'wives', or a range of other significant positions (UNICEF, 2007). Moreover, even when young people are not directly engaged in or victimized by conflict, violence has profound implications on their social worlds and lived realities long after fighting has officially ceased (Betancourt et al. 2012; 2014) insofar as conflict 'brutalizes' everyday social practices and behaviours, cultural and cognitive maps and frames through which sense is made of the world, and common-sense language, ideas, and beliefs

(Brewer 2018). This is to say that the social expectations and considerations for what constitutes a young person (be that a child or a youth) and an adult during and after conflict can shift in relation to pre-conflict contexts (which as described previously are already fluid social constructs). Thus, without denying the importance of some degree of protectionism for young people affected by conflict, relying exclusively on such a discourse threatens to overlook the complex ways that young people's social condition is altered by way of conflict, and the ways this impacts how they come to peace processes. To this point, Ensor and Reinke (2014) argue that the implication of a protectionist framing is the denial of agency and thus "marginalization from mainstream economic life, political acknowledgement, and civic responsibility" (p. 85).

Secondly, there is a tendency when discussing young people in or after conflict to emphasize the threat they may pose to building or sustaining peace. This tendency is particularly acute when referring to young *men* specifically and relies on the false assumption that young men are *inherently* violent (McEvoy-Levy, 2011). For instance, the failures of post-conflict Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration (DDR) programs in post-conflict Sierra Leone have been in part explained by the failure of program designers to see beyond the threat of disenfranchised young people (Bolton, 2012). The logic employed in post-conflict Sierra Leone illustrates the 'youth bulge' theory that is born out of youth as a threat to security discourse. On its own, a 'youth bulge' refers to the demographic pattern where a large portion of a population is made up of young people (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018). However, the way this concept has been operationalized in Peace and Conflict Studies is to draw out a causal link, or to argue that countries with high youth populations are more susceptible to conflict (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018). There has been a degree of amendment to this theory insofar as most proponents of a youth bulge theory now understand such a bulge to be a *mediating* rather than a *causal* factor

(Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018). This is to say that in contexts of youth populations *where this is also high unemployment or weak institutions*, young people are more likely to be disaffected by their situations and turn to violent rebellion in order to provoke change. While this latter interpretation allows for a higher degree of nuance in the relationship between young people and conflict, it offers little in the way of constructing a less essentialized perspective on young people. The trope of young people as inherently violent will be demonstrated below to prop up even more recent, seemingly positive interpretations of youth.

Before moving on it is important to acknowledge that these first two discourses make up a victim/violent dichotomy that is often used when discussing young people and conflict or peace. Ozerdem (2016) states that "the young vacillate between the two extremes of 'infantilizing' and 'demonizing'. On the one hand, youths are viewed as vulnerable, powerless and in need of protection. On the other, they are feared as dangerous, violent, apathetic and as threats to security" (n.p.). McEvoy-Levy (2006; 2014) and Ensor (2012) further contend that this binary is the *defining* feature of how young people's relationship to conflict is discussed. Schwartz (2010) notes a tendency for this binary to operate along specific age ranges, arguing that young people under the age of 18 are more readily assumed to be victimized by conflict while those over 18 are more often viewed as perpetrators (pp. 10-12).

Attempts to overcome the victim/violent binary has come by way of the last two dominant discourses: young people as development assets and as agents of change. A youth as development assets discourses views young people as both a resource to 'utilize' (or exploit) and as national development partners. This perspective emphasizes the potential young people have to shape the outcomes (political, economic, etc) of a community or nation and although it attempts to perceive young people primarily for what they can positively contribute to society

after conflict, it also has the potential to overlook the capacities young people have in the present (McEvoy-Levy, 2011). To this point McEvoy-Levy (2011) states that invisibilizing agency in the present "may unwittingly reinforce the moral and political separation of children from adults, the infantilization of youth and their exclusions from politics, and this provides no preparation at all for peacebuilding" (p. 166). This is to say that rather than focusing on the experiences or skills young people may have gained during a conflict, it instead focuses on integrating young people into a predominately capitalist, neoliberal system of development that ultimately does little to encourage their positive peacebuilding capacities.

Additionally, a development-based perspective is heavily shaped by the security-development nexus. As Sukarieh and Tannok (2018) state,

> "the social category of youth has become an increasing concern for international development policy and discourse, in part due to its utility for the neoliberal project of renegotiating and eroding welfare and development state entitlements; and on the other hand, development policy and discourse has become ever more closely tied to global security concerns, following the end of the Cold War and the rise of the 'war on terror'" (p. 855).

This is significant because it establishes a foundation on which even when young people are included, their inclusion is predicated on a view of preventing a 'threat' or to reifying the misconception of young people as a 'liability' to be *handled* rather than *engaged*.

Lastly, a youth as agents of change discourse attempts to move the farthest from the victim/violence dichotomy by emphasizes the positive contributions young people can make towards positive peace after conflict. The discourse was adopted on an international stage with the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 that recognizes the important role young people play in peace and encourages states to increase youth representation at all stages of decision making related to peace. While an important step forward, the assumption of youth

violence is also heavily present in this document. Indeed, in a press release about the adoption of UNSCR 2250, the UN Press Office made the following statement:

> "By the terms of its resolution, the Council recognized that today's generation of youth is the largest the world has ever known, and accounted for many of those civilians affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and displaced persons. […] But it expressed concern over the increased use of the Internet by terrorists and their supporters to recruit and incite youth to commit terrorist acts, and underlined the need for Member States to work together to prevent terrorists from exploiting new technologies." (United Nations, 2015)

Thus, even in what was initially hailed as a paradigm shifting document, an essentialized account of young people is still reproduced. The reliance on the reductionist account of young people as threats has led many to declare that the paradigm shift that UNSCR 2250 represents on paper has been unable to translate into praxis (for example Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018; Martuscelli & Villa, 2018; Kashwera, 2020).

While it is therefore important to acknowledge the complex ways young people enact their agency during and after conflict, an emphasis on youth as agents of change and as a positive peacebuilding force runs the risk of romanticizing the capabilities of young people. In particular, viewing young people as *the* agents of change without consideration for the structural and environmental factors that may bind their agency does little to emancipate young people from an essentialized discourse of their abilities. Thus, when looking to a more inclusive vision for peacebuilding it is important to consider the intersection between young people as capable actors in their own right and as responding to various structures, some of which may support positive peace work and others which may not.

Lastly, it is important to note that outside of international institutions such as the UN, there has been increasing focus on the ways young people contribute to peace and the conditions

that structure their positive peace capacities. For example, Denov & Buccitelli (2013) use narratives from 11 former child soldiers in Sierra Leone to demonstrate the deliberate ways that young people actively negotiate the post-conflict landscape, thereby negating the notion that youth are passive victims after conflict. Agbiboa (2015) extends this notion by providing an example of how youth in post-conflict Nigeria and Mali create alternative lives for themselves in which they not only do not engage in conflict but also act as tactical agents of peacebuilding and sustainable development in their local communities. Similarly, Azmi, Brun, and Lund (2013) argue that following the civil war in Sri Lanka youth constructed their own safe spaces of informal political engagement. Thus, while youth *are* actively engaged in peacebuilding, when understood in concert with the discursive construction of 'youth' 'peacebuilding', it is not surprising that these actions have often gone unnoticed. As Berents (2015) argues, recognizing these different and informal acts of peace work (a concept that will be described in more detail in the following chapters) is a response to the assumption that "those who occupy margins and 'bottom rungs' […] have nothing relevant to contribute" (p. 101). While Berents (2015) argues that this framing "erases their agency and re-inscribes presumed hierarchies of power", the above examples are indicative of the great capacity young people have for positive change.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the discursive constructions of 'youth' and 'peacebuilding' are important because they help sustain the current status quo approach to young people in and after conflict. Moreover, it is the continued authority of protectionist themes in peacebuilding and the reliance on a victim/violent dichotomy of youthhood that continue to shape the very real practices of peacebuilding. As peacebuilding based on a liberal peace paradigm is increasingly acknowledged as limited and inadequate, it is important that young people are at the centre of considerations for

what should replace it. This necessitates looking at how 'youth' themselves have been discursively constructed in a way that lacks meaningful acknowledgement for the complexity of their position between childhood and adulthood. I argue that contemplation over the future of peacebuilding requires recognizing young people as knowledge producers in their own right who are able to construct their own ideas about how they envision their own place in peacebuilding, what peacebuilding is and how it should be achieved. This is to say that while young people are excluded from the practice of peacebuilding, there is a relationship between their exclusion in a practical sense and the way knowledge of peacebuilding is constructed more broadly.

In challenging both a liberal peace paradigm and the limited discourses of 'youth', it is important to consider the extent to which young people act as participants rather than as architects of peace. As McEvoy-Levy (2006) states:

> "youth are the foot soldiers of war and shape its dynamics in crucial ways, but they are not the architects of war. The architects remain states and political and economic elites. While youth do shape the dynamics of peace processes, they are not the architects of peace processes, either. In fact, although both troublemakers and peacemakers at the grass roots, youth are invariably marginalized from political economic decision making. It is useful to consider what is lost as a result and whether youth political participation in peace processes could function as a peace-building mechanisms" (p.283).

This statement evokes a call for greater power sharing mechanisms between young people and adult decision makers after conflict. However, I argue that given the strength of the narratives displayed in this chapter, such power sharing agreements would make little meaningful change without an interrogation of the epistemic assumptions about youth peacebuilding that remain pervasive.

Chapter 2: Scoping Review of 'Peacebuilding' and 'Youth'

Introduction

The previous chapter has established the foundations that the rest of this thesis will rely upon in terms of youth exclusion from peacebuilding theory and practice. It has demonstrated the discursive construction of liberal 'peacebuilding' and 'youth' insofar as both are not only historically and geographically specific (thus, conceptually limited and narrow), but also that they have become the normative standards, thus indicating that significant power structures are at play within each. In building on this perspective, this chapter explores the extent to which the liberal canons of peacebuilding and youth are present in contemporary peacebuilding literature. Through a scoping review of peacebuilding literature from the years 2016-2020 inclusive, I investigate peacebuilding's 'master narratives' (Edmondson, 2018) and the implications on young people. As well, I explore the knowledge production process itself within the academy and its effects on how young people in Africa and the Great Lakes region are approached. Through this analysis I also examine the current avenues that exist in peacebuilding literature for potentially more inclusive approaches to the field of study.

I draw on the theoretical contributions of Edmondson (2018), Autesserre (2014), and Lowe (2015) to argue that the limited frames that normatively define youth and peacebuilding cannot adequately account for young people's actual participation in peace activities and rather result in simplified and essentialized representations of the role of young people. By defining young people solely through the lens of 'victim' or 'violent' the ways that young people may be both, may transition between either in a fluid and shifting manner, be neither, or exist somewhere in between are overlooked. As Podder (2015) notes, these frames are limited insofar as they obscure young people's positive agency and contributions to peacebuilding. Consequently,

representations of young people and of peacebuilding are reflections of certain knowledges rather than universally applicable truths. I also argue that the master narratives that exist are based on colonial assumptions of knower and known. Thus, this chapter more thoroughly investigates the relations of power that underpin a liberal approach to peacebuilding. In this way this chapter builds upon the previous insofar as it delves deeper into current academic literature to understand the shape and pertinence of the liberal peacebuilding discourse that was historically situated in the previous chapter.

Objectives.

The first objective of this chapter is to locate peacebuilding's 'master narratives'. This concept is taken from Edmondson's (2018) analysis of the commodification of trauma in the Great Lakes region of Eastern Africa (described below). Ultimately, identifying the master narratives helps to understand 1) the extent to which young people have a solidified place within peacebuilding literature and what tropes (if any) are commonly utilized, and 2) the established frames that structure *what topics* are explored in peacebuilding and *how* they are commonly studied. Furthermore, I also employ Autesserre's concept of "boundaries" (described in more detail below) to explore not only what peacebuilding's master narratives are, but also what they are *not*. This is to say that while I am interested in what is included in these master narratives, I am also concerned with what they choose to *exclude*, *obscure* or *silence*. It is this emphasize on what is *left out* that roots this chapter within the post-colonial critique that is consistent throughout this project. Moreover, in looking to the gaps or spaces not acknowledged, this chapter is keenly focused on what permissible modes of thinking (according to liberal) about youth peacebuilding has dismissed in order to become authoritative.

Drawing on the foundations established in the previous chapter, I hypothesize that the liberal canons of peacebuilding and youth will be prevalent in the reviewed literature. Thus, a second objective of this chapter is the explore the extent to which this is the case, while being cognizant of the limitations of these narratives. The intent in doing so is not to re-centre these narratives, but rather to begin to unsettle and *de*-centre them. To do so I draw on Lowe's (2015) use of the concept "conditions of possibility" (explained in detail below) to explore and expose the potentially 'darker' conditions that uphold and maintain the liberal canons of peacebuilding and youth.

Lastly, a third objective of this chapter is to explore the ways that youth and peacebuilding are gendered within contemporary literature. Given the liberalist canon's close relationship to state-centric and International Relations-focused approaches to peacebuilding, I hypothesize that IR perspectives will feature prominently in the literature. However, the types of war-ending processes that are employed via these perspectives, are often profoundly gendered through their adherence to patriarchal institutions and processes to the extent that "peace negotiations and peacebuilding projects reflect male discourses and practices to the exclusion of women's priorities" (McKay 2002, p. 131). Moreover, Vayrynen (2010) argues that IR-focused approaches have often come at the expense of feminist agendas that draw focus to the intimate, relational, and affective aspects of peacebuilding. Therefore, I examine the gendered nature of youth and peacebuilding, the impact that feminist agendas have had on either, and the potential avenues that exist for more expansive feminist-based analyses of the field.

Importance.

Aside from providing a foundational review of peacebuilding that will ground the subsequent chapters of this project, there are several additional aspects that make this review a

useful endeavour. These are related to the relationship between the academic study of peacebuilding and the practice of peacebuilding, the frames of reference in peacebuilding, and the limits of academic knowledge more broadly.

Firstly, there is a strong relationship between the study and the practice of peacebuilding that makes a review of the contemporary literature suitable to shedding light on where the practice of peacebuilding has been, where it may be going, and what future directions could (or should) be emphasized. Most importantly to this relationship is that the institutionalized practice of peacebuilding was to some extents a reflection of peacebuilding as an academic study. This is described in more detail in the previous chapter but is encapsulated in three pivotal moments: Johan Galtung's (1976) publication of '*Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding'* in which 'peacebuilding' as a concept is coined; Paul Lederach's expansion of the concept in several works such as '*Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*' (1995), '*Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*' (1997), and '*The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*' (2003); and the institutionalization of the concept on the global stage in the UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's 1992 report '*An Agenda for Peace*' and the subsequent establishment of supporting UN organizations.

As a point of clarification, peacebuilding practitioners are routinely engaged in erudite reflections on the practices they have been a part of. These include but are not limited to Reports of the Secretary-General on UN peacebuilding initiatives, evaluation reports from independent organizations such as Peace Direct, and audits and reviews of programs by government departments such as Global Affairs Canada. However, these forms of deliberations are distinct from the peer-reviewed and scholarly outputs that are produced primarily within academia.

While those who produce these latter types of work may be or have been practitioners as well, they are doing so while being firmly grounded in a form of knowledge production in which peacebuilding is the object of study, subject to informed critique and open deliberation. Thus, here I refer to the study of peacebuilding as an academic exercise, independent from the established avenues for assessment and evaluation within the peacebuilding apparatus itself. In doing so I also distinguish the study of peacebuilding from the practice of *doing* peacebuilding.

One example of the relationship between the study and the practice of peacebuilding is demonstrated in the institutions founded by Johan Galtung. Often considered the 'father of peacebuilding' for his work in conceptualizing peacebuilding as a unique concept and bringing it to the popular lexicon of post-war reconstruction effort, Galtung also founded the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in 1959 and the Journal of Peace Research in 1964. Both institutions were, and continue to be, dedicated to the study of peacebuilding yet they do so through different approaches. The Journal of Peace Research is firmly rooted within the academy and scholarly knowledge production. As with all scholarly publications, the journal has a strong requirement of theoretical rigour and methodological sophistication, therefore targeted towards an academic audience (Journal of Peace Research, 2022). In contrast, the Peace Research Institute Oslo has a stronger practical focus, producing policy-oriented documents and receiving funding from large international organizations such as the European Union and the World Bank. One of the stated aims of the PRIO is to synergize "basic and policy-relevant research" and states that it "is engaged in the promotion of peace through conflict resolution, dialogue and reconciliation, public information and policymaking activities" (PRIO, 2021). Furthermore, it also proclaims that the institute's findings are highly sought after by international bodies such as the UN, the World Bank, NGOs, media, and governments. Thus, the PRIO's outputs are targeted

towards actors who are more visibly engaged in the practice of peacebuilding, while also being more directly engaged with the practical aspects of peacebuilding. While these two institutions have similar goals in terms of contributing to understandings of building peace between conflicting groups, they also represent the distinction between peacebuilding as an object of study and as a practical experience or exercise.

Secondly and as mentioned in the chapter objectives, this review helps to identify the way that young people are discussed within peacebuilding. This is useful not only for future work on youth peacebuilding, but for peacebuilding more broadly as it explores the different lenses that are typically relied upon when discussing disparate groups such as young people. Moreover, exploring the narratives that shape youth peacebuilding is significant given that these narratives have the potential to impact the extent to which young people are incorporated into formal peacebuilding and how they themselves may choose to engage with peace more broadly.

Lastly, this review helps to situate academic knowledge as *one form* of knowledge production that while authoritative to some extent, is not the sole arbiter of knowledge on the subject. This is to say that in isolating this form of knowledge, identifying its common themes and lenses, and appreciating its normative canons, it is then possible to contrast it with *other forms* of knowledge: ie. that which is produced through music, social media, and in popular fiction as is explored in the subsequent chapters. This idea will be pertinent throughout the remainder of this thesis as I explore specific case studies as a form of alternate knowledge that can be drawn upon to speak back to a liberal paradigm.

Theoretical Approach

In the following analysis I employ the concept of ‘master narratives’ from Edmondson (2018). In her analysis, Edmondson explores the ‘empire of trauma’, or the homogenizing force

that cuts across representations of conflict and suffering in the Great Lakes region of East Africa. She argues that "Empire insists on consistent and simplistic narratives with clear-cut definitions of victims and perpetrator, sweeping aside nuance and complexity in its single-minded quest for spectacles and narratives of suffering" (p. 5). She argues that the West creates and sustains an 'empire of trauma' that commodifies certain types of violence and creates an impetus for survivors to conform to certain master narratives in order to access the material aid associated with the trauma economy. Given the historical authority of the liberal canons of youth and peacebuilding (established in the previous chapter), I follow Edmondson to the extent that this chapter explores the master narratives within these canons, their prevalence within contemporary literature, and the impacts this has had on the ways in which peacebuilding is studied in relation to young people.

The approach Edmondson takes, and that I follow in the forthcoming analysis, also has a strong performative element. Edmondson ultimately argues that the empire of trauma creates a demand for a certain type of trauma and valourizes particular types of victims. In adhering to these scripts and performing the associated "acceptable" forms of victimhood, participants are able to access the material benefits that empire holds. This is not to say that this in anyway delegitimizes a person's actions because they are performative. Rather, thinking of master narratives in terms of the implications they may have on the performance of vulnerability, as well as the performance of what it means to be a 'legitimate' peacebuilder in this case, layers in an element of agency and choice to the conversation. In this context people's (in this case young people's) actions can be interpreted as negotiations of the complex post-conflict environment with a high degree of awareness, rather than simply being idly complicit in the peacebuilding apparatus. This responds to the assertion by Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015) that "Youth

agency for peace is not in need of 'discovery'" (p. 119), but rather that a shift is needed in the way that their participation, action, and agency is interpreted and understood. I stipulate that Edmondson's application of master narratives is one way in which to fulfill this need.

This chapter is also inspired by Autesserre's (2014) analysis in '*Peaceland'* of the construction and maintenance of 'boundaries' in peacebuilding. In her exploration of the politics of knowledge embedded in the everyday practices of peacebuilding's foreign interveners, Autesserre argues that peacebuilding's helping narrative assumes foreign interveners are altruistic and that recipients of that help lack capacity (particularly evident in the notion of 'capacity' building and the assumption of lack of capability that such initiatives are predicated on). In particular, and as is consistent with the broader theoretical perspective of this project, she argues that Eurocentric knowledge hierarchies in peacebuilding have created a preference for generalist knowledge, have valourized the role of the 'expert', and have fuelled the notion of aid and peace work as technical endeavours that relies on 'ready-to-use', universalized templates that are designed outside of the local context and implemented by foreign peacebuilders. In this sense the knowledge hierarchies within peacebuilding have created boundaries around what is seen as 'legitimate' peacebuilding and who 'rightful' peacebuilders are.

Thus, coupling Edmondson's use of master narratives with Autesserre's understanding of boundaries helps to articulate that the master narratives of peacebuilding are not neutral or inevitable, but rather have been actively created and sustained and carry with them certain boundaries that while useful to clarify the object of study, also represent a limited frame to the broader practice of peacebuilding. This assertion of the power dynamics embedded within master narratives also speaks to the post-colonial and post-development thread that is woven throughout this project. Not only does the notion of 'boundaries' help elucidate the existence of multiple

knowledges (albeit restrained by certain bounds imposed by master narratives), it also brings to light the processes by which limitations around certain knowledges are made authoritative at the expense of others.

Lastly, Edmondson also couples her analysis with a postcolonial feminist lens to argue that a 'charitable' assumption is upheld by the construction of target populations as the objects of this charity. This point fits within broader feminist approaches to peace and conflict studies. On one level such analyses have given way to a recognition of the importance of gender as a category of analysis. More importantly however, feminist approaches to the broader field of peace and conflict studies have slowly given rise to an appreciation of the ways in which the *organizational logics* of security and violence are constituted (Shepherd, 2008). One example of this is McKay's investigation of war-ending processes and her argument that these practices are profoundly gendered through their adherence to patriarchal institutions and processes to the extent that "peace negotiations and peacebuilding projects reflect male discourses and practices to the exclusion of women's priorities" (McKay 2002, p. 131).

Thus, the objective of this chapter to explore the ways that youth peacebuilding literature is gendered warrants not only an investigation of the extent to which gender is a topic of study, but also the gendered assumptions that are built into the master narratives themselves. For example, the influence of International Relations (IR) to the study of peacebuilding (as detailed in the previous chapter) has also brought highly masculinized approaches to the study of peacebuilding to the extent that Vayrynen (2010) has argued that the prominence of state-centric and IR-focused approaches to peacebuilding (both in theory and practice) have come at the expense of early feminist agendas that draw focus to the intimate and relational aspects of peacebuilding. However, she also argues that it is precisely this feminist agenda that can help to shed light on

the way boundaries are erected within peacebuilding insofar as feminist analysis helps to highlight the epistemic violence associated with conflict and peace in which some voices are excluded or deemed inferior and therefore denied the ability to be identified as the 'knower' (Vayrynen 2010). In summary, using Autesserre's concept of boundaries also requires a thick conceptualization of the gendered dynamics that are (re)produced and maintained by said boundaries. This thicker conceptualization of gendered dynamics as it relates to peacebuilding will be drawn upon throughout the remaining chapters in such a way that the conversations are less focused on men and women and their experiences of conflict and peace (although these will be noted where appropriate) and more attuned to the underlying gendered logics of peacebuilding apparatuses and discourses more broadly.

In exploring the conditions that uphold the liberal canons of peacebuilding and youth, and the boundaries therein, I draw on Lowe's (2015) use of the "conditions of possibility". In her study of knowledge and development, Lowe argues that while violence and conquest make up the very conditions of possibility for modern liberal capitalism, the association of liberalism with freedom and prosperity makes it impossible to envision alternatives that may address liberalism's darker underside. In the field of peacebuilding more specifically, one application of this is Razack's (2004) assertion that peacekeeping is intertwined with civilizing narratives of instruction and discipline of the Third World 'Other'. In her study of peacekeeping in Somalia, Razack highlights how peacekeeping is intertwined with civilizing narratives of instruction and discipline of the Third World. She argues that "the overriding frame of the encounter is one of the civilized North and the barbaric South. Some individuals inhabit this frame as confident colonizers, others simply begin unselfconsciously as people who have set out to 'do good.' Either way, a racial hierarchy is installed" (p. 187). In both instances the outcome is a distancing

similar to that of Said's (1978) Orientalism insofar as the production of the 'neutral' and valiant peacekeeper is intertwined with the production of that which is to be peace-*kept*.

This chapter draws on Lowe's concept of conditions of possibility insofar as it explores not only the master narratives that are created by certain boundaries within the literature, but also what is silenced, suppressed, or ignored. In other words, it looks to explore not only what is said, but what assumptions are upheld by what is *not said.* Thus, I frame Lowe's use of the conditions of possibility as extending the boundaries highlighted by Autesserre insofar as Lowe showcases the 'darker side' of what is produced by boundaries. Uncovering this potentially 'darker side' to the liberal canons of youth and peacebuilding is consistent with the wider aims of this project to apply a post-colonial critique to normative, liberal peacebuilding as it occurs in different spaces.

Methods

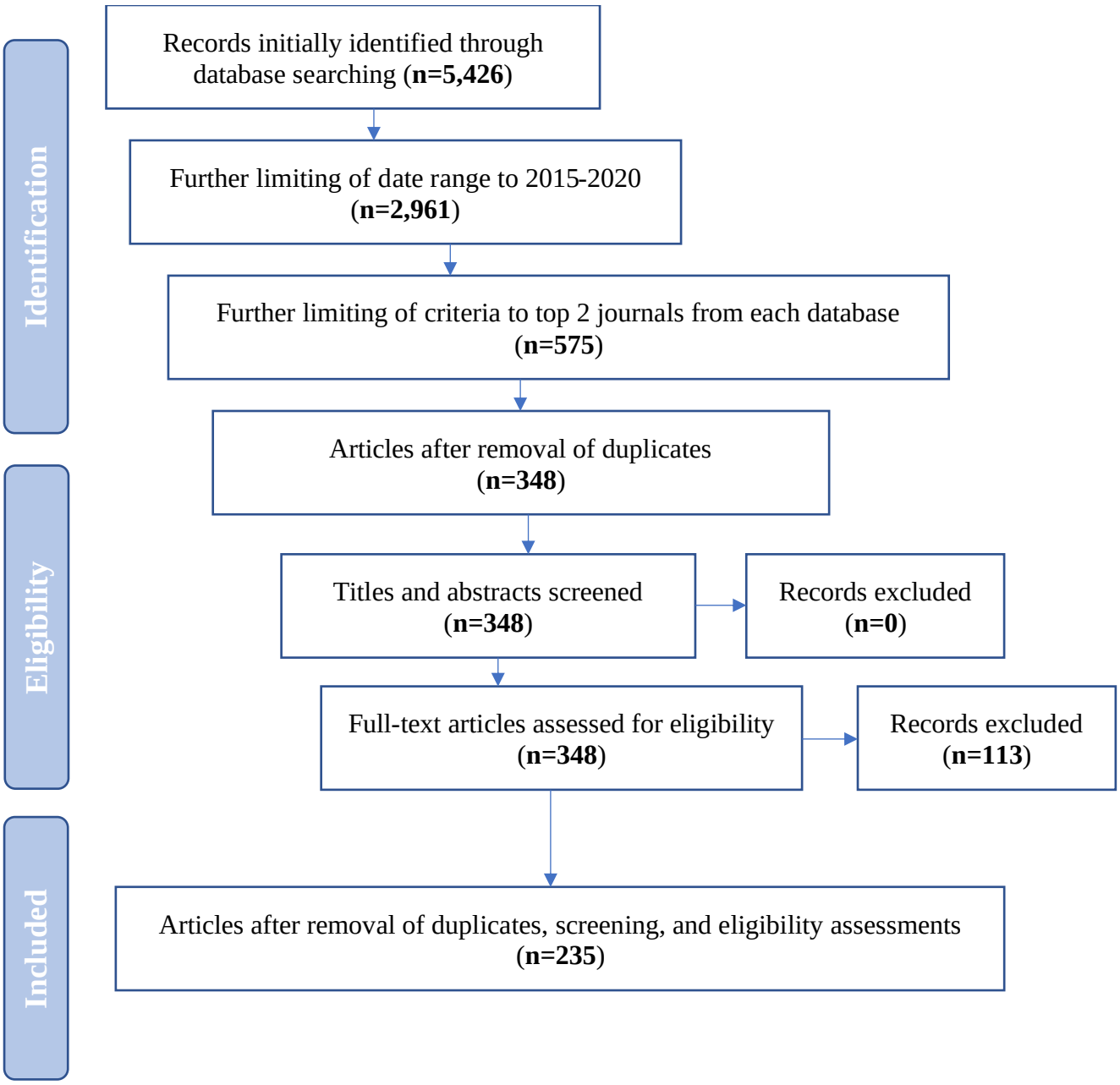
In this chapter I employ a scoping review of peacebuilding literature for the years between 2015-2020. This review has followed the key steps for conducting a scoping review as outlined by Peters, Godfrey, McInerney, Munn, Tricco, and Khalil (2020) and are detailed below.

Eligibility criteria and screening.

The primary inclusion criterium for this review was that the articles spoke to the study of peacebuilding in the broadest sense of the word. Thus, the only keyword used was 'peacebuilding'. Further eligibility criteria included a date range from 2000-2020 (later changed to 2015-2020), scholarly articles published in academic journals, and the ability to be downloaded via the host university's (Queen's University) online access. Exclusion criteria included being outside the date range specified, being in an alternate publication format (ie. books, book reviews, newspaper articles, etc.), or have a focus outside of peacebuilding. An

initial screen of the articles was conducted with the first level of coding in which abstracts were reviewed to ensure that all eligibility criteria were met. A second level of screening was conducted during the second round of coding. At this stage the full text was reviewed to again ensure that all eligibility criteria were indeed met. 113 articles were excluded in this round of eligibility screening. Papers were excluded if they were not original articles (ie. briefing or policy documents, introductions to special editions, etc.) and if peacebuilding was not the primary focus of the paper. The process of exclusion and screening is further detailed below in Figure 2.

Figure 2: PRISMA Flowchart of Sources



Information sources and search.

The first step of the search began at the database level. The term 'peacebuilding' was searched in three leading databases for the social sciences: Web of Science, Worldwide Political Science Abstracts, and SCOPUS. Each database search was limited to scholarly journal articles

published between 2000-2020 with the keyword ‘peacebuilding’ being in the title, abstract, or keywords. The search was conducted in the fall of 2021 and thus the year 2021 was not included in the search as final journal editions had not yet been released for the year. As a note, the Web of Science included one additional limiting step in which the search was limited to social sciences and arts and humanities. This filter was not required with the other two remaining databases. The total number of articles produced from this search was 5,426 with 1072 from the Web of Science, 2,499 from Worldwide Political Science Abstracts, and 1855 from SCOPUS.

Given the large number of results, the decision was made to limit the search to a 5-year period between 2016-2020 inclusive. Peacebuilding as an independent field of study is still a relatively new field and therefore looking at a smaller, more recent time period is appropriate. Moreover, because of the relative novelty of Peacebuilding as its own field of study it is important to note that the findings from this study will inevitably be somewhat marginal to discussion happening in more established arenas such as Political Studies or International Relations. This is also supported by the higher number of published articles on peacebuilding during this time period. Table 1 shows the number of articles published on peacebuilding for a 10-year period in Web of Science and SCOPUS. As these numbers indicate, there is an uptick in research output on this subject around the year 2015 which therefore provides further justification for the decision to limit the time period reviewed. Moreover, the intent of this review is to gain an understanding of where *contemporary* discussions on the subject stand and thus it is helpful to use a more recent time period.

Table 2: Number of Articles Published Per Year in SCOPUS and Web of Science Databases

SCOPUS		Web of Science	
Publication Year	**Number of Articles**	**Publication Year**	**Number of Articles**
2000	11	2000	5
2001	10	2001	6
2002	10	2002	5
2003	9	2003	3
2004	16	2004	4
2005	32	2005	14
2006	35	2006	12
2007	31	2007	14
2008	51	2008	13
2009	71	2009	29
2010	59	2010	34
2011	86	2011	44
2012	78	2012	44
2013	125	2013	57
2014	121	2014	51
2015	119	2015	68
2016	160	2016	96
2017	154	2017	97
2018	187	2018	127
2019	228	2019	156
2020	262	2020	193

The search was also further limited to the two journals that published the highest *quantity* of articles from each of the four databases. Journals were not selected based on *quality* of articles (identified by impact factors of the journals themselves, citation scores of individual articles, etc.) but rather based on the quantity of articles produced. While articles were not selected based on the impact factor (identifiable using citation scores for each individual article), this information was recorded and is discussed in further detail in the findings section of this chapter.

The final four journals selected based on these criteria were *The Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, *Peacebuilding*, *International Peacekeeping*, and *The Journal of Intervention & Statebuilding*. After refining and rerunning the search based on these new inclusion criteria, the final number of articles retrieved after removing duplicates was 235.

It should be noted that most of the mandates of these journals encourage authors to take critical approaches to the subject matter. For example, *The Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* states that it "examines *critical* peacebuilding and development topics that *challenge* our era" (emphasis added). Similarly, *The Journal of Intervention & Statebuilding* states that it is "devoted to *critical* analysis of international intervention" and seeks "Multi or cross-disciplinary contributions and theoretically challenging pieces that broaden the study of intervention and state building to encompass processes of decision-making, or the complex interplay between actors on the ground". *Peacebuilding* has the most explicit aim to engage with critical perspectives, stating that it "particularly welcomes submissions that are prepared to challenge orthodox views and add new empirical insights into scholarly debates" and that its editions "are interested in how dominant 'peace' paradigms produce political subjectivity, and how this is responded to by their recipients. Rethinking approaches to peace is particularly crucial if this area of study is to move beyond its current liberal or neoliberal position.". International Peacekeeping is an outlier in relation to the other three journals as it makes no explicit claims to critical perspectives and only goes so far as to encourage *debate* on various peacebuilding topics. This point regarding journal mandates is an important consideration when discussing the limitations of the findings towards the end of this chapter. Moreover, at this stage it also demonstrates that while is there a push towards critical discussion of peacebuilding, they

are happening within a field that is still within its relative infancy. This finding will be discussed in more detail in the closing sections of this chapter.

Selection of sources of evidence.

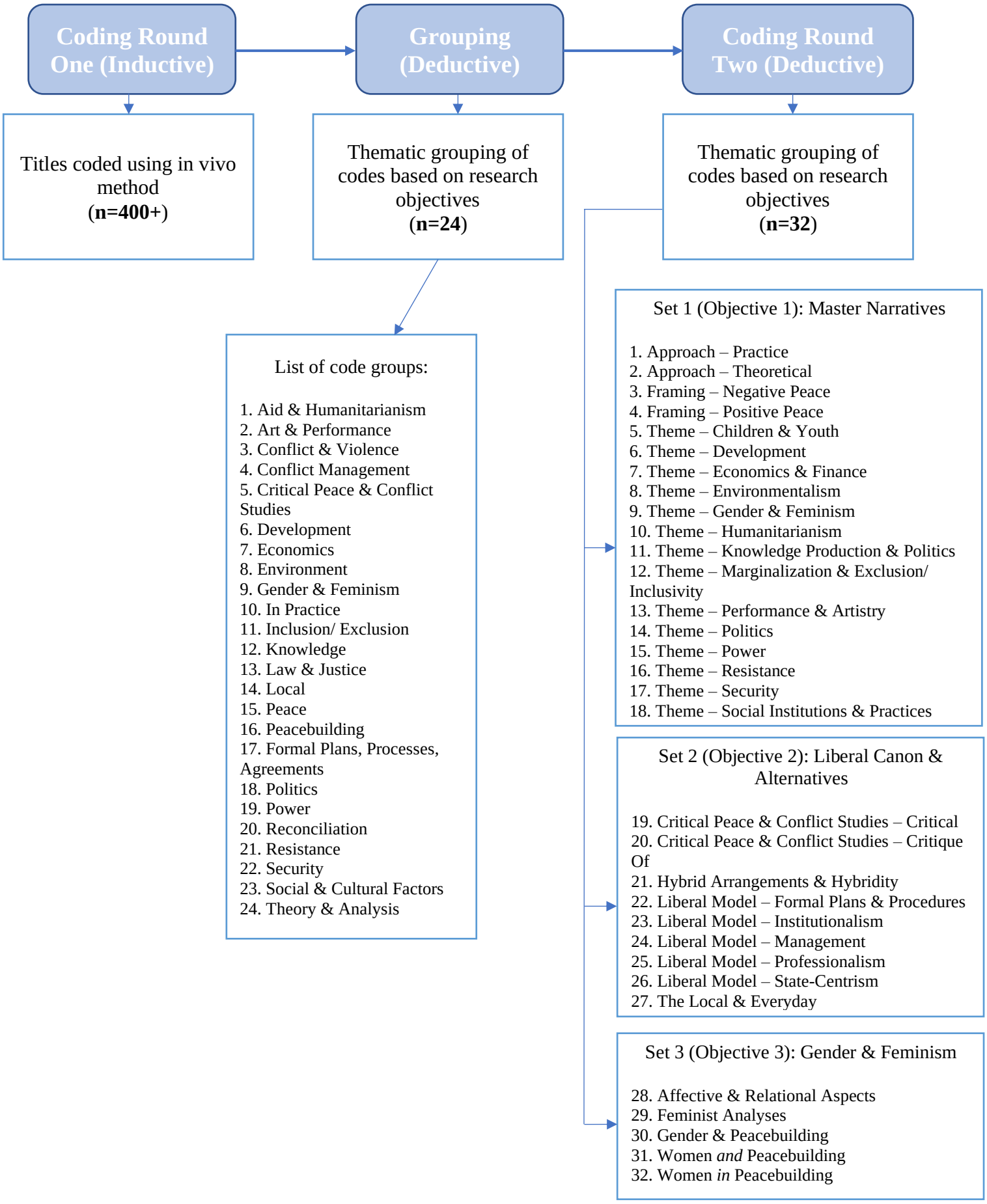
After the final list of 235 articles was identified, each article was pulled from its respective journal, downloaded, and uploaded into the qualitative coding software Atlas.Ti. As each article was downloaded, I screened each abstract to ensure that all eligibility criteria were met and that articles were indeed speaking to some form of peacebuilding. While no articles were excluded at this stage, had the term 'peacebuilding' only appeared in the keywords for example, while the article itself spoke to a different topic, it would have been excluded. All articles were available for download using the online access provided through Queen's University.

Data charting/ data extraction.

Two rounds of coding and one round of grouping were conducted in this review. Firstly, once all eligible papers were uploaded to Atlas.Ti I conducted an initial round of inductive coding of the article titles. This included using an in vivo approach to coding in which I coded using the language and terminology present in the titles themselves, as opposed to creating select codes myself. At this stage codes were related to geographic focus, themes, and actors. This round produced well over 400 unique codes. From this extensive list of codes, I then conducted one round of deductive grouping. At this stage I grouped the 400+ codes into thematic groups based on the stated objectives of this chapter. Groups were created around the themes of a liberal canon and its potential alternatives or critiques, common themes or frames of reference, and feminist and gender analyses. A total of 24 groups were created at this stage. Thirdly, based on the groups created, a new and more refined set of 32 codes was created. These codes were

produced in relation to the three stated objectives of this chapter and thus made up three different sets of codes. The process of coding and grouping is further detailed below in Figure 3. Based on these news codes, the full texts were reviewed in a second and final round of coding. At this stage codes represented *the most applicable codes*. Thus, while various themes or foci may be present in one article, only those that were *best suited* to the article were coded. The intent in doing so was to distill each article to its main ideas in order to be able to identify broad trends and make general comparisons.

Figure 3: Coding and Grouping Flowchart



Data items.

Table 3 provides an overview of each of the 32 final codes and their scope. The 'set' identified in the first column refers to the specific objective that the individual codes address. The last column of 'definition/ includes' gives a brief description of what is encapsulated by each code. In many cases this includes a list of which codes from the initial list of 400+ codes (from the first, inductive round of coding) were group together to create the new, deductive code. For instance, to take the first code recorded below, when the initial round of coding was done, some of the terms that came up were referencing peacebuilding as a practice experience. These included 'empirical hurdles', 'in practice' and 'the field', amongst others recorded below. When compiling the final set of deductive codes, these items were grouped together as 'approach – practical' to capture studies that begin their analysis from a place of recognizing peacebuilding as a *practical* endeavour. Some codes, particularly those in the last set of 'gender and feminism', were created to capture particular *themes* or *trends* that were observed, as opposed to through the grouping of several initial codes. In these cases, a short description is recorded that identifies what the code is intended to capture.

Table 3: Codebook

Set:	Code:	Definition/ Includes:
Master Narratives	Approach – Practical	Empirical Hurdles; In Practice; Action; Implementation; The field
	Approach – Theoretical	Theory; Theoretical Analysis; Conceptual
	Framing – Negative Peace	Conflict; Violence; Conflict Prevention; Holocaust/ Genocide; War; Armed Conflict Agenda
	Framing – Positive Peace	Reconciliation; Social Reconstruction; Infrastructures for Peace; Intersectionality of Peace; Peace Events; Values of Peace; Zones of Peace; Peace Services
	Theme – Children & Youth	Children; Youth; Young People; Adolescents; Teenagers; Youth Organizations
	Theme – Development	Development; Development Goals; SDGs; MDGs
	Theme – Economics & Finance	Economic Legacy; FDI; Funding; External Transitional Justice Funding; Peacebuilding Grant Solicitations
	Theme – Environmentalism	Environment; Urban planning; Urban form
	Theme – Gender & Feminism	Feminist; Feminism; Feminist Frontiers; Feminist Perspective; Nonsolid Feminist; Research Agenda; Feminist Interventions; Violence Against Women; Gender; Gendered Experience; Masculinities; Gendered Identities; Women's Participation; Women's Reflections; Women's Representation; Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda
	Theme – Humanitarianism	Aid; Aid Conditionality; Humanitarian
	Theme – Knowledge Production & Politics	Knowledge; Research Production; Expert
	Theme- Marginalization & Exclusion / Inclusivity	Exclusivity; Exclusive; Inclusion; Divided Cities; Invisibility; Binaries; Difference; Marginalization; Margins; Silences
	Theme – Performance & Artistry	Performance; Theatre; Art; Music; Drama
	Theme – Politics	Politics of Peace; Politics of Vulnerability; Politics; Geopolitics; Biopolitics; Political Tensions; Oligarchy; Political Settlement Analysis; Political Conflict; Political Commemoration
	Theme – Power	Power; Invisible power; Power sharing; Power-blind; Decentralizing power
	Theme – Resistance & Agency	Resistance; Agency; Agents of Change; Rebellion
	Theme – Security	Security; (in)Security; Security Sector Reform (SSR); Civilian Security; Stability; Terrorism / Anti-Terrorism; Extremism
	Theme – Social Institutions & Practices	Social Capital; Social Contracts; Social Fabric; Social Engineering; Leadership; Social Learning; Social Reproduction; Customs; Space; Social Relationships; Public Discourse; Narratives; Vernacular
Liberal Canon & Alternatives	Critical Peace & Conflict Studies – Critical	Includes: Post-Liberal; Rethinking Mainstream Definition: Addressing structural dimensions of peacebuilding including power relations; challenges the status quo; acknowledgement of the historically colonial roots of peacebuilding

	Critical Peace & Conflict Studies – Critique Of	Definition: Is critical of a liberal approach to peacebuilding but does not seek transformative or structural change; encourages change *within* the current system as opposed to a *change of* the current system.
	Hybrid Arrangements & Hybridity	Hybridity; Hybrid Governance; Hybrid Peace Agreements
	Liberal Model – Formal Plans & Procedures	Peace Agreement; Colombian Agrarian Agreement and Implementation; Peace Processes; Policies; Coordinating Interventions; Presidential Amnesty Programme in Nigeria; Somali Compact; Strategy; Trainings; GPH-MILF Peace Process (Philippines)
	Liberal Model – Institutionalism	Institutionalization; Institutional Development; Institutional Design; The State; Intergovernmental Organizations
	Liberal Model – Management	Mediation; Conflict Management; Conflict Transformation; DDR
	Liberal Model - Professionalism	UN; World Bank; Elite; EU; Development Professionals; Experts
	Liberal Model – State-Centrism	The State; Statebuilding; Role of the State; Democratization; Governance
	The Local & Everyday	Everyday; Local Potentials; Local Experiences; Local Involvement/ Participation; Local Peace Committees; Local Turn; Limits of the Local Turn; Local Zones of Peace; Mundane; Cultural Turn; Local Voices; Grassroots
Gender & Feminism	Affective & Relational Aspects	Embodied; Corporeal; Lived Experiences; Relational Ontology; Relationships
	Feminist Analysis	Feminist Frontiers; Feminist Perspective
	Gender & Peacebuilding	Definition: Similar to a *Gender and Development* approach, *Gender and Peacebuilding* represents the most transformative approach to peacebuilding. This approach pays special attention to the social construction of *gender* and *gender roles*, the gendered power relations inherent to peacebuilding, and emphasizes the *relational* and *affective* aspects of peacebuilding that are often overlooked.
	Women *and* Peacebuilding	Definition: Similar to a *Women and Development* approach, *Women and Peacebuilding* is attentive to the impact of patriarchy and to merely include women in existing initiatives could reinforce unequal gender relations based on patriarchy. It therefore seeks to explore the *unique* roles of women in peacebuilding.
	Women *in* Peacebuilding	Definition: Similar to a *Women in Development* approach, *Women in Peacebuilding* refers to a 'add-women-and-stir' mentality in which women need only better inclusion and access to participation in existing peacebuilding interventions. This approach is based on the notion that adding women to the mix will adequately address gender issues, thus equating gender with women.

Findings

Master narratives.

Of the 14 thematic codes created (see above for a list of the themes identified by these codes), the most commonly referenced theme was *social institutions and practices*. Table 4 illustrates the thematic codes and their respective frequencies. Some of the topics covered under this theme include discussions of social or community cohesion (Allouche & Jackson, 2019; Rettberg, 2020), social relations (Porter, 2016; Bangura, 2019), social capital (Hasic, 2018; Kilroy & Basini, 2018), and social identity (Saiget, 2016; Koefoed, 2017), amongst others. The prominence of this theme thus indicates the importance of social factors to the study of peacebuilding. However, this focus is not surprising given the recent sociological turn in Peace and Conflict studies and indeed, shows the considerable traction that this turn has gained in recent years. As stated in chapter 1, the sociological turn was an effort to draw attention to a range of issues that are normally underplayed or ignored by a narrow focus on governance and state-building, thereby often highlighting the importance of the realm of social relations and institutions. Indeed, several of the papers under this code were much aligned with the sociological turn.

Table 4: Frequency of Thematic Codes

Set:	Code:	Frequency:
Master Narratives	Approach – Practical	17
	Approach – Theoretical	36
	Framing – Negative Peace	12
	Framing – Positive Peace	24
	Theme – Children & Youth	15
	Theme – Development	15
	Theme – Economics & Finance	19
	Theme – Environmentalism	18
	Theme – Gender & Feminism	33
	Theme – Humanitarianism	11
	Theme – Knowledge Production & Politics	36
	Theme- Marginalization & Exclusion / Inclusivity	28
	Theme – Performance & Artistry	10
	Theme – Politics	42
	Theme – Power	33
	Theme – Resistance & Agency	35
	Theme – Security	36
	Theme – Social Institutions & Practices	61
Liberal Canon & Alternatives	Critical Peace & Conflict Studies – Critical	26
	Critical Peace & Conflict Studies – Critique Of	42
	Hybrid Arrangements & Hybridity	31
	Liberal Model – Formal Plans & Procedures	40
	Liberal Model – Institutionalism	43
	Liberal Model – Management	34
	Liberal Model - Professionalism	32
	Liberal Model – State-Centrism	51
	The Local & Everyday	77
Gender & Feminism	Affective & Relational Aspects	15
	Feminist Analysis	11
	Gender & Peacebuilding	13
	Women *and* Peacebuilding	9
	Women *in* Peacebuilding	4

The next most common themes were *politics, security, knowledge production* and *politics, resistance,* and *gender and feminism*. Politics and security alone captured 75 unique articles or approximately 39% of the total data set. The next three most common codes made up 93 unique articles or approximately 41% of the data set. To some extent this would suggest that topics that have been called for under a critical agenda such as knowledge production, resistance, and gender, are being studied at a very similar degree to 'classic' peace and conflict topics such as politics and security. However, a closer look at the cooccurrence between themes sheds more light on how these themes are being discussed.

In papers that were coded for *knowledge production and politics* for instance, the most common co-occurring theme was *the local & everyday* thereby indicating a trend towards acknowledging the importance of local knowledge in peacebuilding which has a been a cornerstone of critical approaches. Similarly, *resistance* was most commonly coded alongside *social institutions and practices* and *the local & everyday*. Interestingly, there was very little crossover between the codes of *politics* and *security* and *knowledge production and politics, resistance, and gender and feminism*. A similar pattern occurs for the code *social institutions and practices* as well. The most common concurrent code with this theme was *the local & everyday* followed by *resistance*. Similarly, the code 'security' which is a defining component of a liberal peace model, was most commonly cited with *liberal model-state-centrism* and *liberal model-formal plans & procedures.* Thus, the more 'critical' themes are evidentially being discussed in relative silo from more 'classic' or 'liberal' themes. The implications of the lack of crossover between themes in terms of the feared 'flattening out' of critical ideas is discussed in more detail below but at this stage this divide suggests that the Master Narratives found in this study follow

the historical splintering of the broader field of peace and conflict studies as detailed in chapter 1.

In terms of the least common themes, *children and youth* was an explicit topic of focus in a total of 15 articles. The only two themes that occurred less than *children and youth* were *humanitarianism* and *performance and artistry*. The lack of representation of young people in this way gives a window of insight into the assumptions baked into the data set and what is silenced, suppressed, and ignored. In particular, the lack of explicit attention given to young people as peacebuilding actors further reinforces the adult-centrism of peacebuilding. To some degree this suggests a homogenization of populations and the flattening of different age experiences. Of the 15 articles, there was no one particularly prominent co-occurring theme thus indicating that young people are discussed in the literature from a variety of perspectives.

Of the few articles captured by the code *children and youth*, many were structured by common and expected tropes of young people. The victim/violent dichotomy discussed in chapter 1 was particularly prominent. For example, Bangura (2016; 2019) investigates challenges faced by youth that make them susceptible to becoming violent in the contexts of and the countries of Mano River Basin (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Cote D'Ivoire) respectively. Chikhi (2017) carries out a similar analysis in Western Sahara. The analyses of these two authors reinforce the 'youth bulge' theory in which young people are viewed as having a proclivity towards violence that is dangerous if not accounted for. On the other side of the binary, youth 'victimhood' was referenced. Whether by circumstance (Furuwaka & Deng, 2019), gender (Tarnaala, 2019), or by socio-economic circumstance (Schumicky-Logan, 2017), youth victimhood was reified as an inherent feature of this age group, rather than as a consequence of structural, historical, and political factors. Overall, the prevalence of this binary is not surprising

given the historical trends in how young people have been discussed in academic literature (as outlined in the previous chapter).

Among the more critical articles, Baker (2019) examines how youth engagement with popular music makes up an important site of everyday peace. Similarly, Cabanes-Ragandang (2020) analyzes how young people in the Philippines exerted their peacebuilding agency in a social media campaign to counter Islamophobic hate speech online. In this way youth agency is prioritized which stands in contrast to Pugh (2016) who instrumentalizes young people in their study and regards them simple as one component of broader program implementation. From a gendered perspective, Lederach (2020) explores "how youth navigate the gendered landscape of memory to (re)construct self and place in a context where militarized masculinities circulate and inscribe social power" in Columbia (p. 198). In this way Lederarch's foundational assumption is that young people are aware of gendered social power, and have the agency and ability to engage with and potentially challenge those logics. This differs from Oosterom (2016) who in exploring masculinities and hybrid governance in South Sudan, positions the social practices that prepare young people for adulthood as spaces where gender roles are learned. In this way young people are assumed to be static actors that passively inherit gender structures while doing little to question them.

Given that there are relatively few articles that discuss young people explicitly, it is difficult to make any larger generalizations beyond the fact that they remain a marginal topic of study. With this in mind I now turn to a brief review of the different framings identified in the data set, being positive and negative peace and theoretical and practical approaches. Where an explicit focus on young people is absent, these framings are significant because they make up the lenses through which assumptions about young people may be made.

In terms of the framing of the articles as either positive or negative peace, and the approach as either practical or theoretical, only 81 unique articles clearly fell into one of these codes. Thus, 151 or roughly 64% of all articles were not taking an overly theoretical or practical approach, nor were they clearly discussing either positive or negative peace. With reference to positive/negative peace, the lack of articles identified here may be in part explained by the lack of consensus regarding how peace is defined. In this sense the lack of articles captured by these codes may stem from the fact that 'peace' in peacebuilding is instrumentalized in such a way that it is not overly conceptualized, but rather is assumed to be a universal concept. This finding is congruent with the articles identified as being explicitly theoretical. Peace was only a topic of theorization in two articles. Hudson (2016) and Vayrynen (2019) both make use of feminist theory to offer alternate framings of peace and peacebuilding that are more encompassing of the corporeal and marginalizing aspects of peace. Thus, while 'peace' itself may lack conceptual clarity, the *means* and *mechanisms* of building said peace are more robustly theorized. However, foregoing conceptualizing peace in a concrete way is problematic because it leaves an open space for 'elite capture'. In such cases the type of peace envisioned by those in positions of decision-making power (UN officials, government officials, politicians, military commanders, etc.) is taken as the norm, irrespective of its applicability for other populations such as young people or the poor and marginalized.

From the limited number of articles that *were* identified by these codes, more articles discussed positive over negative peace, and were more commonly theoretical than practical. However, given the limited number of articles it is again difficult to confidently extrapolate this trend. What this finding *does* reveal is that most articles were a mix of theoretical and practical analysis which demonstrates the strong relationship between peacebuilding as a theoretical

exercise and peacebuilding as a practical experience. In terms of Master Narratives, this demonstrates that there is often not a clear delineation of where one ends and the other begins which is troublesome when coupled with the universalizing tendencies of peacebuilding. In other words, without clear articulation of the degree to which a piece of literature is speaking theoretical or practical findings or suggestions could be improperly generalized and applied.

Liberal canon and its alternatives.

Of the two codes used to capture articles that took a distinctly critical approach (*Critical Peace and Conflict Studies – Critical* and *Critical Peace and Conflict Studies – Critique of*), a total of 68 articles were identified, with *Critique of* approaches being the more dominant of the two (equally 42 articles compared to 26 for *Critical* articles). In addition to articles that were clearly situated in a critical approach, the concepts of the 'everyday'/'local' and 'hybridity', two concepts that have emerged from the move to a more critical approach to the field of peace and conflict studies, were cumulatively coded 108 times (n=77 and n=31 respectively). At times both codes were present in one paper. However, even when accounting for this, a total of 96 unique articles discussed either hybridity or the local/everyday. In total, 129 unique articles used a critical approach or made use of critical concepts in some fashion, accounting for approximately 55% of the total data set. To some extent these figures provide an indication that the critical approaches and concepts are not novel ideas, but rather are firmly rooted in a wide range of discussions in the field. However, the saturation of these approaches and concepts in this data set must be interpreted alongside the limitations of this study. As described earlier in this chapter, the mandates of each of the three selected journal lent themselves easily towards critical approaches to the study of peacebuilding, albeit to different degrees. Thus, the articles in this dataset may not fully capture the impact of adjacent fields such as Political Science, Security

Studies, or International Relations. Nonetheless, the fact that critical concepts or approaches makes up over half of the data set is a promising indication of the critical turn's relevance to the specific field of peacebuilding.

However, the *manner* in which these topics were discussed was not always in line with a critical perspective. For instance, the *local/everyday* was coded alongside one of the two *Critical Peace and Conflict Studies* codes six times. It contrast, the *local/ everyday* was coded alongside one of the five *Liberal Model* codes (forma*l plans and procedures*, *institutionalism, management, professionalism and elite-centrism*, and *state-centrism*) in 22 instances. This contrast indicates that although key concepts from the Critical school of thought are being discussed often in peacebuilding literature, they are also being interpreted in ways that are more similar to a classic liberal model of peacebuilding. In keeping with this example, the *local/everyday* was often discussed in such a way that the local sphere was instrumentalized as part of an externally planned project. In this way local actors are conceptualized as *actors* of peacebuilding, rather than its architects and the structural and systematic power relations of peacebuilding more broadly are left unquestioned. For instance, Simangan (2017), Suurmond, Lordos, and Sharma (2017), and Bedigen (2020) are a few examples of an interest in the local level only insofar as it helps to more effectively run foreign or elite-driven peacebuilding initiatives.

While this approach is an advancement to earlier models of peacebuilding insofar as it acknowledges the importance of including local populations and accounting for local level dynamics, it does little to make space for local knowledge and potential criticisms of a liberal peace's underlying assumptions (such as the central role of the state, favouring of elite knowledge, a focus on security sector reform, etc.). Thus, the findings demonstrate that a

'flattening out' of these concepts may be taking place in which the 'local' is folded into existing peacebuilding models, thereby weakening the concept's more radical and transformative potential. This is consistent with Mac Ginty's (2015) argument that the rise in popularity of 'the local' in peacebuilding has been followed by a process of 'delocalization' where a *particular type* of local that can be instrumentalized and intervened in by international peace-support and development actors is constructed and maintained (p. 841). Veit and Tschorner (2019) draw a similar conclusion regarding the extent to which new academic perspectives are incorporated by organizations and actors working in the related field. Speaking to the field of sexual violence prevention specifically, they found that while intervention practitioners make use of the most recent and critical perspectives, they only do so in such a way that academic knowledge is "a form of cultural capital that can be appropriated to consolidate an organization's position" (p. 473). Thus, there is a strong indication that attempts to challenge the status quo are limited.

Among the articles that *were* clearly within the critical school of thought (n=68), most represented *critiques of* liberal peacebuilding, rather than *critical* positions that sought to disrupt the status quo in a significant way. As defined in Table 2, the characteristics that distinguished 'critical' articles from 'critiques of' were an awareness of the apparatuses of power in peacebuilding, attempts to address or account for structural change, or analyses of the colonial and imperialist undercurrents within peacebuilding. Although some articles in this data set met one or more of these criteria, most were limited to critiques of the exclusionary nature of (Neufeldt, 2016; Yacob-Haliso, 2016; Pepper, 2018), 'outsider logic' (Pul, 2016; Lundqvist & Ojendal, 2018), or the universalized, problem-solving models (Schumicky-Logan, 2017) of peacebuilding without further attempts to question the underlying logics of institutionalism, state-centrism, elite-centrism, or Eurocentrism of peacebuilding.

Lastly, to add texture to the findings of the previous section, 'social institutions and practices' were more commonly coded alongside one of the five liberal canon codes as opposed to with one of the two critical studies codes. Similarly, the themes of *security, resistance, power,* and, *politics* were all more commonly cited alongside one of the liberal canon codes. Consequently, although the previous section identified thematic Master Narratives that seemed to be more in line with a critical perspective, these frames help to establish the types of boundaries that exist around those narratives.

Gender.

The theme of Gender and Feminism was one of the most common themes in the data set (see Table 3). Thus, as a topic of inquiry, gender and feminism has considerable footing in peacebuilding literature. To gain a better sense of *how* gender and feminism were discussed in these articles, I also coded for three types of analytical perspective: *Gender and Peacebuilding, Women and Peacebuilding,* and *Women in Peacebuilding.* However, while the theme of *Gender and Feminism* captured 33 articles, not all of these fell clearly within one of the three analytical perspectives. Similarly, not every article that used one of the three analytical perspectives has gender and feminist as its main thematic focus. For instance, Partis-Jennings (2019) drew on gendered and feminist insights but did so to enter into a discussion about hybridity and the construction of difference in peacebuilding in Afghanistan. Similarly, Vaittinen, Donehoe, Kunz, Bára Ómarsdóttir, and Roohi (2019) use feminist ideas to examine how relations of care emerge as a dynamic for processes of trust-building, community-building, and peaceful transformation after conflict.

Of the three analytical perspectives, the findings indicate that a *Gender and Peacebuilding* was the most common approach. However, it only made up a total of 13 articles.

Thus, while it is the most common of the three approaches, it is still not by any means a dominant approach to peacebuilding overall. Among the articles that were captures by *Gender and Peacebuilding*, a positive result is that a *Women in Peacebuilding* approach was the least common code amongst *all* 32 codes, accounting for only 4 unique articles. This low prevalence demonstrates that the relatively outdated perspective of 'add-women-and-stir' maintains very little pull in the field. Indeed, of the four articles, their citations scores were 6, 4, 1, and 0.

The most common gender code was *Affective and Relational Aspects* and accounted for 15 unique articles. Some of the topics covered under this code include the relationships and structural injustices between interveners and locals (Pingeot, 2020), internationally supported peacebuilding as a cross-cultural relational endeavour (Boege & Rinck, 2019), a relationship-based conceptualization of DDR (disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration) (Kilroy & Basini, 2018), and grassroots relational and reconciliation processes (Kelly & Braniff, 2016), amongst others. Although this could be a promising signal that feminist *concepts* are gaining traction, upon further investigation most articles used the notion of relationality independent from a strong grounding in a *Gender and Peacebuilding* perspective. Indeed, only one article had coding for both *Affective and Relational Aspects* and *Gender and Peacebuilding.* In some cases, affective and gender aspects were analyzed in concert with liberal norms. For example, Boege and Rinck (2019) use the concept of relationality to make the case for the importance of external peacebuilders building trust with local populations. This article seizes on the notion of relationality but does so in a way that ultimately supports the universal design and export of externally derived peacebuilding projects. More commonly however, affective and relational aspects appeared in more critical articles, albeit without strong gender or feminist theorizing. For example, Shumicky-Logan (2017) uses a 'relational sensibility approach' as an alternative to a

liberal peace approach in their examination of peacebuilding programming for at-risk youth in Somalia. Similarly, Pingeot (2020) uses a relational approach to examine the relationship between international agents and local people to argue that international peacebuilding is an instance of structural injustice. Thus, while affective and relational aspects are not necessarily strongly correlated with their feminist roots, it appears based on this data that they are being used in critical ways to question some of the logics of liberal peacebuilding.

Overall, 180 articles had no mention of gender in any form. This is significant to the study of youth peacebuilding because feminist analyses provide inclusion spaces to begin a critical discussion on the role of young people. Not only are feminist spaces conducive to studying marginalized groups such as young people, but a *Gender and Peacebuilding* approach pays particular attention to the inherent structures of power within peacebuilding. While this perspective focuses on the *patriarchal* logics of power in particular, in doing so it provides a pathway to investigate other similar forms of power (in this case that which is derived from epistemic power and age-based configurations of power). Thus, the lack of these perspectives in this data set indicates that the window for critical analyses of youth peacebuilding in the broader field is quite narrow. This is in contrast to the types of liberal-based analyses that were more common. As indicated in the previous sections, analyses that focus on the role of the state, institutionalism, and overall offer limited challenges to the status quo seem to be the most prevalent.

Thus, the marginal position of gender-based and feminist analyses in this data set speaks to the conditions of possibility in peacebuilding literature. Interpreting the data through a perspective influenced by Lowe (2015) would suggest that the normative position of liberal-based frameworks and analyses is maintained by the marginal position of more critical

perspectives, such as that offered by a *Gender and Peacebuilding* approach. This is because the latter directly challenges the underlying logics of the former. For instance, in one article coded under *Gender and Peacebuilding,* the author looks to "make a theoretical contribution by challenging the conceptual delinking of gender and feminism in peacebuilding, the conflation of gender and sex and the centrality of (Eurocentric) liberalism to the whole mix" (Hudson, 2016). In this way Hudson (2016) calls into question the underlying epistemic and colonial foundations that underpin liberal peacebuilding. Similarly, in Ní Aoláin's (2016) examination of the relationship between political settlement and peacebuilding, they reveal the peacebuilding's masculine origins and the infused patriarchy of its practices, thereby questioning the foundational assumptions and exclusion baked into peacebuilding. While only two examples, these articles illustrate that feminist perspectives, particular a *Gender and Peacebuilding* approach, can offer critical avenues through which to critically examine the underlying epistemic power relations in peacebuilding. As McLeod and O'Reilly (2019) argue, feminist theories, concepts, methods, and empirical insights have the potential to push the boundaries of critical peace and conflict studies in a unique way (p. 143).

Article impact.

As noted in the previous section, the citation scores for each article were recorded as part of the data set. While an imperfect measure, these scores give a sense of which articles and ideas have gained the most influence after publication. Table 4 indicates the seven most cited articles from the data set. All other articles had less than 20 cross references. It should also be noted that 38 articles had no cross references and 128 had less than 5. Thus, of the 235 articles in the dataset, only 88 had CrossRef scores of above five, and only 38 had more than 10. The large number of articles with few or no cross references can be explained by a few different reasons.

Firstly, given that articles were only pulled from as far back as 2016, it may be the case that many pieces have not yet had time to circulate widely and gain traction, particularly if the authors are not already well-established in the field. Conversely, it is interesting to note that the two authors of the most cited article, Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond are highly reputable scholars in the field. Both are co-editors of the journal *Peacebuilding* (included in this dataset) and have edited multiple handbooks on the topic of peacebuilding. Richmond is also currently a co-editor of *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*, leads several research projects, and is a visiting scholar at universities in Germany, Portugal, and Ireland (The University of Manchester, n..d.). Mac Ginty also edits a book series on the topic of political violence and co-directs a participatory research and evaluation program that works in communities affected by conflict (Durham University, 2021). As a result of these accreditations and accomplishments, the high citation score may be in part explained by the authors' high positions in the scholarly community and subsequent access to various networks. This is not to discredit the work of these authors in any manner, rather it is simply to suggest that the extent to which an article gains traction is not *merely* merit-based. Rather, a scholar's own standing within the field can *also* impact the extent to which their work is cited elsewhere.

Table 5: CrossRef Scores of Top 8 Most Cited Articles

Author(s)	Article Title	Journal Title	Year	CrossRef Citations
Roger Mac Ginty & Oliver Richmond	The fallacy of constructing hybrid political orders: a reappraisal of the hybrid turn in peacebuilding	International Peacekeeping	2016	83
John Karlsrud	From Liberal Peacebuilding to Stabilization and Counterterrorism	International Peacekeeping	2019	43
Jeremy Lind, Patrick Mutahi, & Marjoke Oosterom	'Killing a mosquito with a hammer': Al-Shabaab violence and state security responses in Kenya	Peacebuilding	2017	24
Maria O'Reilly	Peace and Justice through a Feminist Lens: Gender Justice and the Women's Court for the Former Yugoslavia	Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding	2016	23
Maria Martin de Almagro	Hybrid Clubs: A Feminist Approach to Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo	Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding	2018	22
Kara Ellerby	A seat at the table is not enough: understanding women's substantive representation in peace processes	Peacebuilding	2016	21
Daniela Lai	Transitional Justice and Its Discontents: Socioeconomic Justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Limits of International Intervention	Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding	2016	21

Of the 8 articles that had 20 or more cross-referenced citations, topics covered included hybridity (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2016; de Almagro, 2018), security and state stabilization (Karlsrund, 2019; Lind et al., 2017), transitional justice (Lai, 2016), and women and gender (O'Reilly, 2016; Ellerby, 2016). While there are no significant trends in the types of themes that gain traction, it is interesting to note that two articles discuss some aspect of gender and feminism, particularly in light of findings from the previous section. However, similar to the trends noted in the previous section, although gender and feminism was one of the themes that gained considerable traction, the way these articles approached the theme did little to advance a gender and peacebuilding approach. O'Reilly (2016) examines the Women's Courts, a 'bottom-up' approach to truth-telling in the former Yugoslavia to assess its successes and failures.

Ultimately O'Reilly argues that in order to achieve gender justice and equality there is a need to recognize women as victims and survivors, to provide a gender-equitable distribution of resources, and to include women in transitional justice's processes. Ellerby (2016) uses the UNSC Resolution 1325 (which advocates for greater inclusion of women in peace processes) as a framework to assess peace processes and agreements in terms of women's participation and inclusion, concluding that less than 10% of all civil war peace processes meet the standards for women's inclusion as envisioned in UNSCR 1325. While these two articles help to advance the importance of including women in peacebuilding, they fail to address some of the key components of a gender and peacebuilding framework, namely a focus on the gendered and structural dimensions of conflict and peace, a conceptualization of women as agents outside the normative frames of 'victim' or 'survivor', and a recognition of unequal power relationships in peacebuilding. As well, both articles equate gender with *women* which fails to account for the impact of masculinity, and particularly militarized masculinity on sustaining the conditions that render women marginal or vulnerable.

Overall, the fact that 55% of articles in the data set were cited less than five times gives credence to the point made earlier that peacebuilding as an independent field of study (as opposed to an interdisciplinary field) remains on the margins of broader scholarship. Further to this point, the impact factors (IFs) of the three journals are 1.75 (*Peacebuilding*), 3 (*International Peacekeeping*), 0.328 (*Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*) and 2.2 (*Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*). These scores fall far below the impact factors for some of the leading journals in related fields such as the *American Journal of Political Science* (IF 5.887), *World Development* (5.278), *Journal of Political Economy* (9.103), *International Security* (7.179), and *American Political Science Review* (7.828). Thus, the findings in this chapter must

also be interpreted alongside the fact that peacebuilding as an independent field of study occupies a fairly small position within broader academic literature. This serves as reminder that fields adjacent to peacebuilding such as International Relations, Law, and Political Science, amongst others, likely have impacts on the field that are not represented here. Therefore, while some spaces exist for deliberate analyses of peacebuilding itself, as well as for *critical* forms of analysis, there are evidently critical barriers to the widespread adoption of these ideas given the broader landscape of related literature.

Discussion and Conclusion

In conclusion, the master narratives that seem to exist are largely structured by the types of liberal norms discussed in the previous chapter. In cases where more critical avenues are emerging, the topics themselves have a tendency to be discussed in ways that fall short of their transformative potential, thus indicating a potential flattening out of critical ideas. This trend is also reflected in papers using gender or feminist analyses. In these cases the most critical articles (those that questioned the underlying masculinized logics of power in peacebuilding itself) were relatively few. As well, given the low citation scores of most articles, I argue that there is still work to be done to integrate critical approaches into the broader field of peacebuilding scholarship. In thinking about these findings from a critical perspective, they seem to be indicative of the type of discursive colonialism introduced in the initial theoretical overview of this project in which certain modes of thinking are refined at the expense of others. This is an important point to highlight as it establishes the context that the following chapters will be speaking back against.

The normative liberal canons create boundaries around the ways that peacebuilding is discussed in terms of themes (ie. security, politics, power) as well as analytical modes (ie.

negative peace, institutionalism, etc.). Indeed, even when these normative logics were questioned (ie. Critiquing the role of the state, institutionalism, elitism, etc.), they often did not go so far as to advocate for structural change (as indicated by the prevalence of the *Critique Of* code). Thus, even in some more moderately critical spaces, the liberal norms are reified and re-centred as important focal points. Moreover, the relative separation of the most critical spaces from normative liberal spaces, indicates that the most transformative approaches remain outside the boundaries of the master narratives. From a post-colonial perspective, the maintenance of liberal norms within peacebuilding master narratives also carries important ramifications regarding the types of colonial assumptions that are sustained. This can be demonstrated through the engagement with the 'local' in this dataset. As noted above, the *local/everyday* was most often discussed in relation to liberal norms rather than through critical analyses. This is consistent with Mac Ginty's (2015) claim that the 'flattening out' or sidelining of the local is accomplished through a focus primarily on the state and other similar international norms (ie. the importance of security, international state-state relations, etc.). However, as a consequence the role of the peace-keeper, -builder, and -broker is awarded to the state, coalitions of states, and international organizations, rather than to the 'local' itself. This is also consistent with the findings that suggest the local was discussed most often as a *participant* rather than an *architect* of peace processes. Framing the local in this way becomes problematic insofar as it reinforces a colonial notion that the external, foreign (often Western) peace builder is the legitimate actor and source of knowledge.

As stated in the introductory chapter, the aim of this project is to ascertain the potentially 'darker side' of liberal peace. To do so it is helpful to return to Choudhury's (2007) assertion that justifications of violence against "lesser races" are inherent to the history of liberal universalism.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, Choudhury (2007) argues that violence against Iraqis during the 'war on terror' was justified to the extent that they were first identified as human rights abusers. Similarly, in the case of Somalia, Razack (2004) highlights how peacekeeping is intertwined with civilizing narratives of instruction and discipline of the Third World. She argues that "the overriding frame of the encounter is one of the civilized North and the barbaric South. Some individuals inhabit this frame as confident colonizers, others simply begin unselfconsciously as people who have set out to 'do good.' Either way, a racial hierarchy is installed" (p. 187). In both instances the outcome is a distancing similar to that of Said's (1978) Orientalism insofar as the production of the 'neutral' and valiant peacekeeper is in intertwined with the production of that which is to be peace-*kept*. Here I refer to Said's (1978) argument that the production of the Orient was as much about the West as it was about the 'rest' in the sense that the West came to know and define itself through the production of the 'other'. Similarly, here the 'peacekeepers' are defined in relation to the objects that they seek to act against. The findings regarding the local can be interpreted along a similar vein insofar as the local is disregarded as a source of knowledge regarding peacebuilding.

The peripheral position of critical studies, be they critical peace and conflict studies or critical gender studies, maintains the positions between those who are peacebuilding actors and those who are the object of peacebuilding initiatives. Critical approaches that are attentive to the underlying structures of power have the potential to reveal the 'darker side' of liberal peace and the colonial relations of power therein. Thus, it is not surprising that there is both a prominence of liberal themes and perspectives and a relative lack of critical counterparts, as the latter can only exist at the end of the former.

The relationship between peace*builder* and peace*built* (to draw on the peace*keeper*/peace*kept* concepts from Razack) is also evidenced in the findings regarding young people. Firstly, in response to the findings about the frames used to discuss young people in peacebuilding, I argue that while their inclusion in peacebuilding conversations is an important step, the way they have been included thus far does little to attend to their unique needs and circumstances. The persistence of the 'victim' or 'violent' frames, particularly in absence of a notable counter-narrative on youth agency, the ways that young people may be both a victim *and* violent, or may transition between either are overlooked. As Podder (2015) notes, these frames are limited insofar as they obscure young people's positive agency and contributions to peacebuilding. To draw on Autesserre, the frames of victims/violent create boundaries around how a young person in times of conflict and peace are viewed, namely as lacking agency and decision-making authority of their own. This is also to say that what is obscured through these frames is an acknowledgement of the ways that young people may *choose* or *intentionally* adhere to narratives of victimhood and violence, thus indicating the conditions of possibility that sustain these binary frames. This is not to say that victimhood and violence are purely performative or reactionary mechanisms used by young people, but rather it is simply to suggest that young people have an awareness and understanding of the narratives through which other people see them and in some circumstances may actively choose to draw upon these narratives to serve themselves. Consequently, representations of young people and of peacebuilding can be read as reflections of certain knowledges rather than universally applicable truths, thereby suggesting that they are malleable and porous rather than static and concrete.

Secondly and relatedly, the binary frames of victim/violent serve to reinforce the 'helping' narrative of peacebuilding in which external peacebuilders enter into an area to *help*

locals build peace. However, this assumes a degree of *helplessness* on the part of those for whom peace is being built. Thus, conceptualizing young people as peacebuilders in their own right carries the hefty burden of also engaging with the conditions in which young people are victimized or violent, the structures of power that create those conditions, and ultimately in challenging the helping narrative that undergirds peacebuilding.

In conclusion, the findings from this chapter are consistent with the idea that liberalism (in this case liberal peacebuilding) reproduces subjective and epistemic borders that are structured by colonial differences (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006, p. 208). The remainder of the chapters will now turn to a re-examination of who peacebuilders are in an effort to highlight that youth peacebuilding challenge the liberal assumptions of who peacebuilders are and who has claims to peacebuilding knowledge. To do so, the following chapters will make use of Mac Ginty's (2015) 'critical localism' which is an attempt to escape from viewing the global North as a starting point, and rather the local "is interpreted in its own right, and not as a mere adjunct to the somehow more important levels of analysis such as the state, the region or the metropolis" (848).

Chapter 3: Exploring the Importance of the 'Everyday' to Youth-Inclusive Peacebuilding Through Literature*[4]

Introduction

In March 2018 a group of students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida organized a rally in support of greater gun control following one of the deadliest school shootings in US history just days before at their school. In the months that followed, hundreds of thousands of students and concerned citizens around the world would rally and march in solidarity. As a result of the collective action of these students, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting has become recognized as the tipping point for gun control legislation in the United States (Petrusich, 2018; Miller, 2018; Reilly, 2018). Inspired by these actions, then 15-year-old Greta Thunberg organized a similar style strike at her school in support of greater climate action. Later that year Thunberg was invited to speak at the United Nations Climate Change Conference where she famously proclaimed to attending world leaders that "our house is on fire" and that those present at the conference "were not mature enough to tell it like it is" (Sutter & Davidson, 2018). Thunberg's activism, coupled with her candid, no-holds-barred style of speech has inspired countless other young people around the globe to similarly participate in climate activism, a phenomenon that has come to be known as 'the Greta Effect' (Flanagan, 2021; Huang, 2022; Sabherwal et al. 2021; Hayes & O'Neill, 2021). Two years later in the summer of 2020 young people were once again at the forefront of social justice activism. In the wake of several traumatic deaths of black people in the United States by armed police officers in 2020, such as the death of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and most notably

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George Floyd, young people flocked to the streets under the banner of Black Lives Matter (BLM) to protest systemic racism and police brutality. While people of all ages took part in the 2020 BLM protests, the charge was overwhelmingly led by young people (Bryant, 2020).

These examples, amongst many others, showcase young people demanding that their experiences be recognized, and their voices be heard at the highest levels of decision-making. To ensure that these powerful voices are informing praxis it is of the utmost importance that young peoples' own lived experiences and daily life occupy a central position in decision-making processes moving forward. However, as revealed in the previous chapter, approaches to peacebuilding often either misinterpret the roles of young people or fail to consider young people as positive agents of change at all. Thus, this chapter examines theoretical positions that may help to better capture and understand the diverse ways that young people participate in peacebuilding. I centre the discussion around a proposed framework from Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015) for more youth-inclusive peacebuilding theorization. Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015) offer three pillars (which will be described in more detail below) to guide future theorization; peace is narrated by and through youth, structures can either inhibit or facilitate positive contributions to peace by youth, and peace and conflict are profoundly 'youthed'. A central, unifying feature of this framework is the usefulness of the concept of the 'everyday'. To this end I also draw on Millar's (2020) work on the limitations of theorizing the 'everyday'. Lastly, to ground this discussion I utilize three 'coming-of-age' novels by female East African authors to extend the arguments by Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015) and explore the nuances of these arguments in more detail.

In drawing on novels as a grounding point for this discussion I am shifting the remainder of this thesis into a new domain. The remaining chapters will draw upon 3 different forms of

cultural production: novels, social media, and music as a way to provoke an imagination of alternative futures. The explorations in the proceeding chapters are not intended to be exhaustive in their coverage of cultural production, nor of the types of positionalities that they will cover. Rather, I use a few select examples as a form of 'kaleidoscope thinking'. In their analysis of Attawapiskat communities in the context of states of emergency, Wiebe draws upon various indigenous art forms to unsettle colonial narratives about Indigenous peoples and their communities. They state that art is "a relational force, provoking feelings, stirring up controversies, sparking dialogues. It has the potential to raise awareness and shift perspectives, orienting attention to new and multiple angles of vision" (Wiebe, 2023, p. 38). Kaleidoscope thinking in this sense is therefore a mode of analysis that centres on creativity. Wiebe describes such thinking as well attuned to examine multi-sited colonial power and imagine possible de-colonial futures because of its ability to unleash a creative spirit capable of imagining other possible worlds by gathering together disparate ideas to interrupt confined boundaries (2023, p. 41). It is along this vein that I approach the following three chapters in which I bring together 3 disparate mediums in an effort to provoke creative thinking about possible alternatives and disrupt dominant discourses.

Ultimately, this chapter posits that novels can help reposition how we think about peacebuilding and who peacebuilders are, to the extent that young people are more readily acknowledged for their ability to negotiate shifting claims to knowledge and power in a context of conflict. Following from this statement, I make three specific arguments in this chapter. Firstly, recognizing youth as knowledge creators requires dismantling the protectionism and adultism that undergird peacebuilding. This is because both ideologies render young people as 'absent-present', a state in which they are talked about aplenty but rarely heard from directly

(Brewer et al., 2018). Secondly, a focus on the everyday actions of young people illuminates not only the ways that their daily lives are incongruent with reductionist accounts of their lived realities, but that their daily lives are also spaces of peacebuilding in and of themselves. In being cognizant of Millar's critiques, this is not to say that their everyday lives are inherently politicized, but that facets of daily life are instrumental to building the social and relational foundations of peace. Thirdly, and in culmination of the previous two arguments, I argue that a more youth-inclusive approach to peacebuilding requires re-examining the very concepts that underpin 'youth' and 'peacebuilding' and the barometers by which successful peace is measured.

This chapter offers credence to a movement that defines peacebuilding differently than the state-centric, elite-driven, and programme-based model that has predominated peace and conflict studies. Instead, I follow the important contributions of sociological perspectives to the field that focus on 'bottom-up, localized and particularistic conflict-calming measures' (Mac Ginty, 2014). In relation to young people, this more sociologically oriented and reflexive approach to the field of peace and conflict studies looks to conceptualize children's security by considering the relational nature of social and political practices and the oppressive nature of power structures in armed conflict in which young people are situated (Jacob, 2015). From this perspective, there is a need to unsettle dominant discourses of 'children', 'security' and 'peace' on the basis that they lack the capacity to address questions of civilians' (and particularly young people's) own agency and contributions to peace. The 'local turn' within peace and conflict studies with its focus on the 'everyday' is a reflection of this sociological influence and it is within this context that the framework presented by Berents and McEvoy-Levy is situated.

The Case for Studying Fiction

In this chapter I make use of three coming-of-age novels by female African authors. The novels being used are '*A Girl is a Body of Water'* by Jennifer Nansumbuga Makumbi, '*Dragon Fly Sea'* by Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, and '*Our Lady of the Nile'* by Scholastique Mukasonga. There were several criterium used to determine the selection of novels used. Firstly, I chose coming-of-age novels specifically as they directly relate to the period of youthhood where young people exist on the boundary between childhood and adulthood. Thus, I actively sought to include novels that deliberately speak about this period of transition as it best reflects the challenges of youthhood that this project is concerned with.

Secondly, I chose to only look at novels written by female authors. This was done deliberately in response to the overarching effort of this broader project to centre issues of gender in youth peacebuilding. In choosing female authors I do not intend to insinuate that male or gender non-conforming authors are not able to discuss issues of gender. It is important to explicitly state here that gender is conceptualized in this project as encompassing femininities *and* masculinities, *as well as* gendered ways of being that fall between and outside of a male/man-female/woman binary. I indeed acknowledge that there is an abundance of gendered identities that this chapter will not speak to directly. I thus emphasize that I am not suggesting that the stories of gender from a female/woman perspective that this chapter will focus on are the only form of gender expression that are significant to the conversation of youth inclusive peacebuilding. However, in an attempt to centre the voices and perspectives of women, the most accessible choice to do so was to look to authors who have themselves experienced the transition from youthhood into *woman*hood most explicitly to use literature in a way that reflects the reality it is based on. Thus, I deliberately chose to draw from female authors who wrote specifically

about women and girls' experiences as *an entry* point to a discussion of alternative imaginations that is by no means intended to be an exhaustive exploration.While this is a limiting choice in some sense, given the overtly masculinized nature of conflict and peacebuilding, I am intentionally drawing on female perspectives in this overt manner as a way to challenge the hegemonic nature of militarized masculinity within the liberal peace paradigm.

Thirdly, in an effort to seek out non-Western perspectives, I specifically chose authors that were born in and grew up on the African continent and I sought novels that each took place in a different country in the Great Lakes Region. '*A Girl is a Body of Water'* takes place in Uganda during the dictatorial reign of Idi Amin. Spanning several generations, the novel is situated at both the height and downfall of Amin's leadership. Similarly, '*Dragon Fly Sea'* takes place across two generations. The novel follows a young Kenyan girl as she navigates the transition to adulthood against the backdrop of the global war on terror and its reach into Kenya, as well as the growing influence of China in Kenyan economic development. The Rwandan genocide sets the stage for '*Our Lady of the Nile*'. While the story takes place in the 1970s, it functions as a prelude to the later atrocities of the 1990's. '*Our Lady of the Nile*' follows a high school class of young girls in which the school itself offers an existential microcosm of the growing unrest in the country.

Fourthly, given my own language proficiencies I was limited to novels that were in or translated to English. Limiting the search in this way unfortunately excluded novels written in local East African languages. Lastly, I was also limited to novels that were accessible either in print or online as e-books. This further excluded novels that were not available online or that were not available in local print stores or to order a print version. This limitation, in addition to the criteria that novels be in English to some extent refines the colonial production of knowledge

as I am only accessing materials that are accessible to a Global North citizen in my native (colonial) language. I argue that while important to acknowledge, it does not deter from the overall value in this analysis. This is especially because I am not suggesting that these novels are the only spaces that can be used to broaden the scope of imagination of youth peace work, but rather that novels and literature more broadly are a useful *starting point*. Thus, I situate this chapter within what may hopefully come to be a broader body of work that utilizes novels to explore ideas about peacebuilding.

It is also important to note that the chosen novels were not written by youth per se, but by adults reflecting on youthhood and youth issues against a broader context of conflict. As I have argued elsewhere, examining adult reflections on youthhood are useful because the themes that are addressed resonate with established findings regarding the role of young people in peacebuilding (Dixon, 2021). The themes addressed by each novel will be expanded in the following sections but can be summarized as follows. The main theme in '*A Girl is a Body of Water'* is the challenge of navigating adulthood against the backdrop of insecurity and changing notions of 'modernity'. This theme resonates with broader conversations about the agency of young people and the extent to which they are regarded as 'knowledge producers' in their own right. Thus, 'A Girl is a Body of Water' helps make a case for great value that young people's perspectives offer on their shifting landscapes, particularly after conflict. *Our Lady of the Nile* explores themes of opportunism, resentment, and the micro-politics amongst Rwanda's 'future female elite' and thus displays the ways that national ethnic politics permeate everyday life. Lastly, the main themes in *The Dragonfly Sea* are of displacement and discovery and expands on a conversation about how young people make sense of their worlds and their identities in an increasingly connected and globalized world. Thus, although the novels are written by adults,

they capture a piece of reality that reflects the true experiences of a particular moment. Moreover, each author is writing about a context and background that is part of their own upbringing and history. Therefore, each novel is grounded in the reality of what it means to be a young person growing up in a troubled time and are relevant for what they offer about the position of young people in peace and conflict more broadly. It is on this basis that I argue these novels serve as useful tools to traverse into a more theoretical discussion.

Moreover, each novel received praise for its ability to delicately unpack the realities of complex identities. For instance, in an article The New York Times Book Review author Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi is credited for the grace in which she unpacks the struggle of balancing competing feminisms in *A Girl Is A Body of Water,* that of a 'traditional' Uganda feminism known as mwenkanonkano and more 'modern' feminists ideals that emanate predominately from the West. Similarly, in comparing Makumbi's novel to Audre Lorde's *Poetry is Not a Luxury,* Newson-Horst (2021) praises the novel's emphasis on storytelling as a key to women's ownership over their own voices and stories. Thus, themes of voice and representation feature heavily in *A Girl Is A Body of Water* (Coats, 2020). *The Dragonfly Sea* is praised for similar traits, with The New York Times Book Review likening its main character Ayaana as "a bit of a Quixote" as she struggles against a world that is marked by the contradiction of both inclusion and cosmopolitanism on the one hand, and betrayal and division on the other (Mathew, 2019). Ayaana's struggles have also been characterized as a gorgeous tale of Africa's entanglement with the wider world (Kirkus, 2019) thereby highlighting the novel's relevance to a discussion of how young people are cognizant of and navigate through complex geopolitical dynamics. In terms of the complex relationship between adults and young people, Moss (2021) suggests that *Our Lady of the Nile's* 'post-colonial satire' is a story about both the inability and refusal of adults to

protect their young people from the violence of history. The novel has also been regarded for its graceful display of the "dreams, ambitions, and prejudices of young women growing up as their country falls apart" (Johannesburg Review of Books, 2022). Thus, in unpacking the complex realities of being a young person during times of conflict, each novel is also regarded as an exploration of the internal struggles of what it means to exist in a space of self-exploration amidst a backdrop of a changing world or country.

This chapter is also based on the assumption that novels, as a form of popular culture, are useful in what they reveal about the political realm of peacebuilding. It is my assertion that novels function as cultural texts insofar as they reflect pieces of reality and the discourses and representations therein. Indeed, popular culture and politics cannot be divorced from each other and rather 'should be understood as a continuum that enables political change' in which popular culture can both reinforce and challenge 'common sense' views of war and peace (McEvoy-Levy, 2015, p. 202). As McEvoy-Levy argues, 'there is much more continuity between pop culture, political activism, and policy than might be at first assumed' (McEvoy-Levy, 2018, p. 28).

I therefore follow in the footsteps of cultural studies scholars such as Stuart Hall, Edward Said, bell hooks, and many others insofar as I acknowledge the value in looking to popular culture as a site where critical thinking in everyday life and intellectual theorization come together[5]. Similar to the type of creative and cacophonous thinking describe by Wiebe (2023), fiction as it is used in this chapter offers a space for *thinking* rather than for definitive knowledge judgements or claims and as such 'literature's imaginative construction of space and time disrupt

[5] I draw particular inspiration from renowned cultural studies scholar bell hooks who has asserted that 'Merging critical thinking in everyday life with knowledge learned in books and through study has been the union of theory and practice that has informed my intellectual cultural work'. (hooks, 1994)

entrenched and unreflective ways of seeing/interpreting lifeworlds' (McEvoy-Levy, 2017). This chapter is not intended to be a cultural studies piece per se, but rather draws analytical insight from this field in terms of the ability to bridge theory and practice through popular culture. For instance, McEvoy-Levy has showcased the transformative power of the Harry Potter and Hunger Games series insofar as these media (both the novels and the ensuing feature films) have provided a space for young people to 'imagine (themselves in) new communities and be exposed to new and radical ideas', to create alliances of interest, and ultimately to work towards addressing real injustices (McEvoy-Levy, 2015). Looking to popular culture as opposed to real-world cases is therefore important for peace research because it helps imagine new ways of thinking (McEvoy-Levy, 2018). As such, this chapter places the three novels chosen within a broader discussion of the transformative potential of the everyday within peace and conflict studies and is used in this way to help conceive of an alternative approach to peacebuilding that is more inclusive to young people.

Novel Summaries

'*A Girl Is A Body of Water*' follows the story of a young Ugandan woman named Kirabo as she learns to find her place as a woman in her rapidly changing environment. Abandoned by her biological mother, Kirabo is raised by the woman of a small village Nattetta. The novel spans several generations as it traces the histories of Kirabo's aunts and grandmothers, weaving together the intimate relationship between the women of Kirabo's life. Through these histories we come to learn that underneath the hostility between her own paternal grandmother Alikisa, and Nsuuta (the village 'witch') is also an enduring bond of friendship. What started as a sacred bond between Alikisa and Nsuuta as girls to live together as co-wives became clouded by external and systemic factors that seem to continuously work against the female characters.

These factors include the enduring patriarchy that shapes how womanhood is governed, a modernizing society with little space for women, and efforts by everyone to assert control over their own lives against the backdrop of the dictatorial Amin regime. The relationships Kirabo sees amongst the woman in her life are paralleled in her own love triangle between her best friend and childhood love interest, as well as her own place within the changing currents of womanhood and modernity in society more broadly. Ultimately Kirabo comes to recognize and relish in the bonds of friendship and compassion that are weaved throughout the female relationships in her life, an acceptance that helps Kirabo come to terms with her own sense of self.

Written in 2012, *Our Lady of the Nile* chronicles the lives of a small group of students at an elite, female-only boarding school (*lycée*) high in the Rwandan mountains in the years of Hutu rule before the genocide. The novel takes place in the 1980's during a period of growing anti-Tutsi sentiment in Rwanda in the years before the eventual genocide in 1993. Each chapter of the short novel tells the story of one student, from Gloriosa, the class's assumed 'leader' with powerful sway as a result of her father's high political position, to Veronica and Virginia, the only two Tutsi students, taken in under the school's 'minimum Tutsi quota' system. There are three main arcs to the novel that are as follows. The first portion of the novel details 'regular' life at the lychee, including the ways that Eurocentrism in built into the school curriculum. The second arc revolves around the nefarious relationship between a local white man and one of the Tutsi students. The final arc is centred on Gloriosa's rise to power within the school and her anti-Tutsi crusade that ultimately ends in one student's death. Although the story ends on a harrowing note that alludes to the up-coming genocide, it gives a robust account of the different ways that the young students make sense of the infiltration of national politics into their daily lives and

relationships. One key point to note is that although this novel is the shortest of the three, each character represents the typification of a particular theme or identity. This is to say that rather than using a singular or a few characters to showcase the fluidity of identity and the exploration of one's self, the lychee itself is personified to the extent that it functions as the main character in which each student represents a different component of one's character.

Lastly, The Dragonfly Sea is the coming-of-age story of a young Ayaana, a Kenyan girl born off the coast of Kenya on the island of Pate. Ayaana lives with her mother but no biological father, an aspect of her life that causes her to be teased and ostracized by her community. At a young age Ayaana chooses the solitary old man down the Street, Muhidin to be her chosen father. As her bond with Muhidin grows Ayaana faces a serious of difficult circumstances including being raped by a wealthy foreigner and being sent to China as 'The Descendent', an important diplomatic position aimed at fostering relations between the two countries. As The Descendent Ayaana is believed to be of mixed Chinese-African descent, personifying a sought after national bond between the two countries. Most of the novel details her journey across the sea to China, where she meets a widowed sailor that she later takes as a husband, and her many adventures living and studying in China. While searching for a sense of self throughout her travels, it is not until she makes the decision to return to Pate that Ayaana ultimately 'finds herself' by acknowledging the importance of the familial bonds she has fostered in her home community. The novel is also set against the 'war on terror' taking place in Eastern Kenya, in which foreign envoys wreak havoc and chaos on her island in the name of 'rooting out Islamic extremism'. The backdrop to this novel, while only subtly mentioned, helps establish a sense of danger in Ayaana's world from which she is seeking safety. Again, when Ayaana returns to Pate she ultimately comes to understand the societal scripts that have dictated her life, from the

importance of being able to prove one's patrilineal roots, to narratives of 'terrorism' and gendered expectations of 'good' women. Upon her understanding of how these scripts can be manipulated to serve different interests, Ayaana comes to a place of peace in the ability to determine her own scripts for how to live her life.

Theorizing Youth and Peacebuilding

The previous two chapters have detailed the exclusion of young people from meaningful participation in peacebuilding. As stated in chapter one, this is not to say that young people are *wholly* excluded from peacebuilding, but rather that there are significant limitations to the manner and extent to which they are included. Given the focus of the broader project, the exclusion of young people from peacebuilding can be interpreted as a result of colonial and Eurocentric knowledge claims that infantilize and diminish the contributions of young people. It has also situated the 'local turn' in peace and conflict studies within the broader discipline and situated both 'peacebuilding' and 'youth' as *organizing concepts* that have been socially constructed over time. As noted in both chapters, there is a degree of protectionism and adultism that informs youth peacebuilding, both of which will be unpacked in more detail in this chapter. This chapter therefore picks up where the previous two ended as the conclusions made thus far have been that the discursive framings of peacebuilding and youth are significant to peacebuilding theorizing insofar as they structure both what is considered legitimate knowledge and who the respective purveyors of that knowledge are in ways that exclude the everyday experiences of youth. Acknowledging youth as knowledge producers can offer a means to reorient our thinking about peacebuilding, who peacebuilders *are*, and who should *do* the peacebuilding. This reorientation attends directly to the broader project goals of using a post-

colonial and post-development perspective to critically examine youth peacebuilding knowledges, their limitations, and potential alternative ways forward.

McEvoy-Levy argues that an emphasis on young people as the 'future', while useful in highlighting their potential for positive action, obscures the talents, skills, and knowledge that they have in the present (McEvoy-Levy, 2011). In this way, normative discursive framings largely dictate whose knowledge is considered relevant in peace processes in such a way that youth knowledge is not taken as legitimate and useful. As Drummond-Mundal and Cave (2007) argue, "young people are not only the future, they are also part of the present and must be recognized and supported as capable members of society with vital roles in the human struggle to transform conflict and build peace" (p. 73). I follow these authors in offering a radical critique of normative peacebuilding apparatuses and the unequal power that has served to disenfranchise young people.

In summary, this chapter takes the exclusion of young people from peacebuilding, as both knowledge producers and participants as the *starting point* insofar as it makes up the foundational assumption that undergirds the following discussion. It is also an assertion that has been empirically supported in a variety of contexts. McEvoy-Levy (2006) has made similar claims with reference to Northern Ireland specifically as well as in reference to post-conflict situations more generally. Honwana (2012) has discussed the exclusion of young people in a variety of contexts on the African continent, primarily through the concept of 'waithood' which will be explored in more detail in the '*Peacebuilding as 'Youthed"* section. Bangura (2016; 2015 respectively) has also made similar findings in both Sierra Leone and on the African continent more generally. Berents (2015) has explored the exclusion of young people from peacebuilding in the Colombian context, concluding that although excluded, young people navigate and

contribute to peace and peacebuilding in their own way. While only a few examples, these authors provide support for the starting assumption of this chapter.

It is also important to note that the marginalization or exclusion of young people from peacebuilding is also gendered insofar as conflict itself is highly gendered and therefore young people's relationship to conflict has bearing on and shapes their relationship to peace and peacebuilding. For instance, in the context of the northern Uganda, Baines (2011) notes that although the roles young men and women occupy in conflict are segregated along gender lines (ie. men being more likely to act as active combatants and women being more likely to becomes mothers or 'wives'), the choices they make are all structured by a broader state of 'coerced militarized masculinity'. In such a context gender relations and expectations of what it means to be a 'man' or a 'woman' are distorted from what they may otherwise be in peacetime and therefore complicates assigning responsibility and justice seeking in the post-conflict context (Baines 2011). Moreover, while the shifting gender terrain of conflict can afford women some degree of authority and decision-making power (albeit structured by the highly inequitable and violent context of coerced militarized masculinity), given that the broader peacebuilding context remains highly masculinized, women often quickly lose what little influence they may have gained in a conflict setting (McKay 2002). Thus, the peacebuilding landscape is structured along age and gender divisions, both of which complicate and restrict the participation of young people as active and positive decision makers. I reiterate here the intent of this chapter to focus on female perspectives of girl and womanhood as a direct response to the overtly masculinized context of conflict and peace described here.

A youth-inclusive theoretical framework for studying peacebuilding

In what can be read as a response to such criticism, Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015) offer a framework for retheorizing peacebuilding in a way that is more inclusive of the lived realities of young people. In an introduction to a special issue in the journal *Peacebuilding* on everyday peace and youth, the authors offer a locally grounded theoretical framework for the study of youth and peacebuilding. They expound the usefulness of an everyday approach to peacebuilding when investigating the role of young people through three spheres of inquiry: how peace and conflict are 'youthed', how peace is narrated by and through youth, and how structures of power facilitate or inhibit youth peace action. The three pillars will be described in more detail in the following sections.

The framework offered by Berents and McEvoy-Levy is situated within the broader 'local turn' of peace and conflict studies in which taken-for-granted levels of analysis are re-examined and new interpretations of power, legitimacy, and responsibility are offered. This shift in the field of peace and conflict studies marks a commitment to peacebuilding that is grounded in the lived realities of local, non-elite populations, defined by 'bottom- up' solutions, and strives for a more emancipatory and transformative approach to the field (Mac Ginty, 2014). Thus, I explore the extent to which the framework proposed by Berents and McEvoy-Levy makes good on the transformative potential of the broader 'local turn'. I centre this conversation around the three novels to ground the discussion and avoid abstract theorization that is devoid of the practical realities it attempts to explain.

Peacebuiding as 'Youthed'

Just as gender is now understood as a manipulation and a function of power relations, age categories such as 'youth' similarly constitute cultural systems with particular sets of meanings

and values (McKay, 2002; Baines, 2015). Static definitions of 'youth' that fail to account for its cultural constructions are therefore increasingly rejected in favour of definitions that recognize 'youth' as intimately shaped by socio-political context (Schwartz, 2010; Finnstrom, 2008). 'Youth' is best defined as a 'complex and freighted positionality, a social and political status as well as a demographic classification' (Turner, 2015, p. 127) and therefore is not a static, definitive period, but a broad and porous category (Matlon, 2011). Indeed, in each of the three novels, the age of main characters is never explicitly stated. Rather, 'childhood' is marked in each of the novels by a degree of naïveté and an uncritical willingness to accept the scripts handed to them by the various adults in their lives.

For example, in *A Girl is a Body of Water,* as a young girl Kirabo understands her restlessness through the stories passed down to her about a woman's 'original state'. As explained to her by Nsuuta, the village 'witch', the first woman was "huge, strong, bold, loud, proud, brave, independent" and thus "too much" for the world and was actively bred out of womankind (pp. 50-53). Some authority figures in Kirabo's life rely on this story as a way to frighten Kirabo and to suppress the 'unruly' and boisterous sides of herself, while others imbue a sense of responsibility onto Kirabo to unleash her original state and pave the way for a new freedom for the women of her community.

It is through Kirabo's exploration of her own origin story, and the truth about her family tree and lineage, that she develops her own understanding of this 'original state'. Through her journey, effectively her transition through her 'youth', Kirabo comes to recognize the broader forces of patriarchy and insecurity as a result of Amin's political turmoil, that shape the way the myth of the 'original state' is employed. By exposing the role of the myth-*maker* behind the myth, Kirabo ultimately dissolves the power the original state has over her. In doing so she

reaffirms the purpose and meaning of the original state in a way that is not restrictive but rather is a radical form of freedom. This new understanding of the original state is captured in the final scene in which Kirabo looks in awe upon her two grandmothers, once rivals, dancing unencumbered in the rain, following which Nsuuta makes the following request to Kirabo:

> "Promise me you will pass on the story of the first woman—in whatever form you wish. It was given to me by women in captivity. They lived an awful state of migration, my grandmothers. Telling origin stories was their act of resistance. I only added on a bit here and a bit there. Stories are critical, Kirabo," she added thoughtfully. "The minute we fall silent, someone will fill the silence for us." (p. 542)

Thus, in learning about the structures that shape her life, Kirabo's transition to adulthood is marked by developing the ability to critically respond to the cultural, political, and social scripts that would seek to tell her how to occupy space in the world. In a way, Kirabo's entrance into adulthood is thus marked by her carving out a feminism that is bound to her own will and choices.

Similarly, in *Our Lady of the Nile* and *The Dragonfly Sea* the main characters each embark on their own journeys of reconciling their social worlds with their own brands of feminism. In *Our Lady of the Nile*, the students begin the new school year with naïve and at times fantastical ideas about their futures, be it becoming a famous movie star, living a life of luxury and leisure as a politician's wife, or becoming a figure of power and authority in their own right. However, by the end of the novel the girls have come to appreciate the harrowing reality of the growing political turmoil in their country and begin to question the bonds of sisterhood that the lycée has attempted to foster. Some of the girls choose violence and further division, while others seek to unite against the growing anti-Tutsi fervour. Although the paths may be different, by the close of the novel each student seems to have embraced their ability to

decide for themselves how they will move forward in the world. In *The Dragonfly Sea*, Ayaana's youth is marked by the period between her childhood ideas of family and belonging that seem to exist outside of her social and political context and being able to define 'home' for herself in her adulthood. In particular, her formative 'youth' years are spent as 'The Descendant' and attempting to make sense of herself and her world whilst being ascribed a metaphorical identity by those she encounters. Whether a symbol of national cooperation between Kenya and China, or as one man's salvation against his former loss of his wife, Ayanna spends her youth coming to terms with the ways that her world assigns her an identity and tries to shape her own existence as a young woman. Yet by the end of the novel, which can be seen as her settling into adulthood, Ayaana has learned to free herself from the shackles of socio-political expectations and to embrace a sense of sense that is uniquely her own.

Honwana (2012) has offered the concept of 'waithood' – the prolonged period of suspension between childhood and adulthood – to better identify the lived realities of youthhood and identifies that 'youth' is intrinsically imbued with politics and tension. Viewed through this lens, the markers of adulthood in the examples above are somewhat ethereal interpretations, insofar as they are emblematic of a consciousness of the impact of oneself against their wider context and vise versa. Alternatively, Honwana takes a more materialist approach in which adulthood is marked by more concrete markers such as taking a husband or wife, and the ability to own a home, amongst others. However, what is similar in both readings is the way that youthhood is imbued with social and political meaning by people other than the youths themselves.

Recognizing the many nuances and societal scripts of what constitutes 'youth' in turn calls into question the narrow way in which they are conceptualized within peacebuilding theory.

For example, protectionist discourses inherent to liberal peacebuilding have the effect of presenting young people in limited frames as either violent troublemakers or vulnerable victims and are best understood as a reflection of the specific discourses and values inherent to liberal peacebuilding rhetoric. The three novels focused on in this chapter help to question the authority and persistence of these tropes by showcasing how the lives of the various young characters, while at times conforming to victim/violent stereotypes, are defined by a complex interaction with such norms. Instances of their conformity cannot overshadow the situations in which they also co-opt, manipulate, or reject victim/violent identities. It should also be noted here that, as described in chapters 1 and 2, 'youth' is not monolithic and instead captures a wide variety of intersecting social identities and structural constraints. Yet it has been the universalization of a limited notion of 'youth' that has had the impact on *constructing* youth as a singular category. The three novels that this chapter draws upon speak to a few different (albeit ultimately still greatly limited) youth experiences.

For example, in *Our Lady of the Nile,* each characters represents a different way of being. For instance, Gloriosa is the symbol of state power and authority in the school and often leads the cruel torment of the few Tutsi girls. In contrast, Veronica is one of the school's two Tutsi girls and seems to exist in a world of naïve childishness, refusing to acknowledge the growing threat to her life and ultimately being killed as a result. Immaculée functions as a symbol of sexual and bodily autonomy, choosing to wear revealing clothing and engages in a somewhat scandalous relationship with an older, motorcycle riding man. Goretti represents freedom of expression of a different kind, often being the voice of reason and stability against Gloriosa's political tirades. While each student is unique in the role they play in the lychee, when viewed together they represent the many, often times contradictory, roles that young people can play. While each of

the girls is from a relatively high social strata of society, students such as Gloriosa occupy a much higher position on the social totem pole relative to some of her classmates. Thus, while not an exhaustive examination of class dynamics, there is an element of critical class analysis (primarily shaped by closeness to political power) at play in this novel.

In *A Girl is a Body of Water,* Kirabo herself oscillates between instigating conflict and playing peacemaker, all the while navigating her own personal relationships. While living with her father Tom and new step-mother Nnambi in Kampala, Kirabo is made acutely aware that Nnambi has no desire to have Kirabo under her roof. After Nnambi humiliates Kirabo in front of her father, Kirabo confronts her stepmother and wields a folk story as form of intimidation. In the story, a jealous stepmother exacts her revenge on her beautiful step-daughter by refusing to bathe her, feed her properly, and eventually resorting to smearing chicken poo on her. Yet her attempts are marked with only more adoration for the child by the villagers and shame being cast upon the stepmother. Thus, while Kirabo is coy in the purpose of her story, its similarity to her own predicament functions as a weaponization of the story in which Kirabo threatens her stepmother with the fate of the villain in the story. Yet later in the novel, when Nnambi and Tom have separated Kirabo is more empathetic to Nnambi and is kind to her when she is ostracized by the rest of the family. Similarly, when her own best friend betrays her by sleeping with Kirabo's childhood love interest, Kirabo ultimately extends a gracious hand of friendship to her. Thus, Kirabo exemplifies how youth cannot be essentialized as merely peaceful or violent but move fluidly between either as they navigate their own contexts.

Peacebuilding theory however has been limited in its ability to make sense of instances in which young people transgress the models of behaviour established by liberal protectionism. For instance, despite the United Nations Security Council resolution 2250 to increase representation

of youth in decision-making structures for conflict prevention and resolution, the stigmatization of young people as either violent or victims has limited their ability to meaningfully participate (Kashwera, 2020). This is reflected in arguments that when young people exert authority in peace processes, they are often met with apprehension from adult decision makers (see McEvoy-Levy, 2012; Bangura, 2016; and Martuscelli & Duarte Villa, 2018 for examples). Thus, while there is discursive space for the participation of young people in decision-making, in practice these spaces remain limited and confined by rhetoric that dictates how young people are represented. Indeed, this tension is represented by Ayaana's role as 'The Descendent' in *The Dragonfly Sea*. In this role Ayaana comes to be a symbol of unity between Kenya and China, spending the non-school hours of her day making speeches and acting in various diplomatic roles. Yet despite the significance of her posting, Ayaana is severely limited in the decision-making authority. The restrictions placed on Ayaana's autonomy are evidenced in the following scene:

> "Ayaana leaned over, the better to hear the question from the audience: "Will the bones of our ancestors on your island be returned to China?" Ayaana said, "No, they belong to Pate now." After that, no further questions were permitted. Ayaana was instructed to say, in future, "Everything in time." Two days later, a question from a different audience: "What does China mean for you?" Ayaana answered, "Everything in time."" (p. 270)

Ayaana attempts to exert a degree of autonomy over her life and her role by "seeking out and hopping onto fast trains to experience movement and live out the illusion of travelling", spending an unauthorized holiday in Turkey with what turns out to be an abusive and controlling partner, amongst other escapes. However, each of her efforts results in the same ending: begrudgingly returning to China and her student hostel and apologizing to her 'handlers' for her 'disrespect' and acting in a manner that is not befitting of her station. The role as 'The Descendent' therefore

is experienced by Ayaana as less about embracing the fullness of her humanity, and rather was a way to use her personhood as a canvas on which ideas and expectations about the future of relations between the two countries could be painted. Thus, Ayaana's humanity becomes secondary to what she can represent and her symbolism, ultimately rendering her an idealized manifestation of cultural exchange imbued with political meaning and posturing.

Recognizing how conflict and peace are youthed offers a path by which to begin breaking the discursive moulds that constrain the contributions from young people and offers a more nuanced appreciation of how and why they choose to engage in either peace or conflict. Starting from an altogether different understanding of 'youth' themselves, one that captures the complex relationships young people have to peace and conflict is one way to begin breaking the restrictive frames of protectionism and adultism that confine young people to limited frames of violence or victimhood and necessitates. When applied to peacebuilding theory, these three novels illuminate the potential that the everyday has as a place from which to better understand the relationship between young people and peace and conflict. It showcases the multiplicity of youth lived experiences and displays Ozerdem's (2016) assertion that you can have multiple, overlapping and shifting roles. But rather than presenting youth as antagonistic to peace processes as a result of the multi-faceted roles they play, each novel also subtly implies in its own way that when supported and given the opportunity, young people can act as positive mediators of peace.

Thus, to see peacebuilding as 'youthed' is to appreciate these efforts, regardless of whether they transgress the normative assumptions of peacebuilding, not as separate or tangential to peacebuilding, but as intimately connected to it. Consequently, the way that 'peacebuilding' itself has been operationalized is also called into question and contestations around peace and peacebuilding are intensified by a more nuanced understanding of the roles of

young people in either. Peacebuilding itself has been declared as more symbolic than grounded in any unified consensus (Barnett, Kim, O'Donnell, & Sitea 2007; Barnett, Fang, & Zurcher, 2014) and disagreement over how to definitively define 'peacebuilding' stems from contention over how to define success and at what point 'peace' can be said to be achieved. A frequent critique of peacebuilding activities is that the emphasis on state-building, institutional development, and governance is only able to achieve a negative peace, or the avoidance of a return to violence (Bangura, 2016). Yet achieving positive peace in which the root causes of conflict addressed require breaking the mould of elite-driven, institutional, and policy-focused peacebuilding and addressing more purposefully the everyday realities of a larger group of actors, including young people. While it is important to address the material realities of deprivation that follow from conflict to achieve lasting peace, an often-overlooked aspect of building peace includes attending to the social and emotional aftermath as well. Engaging with everyday peaceful practices of young people is an important component of peacebuilding insofar as they help to change how people interact with one another and with authorities which in turn has the potential to 'build the "security, trust, and hope" necessary to create a different, more peaceful, future' (Turner, 2015). The next section will look more specifically at the ways that young people positively contribute to peace in the everyday.

Narrations of Peace By and Through Youth

The roles of young people in thinking and speaking about peace are under-appreciated and 'further attention to the intentional roles of youth as knowledge producers and organic diplomats' is needed (Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015, p. 119). Yet discursive framings that situate youth as distinctly separate from adults erase the agency of young people and re-inscribe presumed hierarchies of power (Berents, 2015). Recognizing the different and informal acts of

peace work of young people offers a challenge to limiting frames and there is a growing body of knowledge that documents the positive contributions of young people to peace (for examples see Agbiboa, 2015 and Azmi, Brun, & Lund, 2013, amongst others). In particular, the efforts of young people are often significant insofar as they 'entail efforts to foster humane relationships, bridge differences, and counter structural violence, though not through intentional/formal dialogue or development projects' (Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015, p. 118). The examples that follow are some examples of how various characters in each of the three novels are deeply engaged in similar forms of peace work.

In *A Girl is a Body of Water*, Kirabo embodies radical empathy in the way she interacts with all the secondary characters, be they witches, harlots, husband stealers, flawed feminists, or bossy sisters. For instance, upon seeing her childhood friend Giibwa (who has always been the more elegant and physically attractive of the two) after several years apart Kirabo is overcome with envy and pettiness yet does her best to shield these feelings from her friend. Kirabo's feelings during this meeting are described as follows by the author:

> "This Giibwa knew she was beautiful, Kirabo realized. It was there in her eyes. That entitlement that light-skinned girls had to beauty, to being the centre of attention. Kirabo reached for Sio's hand. How had Giibwa got even more light-skinned? Her hair was enormous and dark. She had lost weight and stretched at the waist. This was no longer the innocent beauty of childhood; this was sharp and malignant. You saw it for the first time, you looked away. Then you stole small secret glances until you got used to it. It was the kind of beauty that made you hate a girl who had done nothing to you." (p. 282)

Kirabo's feelings of envy and fear coexist with awareness and care as she attempts to bridge the space that time has created between the two:

> "Kirabo feared that Giibwa had seen her envy. But whatever she had felt was gone. She was glad to see her again. It was almost three years since she had last seen her. Kirabo was sixteen and a half now and Giibwa was already seventeen, but she was still her best friend" (p. 282-283)
>
> "Kirabo had imagined their first meeting as a succession of breathless hugs, girly exclamations, high-pitched nothings like *Bannange Ki Kati*, gesturing exaggerating the greatness of the moment, like girls did." (p. 283)
>
> "She decided to try again. After all, this was Giibwa. She had to let her know she was still the Kirabo she knew, Kirabo of Nattetta […] It was her fault; she had to reassure Giibwa that she was not jealous of her look. She gave it a moment, then tried again." (p. 283-284)

It is this sense of kindness that creates the lens through which the reader follows Kirabo's journey. It is also what culminates in the novel's ultimate conclusion: that *mwenkanonkano* (a word that Makumbi came up with to describe a Ugandan movement that predates Western feminism) is a space for all women, be they traditional women, defiant women, women of different classes, tribes, and race, to acknowledge each other's humanness and simply *be* (Owens, 2020).

In absence of one central main character, in *Our Lady of the Nile* the different characters embody different ways of creating peace (or conflict). For example, in trying to protect her friend Veronica from the potentially dangerous advantages of the white man who lives near the lycée, Virginia uses the mythology of the Tutsi people as a way to curse the land upon which the white man lives. Gloriosa stands out as not only a barrier to peace within the lychee, but an active contributor to conflict and ultimately violence. In the end Immaculée puts her own safety at risk to smuggle Virginia out of the school and facilitates her transport to the house of trustworthy and safe family. Thus, although Gloriosa is a force of violence, her presence in the novel serves to heighten the bravery of Immaculée's final action and make the scenes between Immaculée and

Virginia all the more powerful. Immaculée also has more subtle moments where she chooses friendship over the division that Gloriosa perpetuates. For instance, when Goretti proclaims to the class (in an act of defiance against Gloriosa's performed superiority) that *she* will go trek with the famed gorillas, Immaculée volunteers to join her, leaving Gloriosa to glower at her for the perceived betrayal (p. 104). In this act Gloriosa and Immaculée both challenge the sense that Gloriosa is the only one wealthy enough and 'worthy' of such an adventure. Their regaling of their adventures to their class upon their return also functions to create a bond amongst the girls, as they all share in the delight of the story and the experience, much to Gloriosa's dismay.

Goretti on the other hand, is much less dramatic in her protestations against Gloriosa. For instance, she snubs Gloriosa's welcome at the beginning of the school year. In this interaction Gloriosa has stationed herself beside the headmistress, thereby claiming an informal sense of authority and superiority and instead of accepting this, Goretti brushes past Gloriosa and mocks her by saying "Still prancing around like a minister, I see" (p. 28). Similarly, later in the novel when Gloriosa is increasing her authority in the lychee, most of the girls (and some staff) take every opportunity to become closer to her. Goretti however, chooses to keep her distance and covertly express some scepticism in Gloriosa's rising power to those whom she still trusts. Thus, Goretti once again makes the decision to distance herself from Gloriosa without directly challenging her.

In *The Dragonfly Sea*, although Ayaana is tasked with being the manifestation of international partnership, the contradictions she experiences in this role are symbolic of the contradictions in incorporating youth into formal peacebuilding. For Ayaana, her voyage to China is both free and costly, empowering and restrictive. While her education and board are free, her time away costs her a connection to her home island and the sea, to her family and

particularly her father who dies in her absence. Similarly, while she is afforded freedom to move around her new city as she pleases and is exposed to a variety of new experiences, she is also bound by the restrictions placed upon her as a state figure. The control Ayaana experiences under the guise of an opportunity for mutual exchange mirrors the changes happening in Kenya under new Chinese involvement. Upon returning to Pate after her education is complete Ayaana is aghast at the many Chinese-led changes such as the closing of the 'eternal' Mkana Channel, a new harbour and oil pipeline, and a "Chinese-built coal factory that would rise in pristine Lamu and turn the island black and bleak" (p. 417). Thus, for Ayaana her peace does not come from the formal partnership she spearheads, but rather from the micro-relationships she makes along the way, and ultimately her acceptance of the changes her family undergoes in her absence. As a result, far from being a gesture of friendship and goodwill, Ayaana's role as 'The Descedent' devolves into experiences of coercion and restriction.

I do not argue that the authors of the three novels set out with the intention of explicitly commenting on youth peacebuilding in an academic and theoretical sense. However, I argue that when the aspects of reality reflected in the stories are applied to peacebuilding, they can offer important lessons. One such lesson is in regard to the tension that exists overusing the 'everyday' or the 'local' as a potentially useful space for peacebuilding efforts. For instance, Belloni (2012) cautions that an emphasis on the usefulness of the everyday to peace and conflict studies has led to a glorification of all things 'everyday' and 'local' as useful. Indeed, while some characters are indeed acting in explicit or more formal roles as peacebuilders (such as Ayaana when acting in her role as 'The Descendent', or Immaculée's decision to save Virginia from the anti-Tutsi violence), the primary motivator for other character is to simply 'get on' with their daily lives. This is not to diminish the impact their everyday actions may have as more mundane acts of

peace *work,* but rather it is to suggest that *not all* characters experience conflict and peace as *solely* exceptional circumstances. Instead, peace becomes enmeshed within their daily lives and entrenched in the structures and routines of everyday life.

The contradiction between different forms of peace work demonstrates that 'youth' is not a static construct but rather, it is subject to its own diversities and fractions where youth have the capacity for both peace and division, but they come to exercise either through the experiences they encounter in their daily lives. Not only does this highlight the importance of resisting monolithic representations of the everyday as cautioned by Belloni, but it also exemplifies Millar's (2020) caution that incorporating the everyday into peacebuilding discussion often involves over-politicization. In overly politicizing the everyday, the more mundane and organic instances may be overlooked, and youth potentially wrongly identified as ill-equipped or incapable of participating in peacebuilding if there are not also examples of overt and politically motivated peacebuilding.

Each character mentioned above has their own unique experience of building peace, some of which conflict with or contradict one other, some that may appear contradictory to 'peacebuilding' as a broader political project, but each of which is ultimately meaningful to the individual. 'Peace' therefore is not monolithic but is grounded in subjective experiences. Peacebuilding theorization must reconcile such variations in a way that is attentive to youths' unique contexts without compromising the merit and legitimacy that comes with recognizing youth peacebuilding as a global trend. Doing so necessitates a willingness to appreciate peace-building that may not look like peacebuilding in its traditional sense by loosening the grip on a normative vision of peacebuilding and accepting potentially different interpretations that are grounded in the knowledges produced by youth themselves.

Peace in the three novels is not presented as an outcome to be achieved through acute, state-centric processes but rather is articulated through a series of everyday attempts to navigate one's own social world. Peace is presented as a reality in which each character can have their perspectives honoured and to be able to exert agency over the decisions that affect their lives. This is not to say that such a vision of peace is incompatible with state-led exercises, but the three novels leave the impression that any such measures will be ineffective if they are unable to capture the vibrance of youth populations. Although there has been an increased focus on the perspective of young people in building the types of grassroots social relations that are needed to achieve a lasting peace, the success of such initiatives has been limited by a reluctance to transfer authority and decision-making power to young people (McEvoy-Levy, 2012). For instance, it is interesting to think about what Ayaana's role could have been had she been given the space and authority to breathe her own truth and history into the role. I conjecture that it may have been less fruitful for Chinese development interests in Kenya, but potentially more successful in building honest and tolerant relations. While based on a fictional account, I argue that this question and the examples provided in this section helps to suggest that the limited success of youth peacebuilding initiatives represents a slippage between the design of these initiatives in theory and their practical implementation.

An important question to consider is the extent to which a critical peace perspective can decolonize engagements with young people in the creation of knowledge about peace (Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015, p. 121). It is my stipulation that the novels mentioned here, as well as novels more broadly, can offer a place to begin this imagination as it helps to distinguish between 'peace work' as organic, everyday activities, and 'peacebuilding' as formal and structured activities. In this sense novels are a helpful tool to unsettle peace from its colonial discourses and

imperial constructions of knowledge about what peacebuilding looks like and who peacebuilders are. Indeed, a state-centric approach to peacebuilding has been critiqued for its short-term, project-oriented design (Bangura, 2016; Kashwera, 2020; Liden, 2009) and reconceptualizing peacebuilding as a longer-term process that is embedded in the everyday helps to overcome these limitations. The everyday is defined as the 'realm in which ordinary, taken-for-granted, habitual social life is performed' (Brewer, 2018, p. 15) and I propose that the term *peace work* better encapsulates this more organic nature of the everyday because while it may be spurred or supported by peace- building, it does not occur solely in isolated and formal peacebuilding activities. In this sense, peace work differs from informal peacebuilding as it is an attempt to overcome the binary of 'formal' vs. 'informal' itself. I stipulate that peace work can encompass activities that would otherwise be considered 'formal' and those that are understood as 'informal'. This is to say that peace work is fundamentally connected to a person's broader life and therefore can contribute to a 'culture of peace' in ways that are not captured by a narrow and exclusionary focus on a binary of formal vs. informal peacebuilding.

In both *A Girl is a Body of Water* and *Our Lady of the Nile*, the main characters seem to be less successful in formal and institutionalized settings that are intended to broker peace than in their everyday actions that create cultures of peace. Ayaana's time as 'The Descedent' is not only unsuccessful in shaping her identity as part of a Chinese lineage, but also works to veil the exploitative extractive pursuits of the Chinese state in Kenya. Similarly, in *Our Lady of the Nile,* while the lychee is intended to be a space to shape 'the future female elite' of the country, in the end it ends up being a breeding ground for anti-Tutsi fervour. However, the girls are able to find small pockets of friendship and safety within Gloriosa's tirade of abuse just as Ayaana creates her own community and sense of belonging. All of these actions take place with a backdrop of

instability, be it in personal relationships and experiences or the wider socio-political contexts (ie. the war on terror in Kenya, the growing anti-Tutsi rhetoric in Rwanda).

Therefore, to decolonize peacebuilding and build new knowledge, the notion of peace work is useful to expand what constitutes 'peacebuilding' and who is considered a legitimate peace-builder. Moving away from the dichotomy of formal/informal is important because it recognizes that 'formal' peacebuilding that is based on elite-led foreign interventionism is exclusionary and inaccessible to many people, particularly youth (Honwana, 2012). Similarly, while 'informal' peacebuilding helps capture other forms of knowledge and participation, it is often used in such a way that it reproduces a colonial and hierarchical sense of difference in which the informal exist 'out there' and as the 'other'. In this way, the dichotomy of formal/informal functions as a form of 'discursive colonialism' or a classification tool used to demarcate social difference as a basis for intervention and domination (Radcliffe, 2015). Thus, peace work is an attempt to account for the complexity of everyday life and the social heterogeneity therein.[6]

Not all actions of youth can by subsumed within peace work, but I suggest that peacebuilding theorization would benefit from an openness to recognize the experiences that resonate more closely with young people's own lives. Examples of youth 'building Kachin' in Myanmar (Oosterom, Pan Maran, & Wilson, 2019), engaging with and shaping the informal economy in Sierra Leone (Podder, 2014), and spearheading political revolution in Kenya (Kagwanja, 2005) are but a few examples of young people engaging in peace work in ways not recognizable by the dominant lexicon of peacebuilding. To decolonize peacebuilding from its

[6] The use of social heterogeneity draws from Radcliffe's (2015) argument that social heterogeneity is 'flattened out' by development discourse and the essentialized understandings of social difference that positions the realm of 'local' 'informal' and 'everyday' as distinctly different (inferior) and therefore work to justify domination and conquest.

exclusionary roots, it is important to recognize its epistemic limits and to acknowledge youth as knowledge producers who have their own (potentially contrasting) interpretations of peace and peacebuilding. A crucial step in making peacebuilding more inclusive is therefore not only including youth voice but *starting from* a place of youth knowledge and experience. Doing so challenges the 'adultism' inherent to protectionist discourse, a theme that will now be addressed as it relates to the structures of facilitation and inhibition in young people's lives.

Structures of Facilitation and Inhibition

The way that young people are actively involved in practices of peace in their everyday lives is structured by their broader environments (Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015). Protectionism, much like narratives of 'innocent' or 'victimized' youth, is a powerful discursive and colonial tool that obscures the ways that young people negotiate risk and oppression to act for peace and is a defining feature of the environments young people navigate (Ensor & Reinke, 2014; Watson, 2015). Rather than presenting adults as the 'natural' purveyors of expertise, each of the three novels presents a more fluid boundary between young people and the authority of the various adults in each story.

In *A Girl is a Body of Water*, the adults in Kirabo's life seem to act as both inhibitors *and* enablers of her peace work depending on the context. For example, Nsuuta, the village witch and who is later revealed to be Kirbao's biological grandmother, encourages Kirabo to embrace the original state. While the societal script in Kirabo's community has dictated that the original state is something to be suppressed, Nsuuta give Kirabo the encouragement and space to explore this part of herself, allowing a sense of freedom that Kirabo is otherwise denied. However, Nsuuta also comes to represent the impossibility of women's position and the impact of gendered expectations on her personal autonomy.

Similarly, Kirabo's Aunt Abi represent female sexual liberation and the importance of female pleasure in sexual relationships. In the following scene Aunt Abi explains female sexual pleasure to Kirabo:

> "Has YA told you about labia elongation?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "Of course she has! She must be your formal aunt, must she not?" Kirabo now began to see a conflict between Aunt Abi, who had said, "This one is mine," when she first arrived, and Aunt YA, who was Tom's oldest sister: "But I will help too." Aunt Abi was saying "Don't do too long. Long is old-fashioned, before men discovered women." She wrinkled her nose. "Just a little, like this." She indicated the upper two segments of her tiny finger. "Doors to keep things closed." She pressed her hands together. "And don't pinch them at the top. Otherwise, you will get strings. Hold them right at the base with the thumb on one side and both the fore and middle fingers on the other. That will keep them wide." Kirabo nodded. This was the kind of Aunt Talk which never seemed to end. "You will have to show me how far you have gone. Don't worry; I will show you mine."
>
> The idea of looking at Aunt Abi's bits. Kirabo must have pulled a face, for Aunt Abi asked, "Did YA explain why we elongate?"
>
> "She said I will not have children if I don't."
>
> "Kdto!" Aunt Abi was outraged. "Trust YA to use scare tactics. Kirabo, elongation is the one thing we women for ourselves. It is for when you start having sex. A man is supposed to touch them before, you know, to know you are ready By the time the entire length of them is wet you are ready."
>
> "We do it for ourselves?" Kirabo wrinkled her nose in disgust.
>
> Aunt Abi shuffled to the end of her sofa in earnest. "Look, Kirabo, don't delude yourself. Everything about us, our entire world, is built on how men react to us. So yes, in that respect we elongate because men can be inept. They are also supposed to guide them to the bean if you are still dry. Child, never let a man rush you. Tell him *I am not ready,* show him how to use his member to whip the labia, slow and gentle a first, then fast. Within a minute, you are ready If you land on the kind of husband who does not know what to do, pack your bags and come home – hmm, hmm. An inept husband is a life sentence."

> Kirabo smiled. Nsuuta would have stated that elongation was evidence of selfish lovemaking our foremothers had to put up with.
>
> Aunt Abi must have misread her thoughts, for she looked at her with a worried face. “Have you ever looked at yourself down there, Kirabo?”
>
> “No.”
>
> “No?” The incredulity. “Could you not find a mirror? You must look at yourself properly. It is the most magical part of you. You know a flower that is beginning to unfold?”
>
> “Yes.”
>
> “That is your flower. Explore it, love, find out what it is capable of before you hand it over to a man.”
>
> Though Kirabo had no intention of looking down there, it was inspiring to see Aunt Abi’s attitude towards it. Now it was a flower, not ruins.
>
> (pp. 171-173)

This information is liberating for Kirabo, who has otherwise been taught that sex is either for the pleasure of male partners, or purely a reproductive ‘duty’ in a marriage. However, Aunt Abi’s feminism also reinforces patriarchal notions of marriage. When her father’s new wife Nnambi refuses to raise Kirabo as a child her husband bore out of a prior affair, Aunt Abi shames her for this decision and actively displays her dislike for Nnambi.

Similarly, in *Our Lady of the Nile*, the adults at the lychee represent different types and degrees of structures. For example, the headmistress, known as ‘Mother Superior’, symbolizes the overarching power structure at the school and what should be the final source of authority. However, Mother Superior’s control over decisions in the school is both malleable and porous. When a student becomes engaged to and impregnated by a powerful political figure, Mother Superior is powerless to deny her presence at the school (something she wholeheartedly disagrees with, given its very public presentation of pre-marital sex). Similarly, when the Queen of Belgium comes to visit, Mother Superior is forced to relinquish her authority over the

education and class schedule as political representatives all but take over the school in preparation for the visit. In the final scenes of the novel, Mother Superior has been relegated to merely a figurehead of authority as Gloriosa uses her family connections to install military control over the school to carry out her persecution of the Tutsi students.

Similarly, Father Herménégilde is the head priest at the school, charged with their religious and moral education. However, it is revealed that he has a history of preying on the young girls at the school, bribing them with clothing and expensive luxury items in exchange for sex. Thus, a figure that is not only supposed to represent the moral code that the girls must adhere to, but who is also responsible for teaching them how to lead a morally respectful life, is himself engaged in ethically reprehensible behaviour. As a figure of safety and guidance, Father Herménégilde turns into a source of violence and insecurity for many of the girls.

These depictions demonstrate that any rigid boundary between adults as the purveyors of knowledge, of safety, or of purely a positive or negative force in young people's decisions to engage in peace work is not only arbitrary but also highly fluid. This in turn challenges the static and inflexible nature of the distinction between 'child', 'youth', and 'adult' more broadly. Thus, these examples above help to reinforce the argument that a 'key element to genuine and transformative participation is "mutual respect and power sharing" between young people and adults' (Drummond-Mundal & Cave, 2007) in which the rigid boundaries between 'youth' and 'adult' are broken down. However, such a reshaping of boundaries is predicated on first acknowledging the discursive constructs that exist and the boundaries therein, similarly to the processes undertaken here in chapters 1 and 2. A failure to do so serves to delegitimizes young people's attempts to take their seat at the adult table of decision making. Peacebuilding studies have similarly demonstrated the less overt ways that such delegitimating occurs (Schwartz, 2010;

Abbink & Van Kessel, 2005). Discourses such as protectionism that maintain a rigid boundary between 'youth' and 'adult' are thus exclusionary when they reinforce a denial of young people's agency (MacEvoy-Levy, 2011). When extrapolated more broadly, the exclusionary boundaries are a reflection of colonial constructions of knowledge in which certain 'permissible' ways of being are propelled at the expense of others.

To this point, Ensor and Reinke (2014) dispute the rigidity between 'adult' and 'youth' and rather suggest emphasizing young people's ability to traverse into adult-centric domains and to make their own decisions regarding their well-being. However, in traversing into adult-centric structures, young people may also seek to resist the binds imposed by these very structures. These moments echo the argument that despite the lack of place-making authority granted to young people, they are nonetheless actively involved in the asserting their own agency and defying the very structures that limit them (McEvoy-Levy, 2012).

Indeed, throughout *The Dragonfly Sea*, Ayaana makes many attempts to subvert the restrictive structures that bind her. As a child she escapes down to the sea when the teasing from her peers becomes too much, or when her own emotions and sense of loss from not having a biological father present in her life feels unbearable. She agrees to travel to China as 'The Descendent' in part to escape the memory and pain of 'Thursday', the day of the week on which she was sexually assaulted. Most significantly, Ayaana clearly asserts her authority at a young age when she 'chooses' Muhidin as her father in the absence of a biological father figure. In doing so Ayaana recognizes the importance to her community of being able to identify your paternal lineage and sets out to rectify this on her own terms. While this could be interpreted as a childish attempt to recreate the family structure that she envies (and is ridiculed for lacking) in her peers, the bond between herself and Muhidin and eventually her mother and Muhidin is one

that endures. The power of the relationship she creates with Muhidin is so strong that as her community comes to accept him as her rightful father, a strong attachment is also fostered between Muhidin in her mother, culminating in their marriage and having a child together. Thus, Ayaana's agency in recognizing not only the societal importance of having a father figure, but also to create and acknowledge an important emotional connection should not be overlooked. Ayaana's character represents a challenge to the notion that young people are emotionally and intellectually immature when compared to their adult counter parts.

Kirabo's story in *A Girl is a Body of Water* is similar insofar as she continually battles the many faces of patriarchy. Whether it be the various adults in her life that reproduce patriarchal expectations of womanhood or the societal pressures she faces that dissuade higher education over marriage, Kirabo struggles with how to be a woman in her changing society.

While Ayaana's decision to relinquish her role as the Descedent, or Imaculée's choice to actively protect her Tutsi classmate could easily be read as politically motivated actions, there is a misguided tendency within peacebuilding theory to unnecessarily politicize the everyday, thereby stripping it of the very features that make it a valuable analytical concept (Millar, 2020, p. 311). 'Everydayness' is about the "emergent character of everyday practice; the fluid, organic and creative tactics individuals deploy to get along within complex socio-cultural milieu" (Millar, 2020, p. 311). Thus, while it may be tempting to ascribe political agency and intent to the efforts of some of these characters, it may be more useful to interpret their action as 'pre-political', or "things that may not be directly or unequivocally classified as "political participation", but at the same time could be of great significance for future political activities" (Millar, 2020, p. 317). Doing so is less about re-inscribing a dichotomy of political or not, or

political (in the everyday sense) vs. Political (in a formal sense) and more about expanding and nuancing how youth agency is understood more broadly.

For example, while a focus on everyday political agency helps amplify the contributions of young people, they also run the risk of reproducing exclusionary boundaries in which the 'everyday' occurs somewhere 'out there'. To this point, Vayryen (2010) argues that "[the] tendency to define everyday through the subaltern and her spatiality, namely through the spatial location where the subaltern is assumed to reside and through the forms of everyday life that are thought to characterize her. In the local turn, subaltern and her everyday life is projected to be somewhere "out there", in the distance location of the violent political conflict or post-conflict zone" (pp. 24-25). Examples of this include Azmi, Brun, and Lund's (2013) assertion that while engaged in a form of peace work the youth in their investigation are 'stuck in their everyday politics, in a situation of "betweenness" – between Politics and politics' or Podder's (2014) concept of 'subaltern agency' to describe the power and capacity that youth possess to create routes for social belonging and to remedy their marginal status independent of inclusion in formal policy and strategy. While this approach 'privileges the agency of individual efforts to survive amidst structural limitations and obstacles to social mobility' (Podder, 2014, p. 55), classifications such as these portray youth agency as merely tactical or survival rather than emphasizing their Political and relational capacities (Oosterom, Maran, & Wilson, 2019; Baines, 2015). To move beyond this binary Vayrynen (2010) suggests drawing on an early feminist research agenda that focuses on the practice of doing peace as a more effective way to understand political agency.

The concept of 'pre-political' agency is a useful contribution in this regard if it is employed with the intent of moving beyond restrictive and exclusionary binaries and instead to

highlight the relationship between formal political agency and everyday or subaltern forms of agency. The notion of pre-political agency acknowledges the significance of this form of agency to formal political agency, while also leaving space for the ways that everyday or subaltern agency may manifest in a resistance to or disengagement from political participation. It therefore helps to reveal the diversity of and relationship between efforts towards living in peace, some of which are political in motivation, many of which are not, but all of which impact the ways that young people relate and contribute to the broader peacebuilding context. Moreover, it emphasizes that when exploring youth political agency, a central feature must be what their actions reveal about the structures they are responding to.

Conclusion

For peacebuilding theory to be more inclusive to the valuable lived experiences of youth, and subsequently to better address the practical implementation of youth-centric peacebuilding, the epistemic foundations of both liberal 'peace' and liberal 'youth' must be questioned. Doing so gives us pause to think more deeply about what it means to be a 'youth', how conflict is experienced by youth, and the ways that peace is performed and achieved by youth. The intended result is not to interpret all youth action as inherently peace action, or even all peace work as inherently political peace work, but rather to assert the value in starting peacebuilding from the perspectives of young people and their own conceptions of what peace looks like and how it should be accomplished. While looking to the everyday as a space in which meaningful peace work occurs is a way to achieve this end, I do not argue that such an emphasis on the everyday should come at the expense of structural, state-level change. Rather, everyday peacebuilding is most valuable when it is supported alongside top-driven, structural reform. I have focused on asserting the value of the everyday as a zone of peacebuilding at the expense of a conversation

regarding the latter given that the everyday, and, in particular, the everyday as more than just a pseudonym for 'local' still occupies a marginal position within peacebuilding theory and therefore requires a more dedicated space of contemplation.

As stated at the onset of this paper, novels are useful instruments for a conversation regarding everyday peacebuilding given their exploration of the complexities and nuances of everyday life for a young person during a period of conflict. Considering criticisms that the everyday is co-opted as a placeholder for the local, the novels I have examined are also useful because they do not solely focus on the intentionally politically motivated actions of its young characters. Rather, each novel explores how the more mundane and unexceptional aspects of their lives in a conflict-setting normalize values of trust, respect, and ultimately peace. In this sense, they reflect the notion that "Peace has to be enacted anew in every generation, in every year and every day, in the living relationships of person to person in all social forums and institutions" (Brewer et al., 2018, p. 249). Without this type of social reconstruction and healing in which people reinforce peaceful ways of living together, any attempts at conflict resolution are unlikely to take root.

The discussion this paper has offered also contributes to a broader discussion of the 'local' turn in the field of peace and conflict studies. While it builds on the enthusiasm for the transformative potential of the 'everyday', particularly its ability to offer inclusion to young people, it is also sensitive to cautions against regarding the everyday as a silver bullet (such as Millar, 2020 and Belloni, 2012). This paper has demonstrated that focusing on how peace and conflict are youthed involves accepting the positive and negative roles of young people on the basis that both lend insights into creating a more expansive and long-lasting peace. Although a focus on the complexity of everyday life reveals the ways that young people can be both

peacebuilders and peacebreakers, even the moments that may be seen antagonistic to peace help showcase the root causes of conflict that may otherwise go unaddressed. The novels emphasize that the 'everyday' is not monolithic, and that regardless of how they may first appear, the full spectrum of how peace and conflict are 'youthed' is significant to peacebuilding efforts and worthy of consideration. The everyday is useful not because everything that takes place in this space positively contributes to peace, but because it is where social worlds are negotiated, where the intimate relations of peace are (re)made, and where formal, state-led, or top-down peacebuilding processes come to life. Consequently, it cannot be viewed as separate or distinct from the 'global' or the 'political' but rather as fundamentally integral to these.

Highlighting the value of everyday youth experience and knowledge through a sensitivity to narrations of peace by youth also questions the logic that peacebuilding knowledge is elite driven. An everyday approach to peacebuilding questions the "outdated liberal notions of top-down, state centrist and technocratic blueprints for peacebuilding" and "disempowers the alleged "expertise" of the outside peacebuilding professional" (Brewer et al., 2018, p. 210). I have argued that young people deserve particular attention as knowledge producers. This finding it situated within a broader discussion in the 'local turn' about who represents and speaks for the everyday experiences at this level. In liberal peacebuilding while it is often elites that are incorporated as the mouthpieces for the 'local' in peacebuilding processes (as demonstrated by Omeje & Hepner, 2013 and Wade, 2016), they may have a vested interest in maintaining the exclusionary status quo as a form of self-preservation (Barnett et al., 2017). However, as this chapter has demonstrated, the local is comprised of a diversity of experiences, some of which are purely locally situated, and others that represent the collision of the local and external or foreign actors and processes. Young people's narrations of peace in particular represent a critical

component in addressing the root causes of conflict and therefore establishing meaningful and lasting peace. There is therefore a need for greater recognition of the plurality of everyday experiences that can occur at the local level and the value that a more diverse set of voices can afford to peacebuilding. As this paper has demonstrated, doing so is also predicated on a power-sharing agreements in which a sense of control in which only a few are assumed to be the rightful purveyors of knowledge is relinquished.

Lastly, I have argued that the structures that shape young people's lives are inhibiting to their positive peacebuilding capacity when they rely on protectionism at the expense of allowing young people to explore their own creative agency. By the same token, structures can facilitate peace work by exercising some degree of power sharing in which the division between 'adult' and 'youth' is not rigidly maintained. Doing so also requires allowing space for youth to fail, to explore paths that may not work, and ultimately to imagine for themselves what 'successful' peacebuilding looks like. Importantly, recognizing youth voice and knowledge cannot be an exclusive process in which only some youths are acknowledged. To this end, 'policy-makers need to consult with a broader group of young people, not just those who are easy and unchallenging to listen to' (Cook & Wall, 2011, p. 180). This is not to say that adults cannot meaningfully contribute to youth peacebuilding and that their own knowledge is fundamentally inconsistent with young people's best interests. Rather, it is only to reiterate that the starting place for inclusive peacebuilding must be with young people themselves in more equitable power-sharing and knowledge-producing arrangements. As such, any intervention must be based on the recognition that external actors are not the sole purveyors of peacebuilding knowledge, nor is there one universal template for peace but rather that positive contributions to peace can be greatly facilitated by the broader environment.

The framework offered by Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015) is a useful contribution to the study of peace and conflict insofar as it adds colour to the space of the everyday. Exploring the ways peace and conflict are youthed, the ways that young people narrate their own experiences of either, and the structures that facilitate or inhibit the action of young people moves the conversation away from representations of the 'local' as a homogeneous space. In doing so, this framework helps to dismantle the very notions of protectionism and adultism that perpetuate a rigid view of the local and the everyday. Moreover, the nuance afforded by this framework showcases that the local and the everyday are not synonymous but rather the everyday represents a dynamic meeting place between the local and the global, and the mundane and the Political. While this represents an exciting new avenue for the study of peace and conflict more broadly, this chapter has also attempted to balance the enthusiasm for the transformative potential of the everyday. By showcasing the tension and disagreement that occurs within the everyday, this chapter has demonstrated that the everyday is transformative not because all that occurs within this space unequivocally contributes positively to peace, but because acknowledging and working through friction in the everyday is a necessary, and often ignored, aspect of building meaningful peace.

Chapter 4: Social Media Activism & Youth Political Agency

Introduction

The events now known as the 'Arab Spring' were a series of youth-led, anti-government protests and rebellions that began in Tunisia and spread across much of the Arab world between 2010-2012. Of the six African Arab nations where major protests took place, all experienced a significant outcome[7]. Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Morocco all experienced government changes, if not complete government overthrows as a direct result of the protests and collective action. Major gains were also achieved in Algeria and Sudan where a 19-year-old state of emergency was finally lifted and the reigning president vowed to not seek re-election, respectively. In the 10 years that have since followed these extraordinary moments there has been a marked increase in the use of social media as a tool for activists responding to authoritarian governments across the African continent. This increase in popular uprisings using social media was initially met with hopeful suppositions that a broader 'African Spring' was underway (Chatora 2021). However, over a decade later a growing consensus indicates that the early enthusiasm in the immediate years after the Arab Spring has not been matched with tangible, structural changes across the continent (Chatora 2012). Indeed, of the many countries where protests took place, Tunisia is often regarded as the only nation to have successfully achieved lasting and meaningful change (Parker & Fahim 2021; Yerkes & Mbarek 2021; Grewal 2021). Several other countries such as Syria, Libya, and Yemen have experienced escalating conflict since the protests that, without drawing a direct correlation, at minimum speak to the inability of the protest movements to lead to sustained, positive change.

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[7] Djibouti was the seventh African nation to experience a period of civil disobedience during the Arab Spring however, the protests that took place during this period were relatively minor compared to their counterparts elsewhere across the northern reaches of the continent.

This chapter is primarily concerned with a critique of the deeming of social media-led activism and protests across the African continent as 'successes' or 'failures'. I question the skepticism that has led some (ie. Sandoval & Fuch 2010; Van Laer & Van Aelst 2010) to forsake the once energetic indications of a broader African Spring and the positive potential of social media. Drawing from this query, I will explore the extent to which social media-led activism and protests can be considered emancipatory and transformative for young people, specifically those in the Great Lakes region of East Africa. In looking at social media activism I am drawn to questions of youth agency and the degree to which young people's online activism can be considered *political* agency and the significance of the *process* of social media activism as opposed to its *outcomes*. When discussing agency, I am particularly attuned in this chapter to *agency as voice* and the ways that social media is used as an outlet for youth voice in absence of other, offline outlets. In following from the post-colonial critique that unites this project, I am particularly inspired by agency as voice as it relates to the subaltern as detailed by Spivak (1988) in which the subaltern's voice is rendered invisible by imperial and colonial structures of 'legitimate' knowledge. This is to say that discourse from non-Western forms of 'knowing' are diminished and displaced to the margins of intellectual discourse. In this chapter I use a post-colonial critique to start from the position that youth voices on social media are similarly discredited as antithetical to meaningful political dialogue. However, in this chapter I demonstrate that Twitter can afford young people a powerful space to reclaim a sense of agency and voice through the ways that they mobilize and participate in social campaigns online. To do this I engage with theoretical debates about agency, power, knowledge, and politics by grounding the discussion in the recent Twitter campaigns in three East African nations. I explore the

principal debates of this chapter in the light of the #CongoIsBleeding campaign in the DRC, #FreeStellaNyanzi in Uganda, and #Repeal162 in Kenya.

The broader objective of this project is to examine avenues for greater youth inclusion in peacebuilding. To this end I suggest that one of the most significant outcomes of the Arab Spring has been the widespread acceptance that online, virtual spaces are arenas where young people naturally conglomerate and engage in dialogue. Therefore, I look to social media not to suggest that online campaigns themselves constitute peacebuilding, but rather, and in a similar vein as the use of novels in the previous chapters, that social media constitutes an interesting space of new imaginations. In this chapter I look at what happens (or is happening) in online spaces in terms of youth voice and agency, and the extrapolations that can be made to peacebuilding more broadly as a result. I deliberately chose to examine Twitter campaigns that were born from the ground-up by local people rather than by external or foreign institutions to remain consistent with the overarching objective to explore alternatives to institutionalized peacebuilding. An example of the latter includes projects endorsed by the organization ConnexUS, a "social impact network" that supports digital creators working on peacebuilding initiatives (ConnexUS, n.d.). However, many of the projects supported by ConnexUS are funded by groups or institutions firmly embedded in the liberal peace paradigm such as universities in the Global North, the Bezos Family Foundation, the European Union, and the United Nations. While I do not discredit the work of projects funded by these entities, I instead sought out campaigns that arose organically at a local level, independently of external impetus. As a result, the campaigns I examine have a less explicit connection to peacebuilding (as an institutionalized, liberal exercise) than those supported by organizations such as ConnexUS and many others. However, in seeking

out ways in which peace is supported outside of a liberal model, it was crucial to be selective in which campaigns to include.

It is also important to emphasize here that while I look to a few snapshots of 'locally grounded' social media campaigns, they are not intended to be exhaustive of the plethora of online activism that can and is taking place. Rather, I again reiterate that the examples used are only intended to be grounding points for a more theoretical re-imagination of possibilities. Thus, the examples used in this chapter cannot be taken as representative of *all* youth. As delineated in chapters 1 and 2, 'youth' is not a homogenous category and indeed great harm can be done when it is treated as such. While I will attend to some of the social identities that shape online activism in this chapter, there will be many ivtersectionalities that, by virtue of the scope of this chapter and project, will not be addressed. However, I here acknowledge that there are many other factors that while significant, will not be the focus of this chapter.

The approach I take in this chapter is in contrast to the programmatic tendency to assume that youth need to be *given* opportunities for voice or that they *lack* voice in some regard. Instead, I follow the assumption laid out at the onset of this thesis that youth are not deficient in their capacities for peacebuilding, such as in their capability to exercise their voice and agency. Rather, I have suggested throughout this thesis that it is the systems and structures in place that lack the ability to *acknowledge* youth voice where it naturally occurs. Therefore, the theory of change that I have put forth thus far is not that *new* spaces need to be *created* but that more attention and recognition needs to be directed to that which already exist.

This chapter will proceed as follows. Firstly, I situate the theoretical position of this chapter within the broader framework of this dissertation, specifically the application of critical and post-development theory to the concept of 'agency'. Secondly, I outline two key debates

related to this topic, namely, social media as a new space for active citizenship vs. for government repression, and social media as slacktivism vs. as passive citizenship. Thirdly, I provide brief contextual information regarding the three Twitter campaigns outlined above before moving into an engagement with the central theme of the paper. I argue in favour of or a re-reading of the idea of an 'African Spring' in a way that accounts for the fluid and effervescent nature of youth-led online activities. I therefore stipulate that 'success' of social media activism be re-imagined to emphasis the *process* of activism over the *outcomes* in terms of ability to create immediate structural change.

Theoretical Positioning

Following from the proceeding chapters, I continue to draw from post- and critical-development schools of thought for this discussion. In particular, I follow Kadoda and Hale (2015) and Mateos and Baja Erro (2021) in their acknowledgements that the online protest movements that have exploded on the African continent in the past decade can be viewed primarily as *development* issues insofar as they are often responses to the failures of governments to fulfill the development promises of the post-independence eras. I also follow Otiono (2021) in their assertion that post-development offers a space for a more positive perspective on social media activism, specifically in terms of its ability to open space for youth voices. For instance, Otiono (2021) argues that a post-development reading of digital activism in Africa illuminates the "ways that African youths are constructing resistance against oppressive regimes while moving forward on their own terms" (p. 124). Situating social media within post-development also helps to expand on the concept of the 'everyday' that has been discussed in the previous chapters. This is because shifting focus from 'traditional' peacebuilding actors (ie. states, international institutions, etc.) to new forms of social integration and communication features the

ways that ordinary people construct their own alternatives to development and peacebuilding within their everyday lives. Thus, situating the following discussion within the bounds of post-development theory helps to position youth social media activism within the broader goals of this project of looking to more organic forms of youth knowledge production.

This chapter also adds an additional component to the theoretical landscape to the extent that I look to critical development studies for a reading of 'agency' that better accounts for youth knowledge production. To do this I pair Honwana's (2012) concept of 'waithood' with Millar's (2020) concept of 'pre-political agency' (introduced in the previous chapter) to analyze the relationship between youth action and structural or discursive constraints. Honwana (2012) uses the concept of waithood from Singerman (2008) to categorize the period between childhood and adulthood as one of 'waiting' (either voluntarily or involuntarily) to secure steady employment and marriage, as well as a variety of other socially determined markers of adulthood. Honwana (2012) brings waithood within the folds of critical development by arguing that for young people on the African continent this period of waithood is not only a *prolonged* period, but it is largely shaped by the structural constraints of a global capitalist system that has disadvantaged them in relation to their Global North counterparts. She argues that waithood represents a contradiction of modernity insofar as:

> "young people's expectations are simultaneously raised by the new technologies of information and communication that connect them to global cultures, and constrained by the limited prospects and opportunities in the daily lives" (Honwana, 2013, n.p.).

Yet far from succumbing to their stereotype as a 'lost generation', Honwana (2012) argues that African youth are engaged in a long process of negotiating their identity and independence. Thus, she argues that the protests and online activism are best read as active challenges by young

people to their marginal structural position and attempts to find solutions to their problems in absence of a distrusted state and global system.

As I will conclude in the latter sections of this chapter, the concept of pre-political agency helps to translate Honwana's findings into an interpretation of agency that is more fluid in nature. As described by Millar (2020), pre-political agency refers to actions that may or may not be universally categorized as 'political participation' in a formal sense, but nonetheless are of great significant for *future* political activities. What is essential in this definition is the notion of agency as something that is fluid and on-going and that cannot be neatly categorized by any one particular action. In associating agency with voice, I therefore suggest that through the practice of engaging in online social media campaigns young people exercise using their voice for political action, an activity that shapes their experiences with the offline world. Thus, in combining 'waithood' and 'pre-political agency' I am drawing focus towards the idea of agency and voice as *process*. In other words, this paper begins at a theoretical standpoint that views the exercise of one's agency and voice as an iterative process between repression and resistance. I make use of the idea of the internet as a rhizome from Sebeelo (2021) and the concept of 'techno-sociality' from Bohler-Muller and van der Merwe (2011) to expand on this idea.

Bohler-Muller & van der Merwe (2011) use the concept of 'techno-sociality' to unpack the Tunisian revolutions that sparked the broader Arab Spring. They stipulate that techno-sociality refers to the merging of technology with social behaviour and it was this marriage of online and offline worlds that fueled much of the coming revolutions of the Arab Spring. In other words, the authors use this concept to emphasize the fluid interconnectedness that made up the collaborations that sparked the revolutions of the Arab Spring. Similarly, Sebeelo (2021) uses the analogy of a rhizome to describe the internet as something that is made up of multiple shifting

functions that is constantly morphing, rather than a singular entity with static use (p. 99). These two concepts together elucidate a shifting connectivity that is unique to digital activism. They also provide a framework to understand the ways that the tools of social media are not by nature positive or negative, but rather are shaped by those who use them. This latter point will become useful for a discussion of the use of social media by both authoritarian governments as a tool of repression, and by online activists as a tool of resistance. Thus, when analyzing agency and 'success' of online activities such as social media activism, it is my argument that it is necessary to account for the fluidity that makes up these activities.

The implications of the theoretical perspective I have chosen on the broader issue of youth peacebuilding knowledge production relates to the discursive frames that portray young people as apathetic and as a 'lost generation'. This chapter advances the notion that young people are engaged in creative methods of knowledge production that fall outside of 'traditional' peacekeeping mechanisms. The theoretical positioning of this chapter helps to situate young people as engaged in a vast online world of discourse and debate that is demonstrative of the type of 'everyday' peace work advanced in the previous chapter. Moreover, I approach this topic from the perspective that young people *are* knowledge producers in their own right and that greater recognition for the organic ways that they choose to create their own narratives about peacebuilding is needed. Social media activism alone therefore does not necessarily constitute peacebuilding per se but can be an important space where young people explore using their voice and agency to imagine new futures together. This is a critical aspect of moving towards a peacebuilding approach that is more responsive to the needs and ideas of young people themselves. Once again, this is in contrast to a more deficiency-based approach that assumes young people lack the capacity to understand and engage with peacebuilding. This is consistent

with the theme of young people as the *architects* rather than just the *participants* of peacebuilding initiatives, as advanced throughout this project.

Key Debates

New spaces for activism or for on-going repression?

Much of the enthusiasm that came in the wake of the Arab Spring for social media as a revolutionary tool to overthrow authoritarian governments has been related to the new spaces for active citizenship that social media affords. Authors such as Persily and Tucker (2020) and Guess and Lyons (2020) argue that social media provides opportunities for more direct democracy with more voices participating in political discussion. Such an assertion is based on the idea that social media provides opportunities for more people to voice their perspectives, more direct access to political leaders (ie. by being able to subscribe and comment on representative's Twitter or Facebook pages), and spaces for citizens to interact with a broader network of like-minded individuals (Bohler-Muller & van der Merwe 2011, p. 7; Bosch, Admire, & Ncube 2020; and Chatora 2012, p. 4 respectively). Such potential has led some to proclaim that social media represents a fourth wave of global democratization that has its origins in North Africa during the Arab Spring (Hashim 2021). From this perspective it appears that social media represents a powerful and important arena to pay attention to when engaging with where and how young people exercise their voice. Indeed, social media has the potential to successfully mitigate many of the barriers to wider political participation in Africa, namely access to information, time and funds required to maintain political engagement, and a lack of political infrastructure (Chatora 2012). Many have noted that access to mobile internet (as opposed to a static, home connection) has been rapidly increasing on the continent (Bohler-Muller & van der Merwe 2011, pp. 2-4). For instance, in the seven years between 2015-2022 the number of internet users on the continent

more than doubled to 570 million people (Saleh, 2023). Moreover, of total web traffic, the African continent has the highest percentage of *mobile* internet use globally (Bianchi, 2023).

While the previous chapter attended to peacebuilding and its age-based and *gendered* dynamics, the topic of social media helps brings class dynamics into view. Despite the relative affordability of mobile internet services and thus to spaces for political dialogue and participation, it may remain out of reach for more rural communities (Munga, 2022). This divide cuts across class and gender lines in that the ability to participate in social media-based political discussions is dependent on functional literacy which, given low rates of education, particularly for women's and girls in some parts of the continent, make such literacy unattainable for some. Therefore, the economic accessibility of mobile internet services does not alone equate to an ability and access to online political activities. While a rural/urban divide demonstrates class and gender segregation, even within more affluent urban spaces there are still class distinctions in terms of *how* people engage with the online platforms. This is to say that while literacy is a minimum requirement to access and contribute to online political conversations and activities, the *type* and *degree* of literacy can shape *how* someone engages online. The implication for youth agency and peacebuilding is that social media activism cannot be representative of *all* youth in the same way. Thus, while it presents an interesting avenue to explore youth voice, there are important nuances as to the type of young person whose voice is represented online. For instance, having access to the language and rhetoric of a global intelligentsia can widen the scope of community that a person may have access to. The ability to communicate in a globally resonate manner is no small feat given that international attention can to some degree influence the impact of an online campaign. One such example of the power of social media and international attention is the #BringBackOurGirls campaign in Nigeria that attracted support of

global icons including Michelle Obama, Hilary Clinton, Oprah, as well as institutions including Amnesty International, UNICEF, Oxfam International, and many others (Idowu, 2022). However, while international acknowledgement can play an important 'shaming' role to provoke governments to act, international engagement has proven to be relatively 'thin' or 'shallow'. It is on this basis that Idowu (2022) claims that "the use of digital technologies to hold political leaders accountable by exposing them to the international community is a façade" (p. 536).

Lastly, while mobile internet services help to disseminate information more widely, it cannot be assumed that it is necessarily *good* information to the extent that political officials may also use the tools the internet provides to spread misinformation and propaganda. Therefore, a critical literacy is required to make sense of the vast array of messaging that is available online and to meaningfully participate in political dialogue. Thus, there is tension over the extent to which social media tools and online activism are truly liberatory, or if they further entrench existing offline power hierarchies and structures (Bosch, 2017; Kaddish & Kale, 2015; Matsilele & Ruhanya, 2021).

More recently, there is growing interest in the ways that the same tools used by online activists are also used by authoritarian governments to further exert control over their citizenry. For instance, in 2021 at least 10 African countries experienced a major internet shutdown, with several other countries such as Benin, Uganda, and Zambia (amongst others) enacting tough cyber laws to limit dissenting speech (Allen & Kelly, 2022). In light of recent attempts by authoritarian governments to crack down on and dissuade online political dissent, the Arab Spring can be viewed as somewhat of an anomaly. As Idowu (2022) has argued, an enabling factor for the Arab Spring was the relatively open online space that activists could make use of, free from significant laws restricting them (p. 531). However, partly as a response to the

movements of the Arab Spring, the same degree of online freedom is increasingly harder to access in more contemporary activist spaces. Thus, what successes were gained from the Arab Spring are partly a function of the unique historical moment that they took place in.

Slacktivism or a new activism?

The term 'slacktivism', also referred to as 'clicktivism' and 'armchair activism' refers to "supposedly inauthentic, low-threshold forms of political engagement online, such as signing an e-petition or 'liking' a Facebook page" (Mare 2016, p. 64). From a cynical perspective, this form of 'feel-good' online activism lacks the capacity to affect social and political change (Bosch et al., 2020). For instance, Otiono (2021) argues that 'lazy' forms of activism "such as uploading politically charged Facebook posts, or aggressively re-tweeting sentiments in line with their worldviews" do little to deliver concrete solutions to injustices (p. 132). Similarly, in an oft-cited commentary published in The New Yorker, Malcolm Gladwell (2010) stated that online and social media activism only makes it "easier for activists to express themselves, and harder for that expression to have any impact" (n.p.). It is in a similar vein that Morozov (2011) argues that online activism represents a low and ineffective form of activism. From this perspective the main benefit of online activism is confined to the ability to raise awareness about a particular issue. Furthermore, a techno-pessimist reading of online activism calls into question the degree to which online political activism constitute *meaningful* political participation.

Contrasting opinions come from a more optimistic, or techno-optimistic perspective. Firstly, Otiono (2021) argues that the concept of 'slacktivism' is less relevant on the African content given the unique historical context that shapes political action. They stipulate that slacktivism connotes a high degree of political apathy that is not present on the continent to the

same degree that it is found in countries of the Global North. To this end Otiono (2021) argues that:

> "[…] the identification of "slacktivism" among youth in various geographic contexts requires investigation into whether the same form of political apathy exists among Africa's digitally networked youth. Some Africans dismiss the claims of indifference among youth operating in digital spaces. Rachel Gichinga, a Kenyan blogger and co-founder of Kuweni Serious (Kuweni meaning "let's get"), a civil society organization that mobilized Kenyan citizens to vote in the 2010 Constitution referendum, states "I don't know that so-called 'slacktivism' exists (Davidson 2012, n.p.)" (p.132).

Similarly, Davidson (2012) has called for a more robust examination of country-specific dynamics before discrediting online activism as merely 'lazy' or relatively disengaged forms of activism. Several such examinations have taken place such as Selnes and Orgeret's (2020) investigation of the use of social media in Uganda, and Kadoda and Hale's (2015) study of the historical legacy of protest in Sudan's contemporary youth social media activism. Thus, online activism and the use of social media campaigns for political purposes cannot be viewed solely as one-off moments, but rather along a continuum of politically engaged activity. When viewed in this way social media activism challenges rather than perpetuates the trope of the passive victim in the victim/violent dichotomy discussed in previous chapters. Mateos and Baja-Erro (2021) go so far as to claim that contemporary online activism represents a 'third wave' of protest movements on the African continent. This 'third wave' follows the 'first wave' of independence movements beginning in the 1940s and 50s and the 'second wave' of post-Cold War protests in defiance of centralization and single party regimes (Mateos & Baja-Erro 2021, pp.653-653). When viewed along a historical continuum of politically engaged activism young people online

are conceptualized as active, engaged citizens with powerful voices as opposed to apathetic individuals unwilling to engage with the challenging dynamics of their situations.

Moreover, Otiono (2021) further contends that 'passive' forms of activism that take place online and in virtual spaces need not suggest 'laziness' or political disengagement. Rather, passive activism may represent efforts at self-preservation in regimes where participation in offline protests could result in physical harm or jail (Otiono 2021, p.133). From this perspective, passive activism is viewed not as political apathy, but rather as an informed tactic to voice dissent within brutally repressive social spaces. This is particularly significant when thinking about the ways that young people themselves find and create spaces to engage with their realities in contexts where there may be risks to doing so. In terms of peacebuilding more broadly, this reinforces the idea that youth exclusion from peacebuilding may stem from a deficiency with the model of peacebuilding itself, and not from their young people's perceived inability or unwillingness to engage. The universal application of notions of social media that are grounded in the unique and specific histories of the Global North can also be interpreted as a form of discursive colonialism (as laid out in chapters 1 and 2) in itself. This is to say that the way social media use has developed in East Africa is historically and contextually specific, and cannot be understood through a lens that has developed from the experiences of social media in the Global North. Suggesting that East African social media campaigns can be viewed as 'passive' activism in the same way that campaigns in the Global North are, can constitute a form of epistemic violence insofar as it privileges one specific understanding of the role of social media at the expense and to the detriment of a different, in this case more positive, interpretation. Therefore, I situate social media in the Great Lakes region here as a form of negotiated tactic in an attempt to

offer a vastly different interpretation of its role in peacebuilding than what is offered by viewing social media activism as solely a Global North construct.

Reading online activism as a negotiated tactic also calls into question the notion of 'cyber-utopianism'. The concept of a cyber-utopia is often used in a techno-pessimistic manner to critique the idea that the internet can be used to democratize authoritarian regimes and that it can be used to bring about tangible political and social change (Bosch 2017). This perspective is often supported by the fact that although the internet can be used as a tool to hold regimes accountable, the same regimes can also use the internet as a tool for further repression and the spread of propaganda (Morozov 2011). In contrast, Matsilele and Ruhanya (2021) (in following Jones (2015)) argue that online activism cannot be captured by a binary of dystopian repression by the state versus an activist's utopia, but rather that digital spaces work simultaneously as tools of both empowerment and control (pp.354-385). Otiono (2021) goes further in their critique, suggesting that the notion of cyber-utopia itself should be reframed not as some elusive and naive dream but rather as an intentional alternate imagination to the current limitations young people face (pp.124-125). Seeing cyber-utopia as an actively constructed counter-narrative in turn positions the online activist as not only a politically engaged agent, but also as an important story-teller responsible for making claims onto a deficient reality (and often state). This view on cyber-utopia also reflects the significance of social media activism to peacebuilding more broadly. Specifically, it emphasizes young people's creative agency in their use of online spaces to create alternative imaginations of how to move forward after a conflict or violence. Thus, from this perspective young people are not enraptured by utopian and idealistic fantasies, but rather are *actively* engaged in creating a space for powerful alternatives to be imagined.

Finally, I return briefly to the notion of the internet as a rhizomatic space of techno-sociality to suggest that online activism cannot be defined in any one singular way. Rather, I suggest that tension exists over the extent to which online activism represents engaged political citizens because *all* the perspectives noted here are accurate. However, I suggest that what is most important to bear in mind is that while some young people may truly only engage with online platforms in disengaged or frivolous ways, their presence should not take away from those who also use such spaces for committed action to influence socio-political change.

Context – 3 Twitter Campaigns

The following Twitter campaigns were selected on a series of criteria. Firstly, and most significantly, I opted for campaigns that were not a result of corporate or institutional sponsorship. This is to say that I looked for campaigns that seemed to have been initiated by local people themselves in response to an issue rather than a foreign entity selecting an issue and implementing a social media campaign around it. While it was not possible to verify the initial tweet of each campaign with certainty, the following sections detail the broader contexts from which each campaign was born. Secondly, while some campaigns may incorporate a variety of social media platforms, I focused on those that seemed to take place predominately on Twitter. Thirdly, I looked for geographic variety and selected campaigns that responded to issues in different countries. As I will demonstrate, there is a tendency for multiple campaigns to find solidarity across geographic divides and therefore cannot be fully separated. However, I sought campaigns that were born out of an issue specific to a particular country. Lastly, I was limited to campaigns that took place mostly in English or that at least had a sizeable number of tweets in English. This was a limitation to the extent that it does not include online voices that were expressed in local languages and thus the claims I make cannot be generalized to *all* youth of a

particular campaign. The gaps created by digital platforms such as Twitter will be discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

#CongoIsBleeding

The DRC is home to some of the largest solid mineral deposits in the world such as diamonds, gold, copper, tin, zinc, and cobalt, with their combined value being upwards of U.S. $24 trillion (Global Edge, 2023). Estimates suggest that four-fifths of the world's total cobalt deposits are potentially buried under the ground across the country, with the southern parts of the country alone sitting atop 3.4 million metric tons of valuable mineral (Posner, 2023; Niarchos, 2021 respectively). Some of the most integral components of lithium-ion batteries and magnetic steels used in phones and laptops, as well as electric vehicles are derived from the minerals found in the DRC, thus making the country a critical ally to large corporations such as Apple, Samsung, Tesla, and many others (She is Africa, n.d.; International Trade Administration, 2022). However, the conditions under which these precious minerals are extracted are at best precarious, and at worst gross violations of human rights.

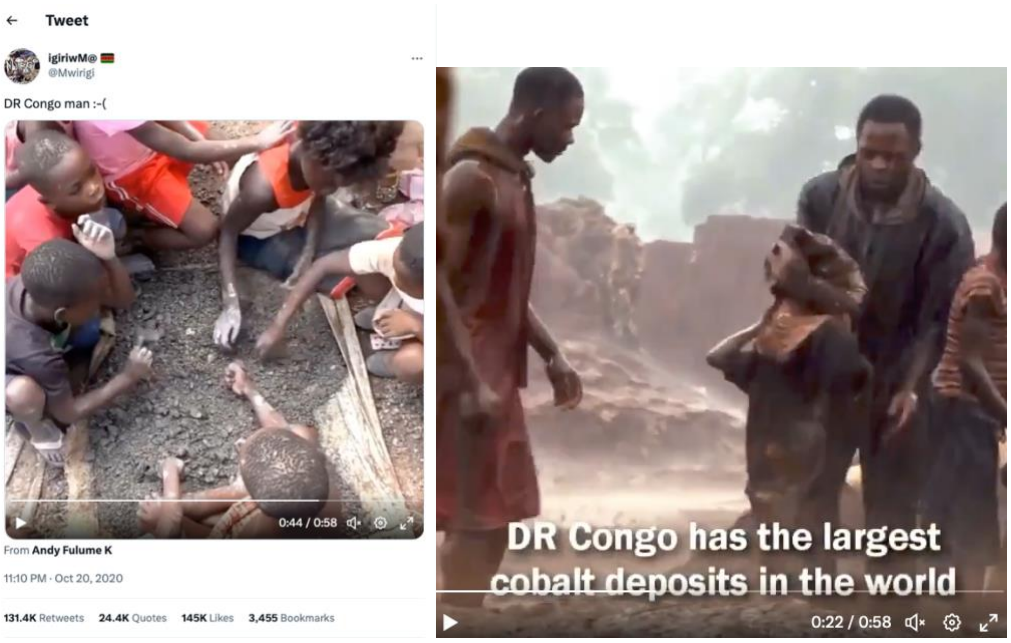
In the late months of 2020, the hashtag 'CongoIsBleeding' went viral on social media, predominantly Twitter, and as of May 2023 is still fairly active. The online campaign calls attention to ongoing violence and human rights abuses that have been taking place in and around the mining industry. Two particular foci of this campaign centre on the use of child labour and child slavery in the mining of cobalt in the country, and the sexual abuse of women as a result of on-going violence by various factions seeking to gain control of the mining sector.

Regarding the use of child labourers, several reports put the number of child mine workers at roughly 40,000, with many working in the 'artisanal' and small-scale sector where few protections are in place to safeguard them against abuse (Oduah, 2020; Socialist Worker's

League, 2020; Posner, 2023; Ojewale, 2022). The following image shared under the #CongoIsBleeding campaign highlights the use of child labour in mining the raw materials that make up popular smart phones:

Source: https://twitter.com/amprolificdev/status/1396073953173585921?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

The narrative under #CongoIsBleeding emphasizes the dangerous working conditions for young people, as well as the many health risks that mining can pose to them. One particular tweet that was retweeted 131,400 times includes a video from Sky News Congo showcases young children working in the mines in poor weather conditions and without adequate protective gear. The images below showcase some such images:



Source: https://twitter.com/Mwirigi/status/1318751539616501761

Tweets under the hashtag that discuss the mistreatment of women highlight the widespread sexual violence that has occurred as a result of the decades long fight for control of the country's vast mineral supplies (Rustad, Ostby, & Nordas, 2016) and are showcased in the following set of tweets:

Source: https://twitter.com/estherbirungi4/status/1317346216947142656?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/temscaprice/status/1316303028245454850?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/kadobamosesug/status /1317448923976523777?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

In highlighting the ways that women specifically have been targeted, the hashtag also draws attention to the connection between contemporary violence against women and the historical perpetration of human rights abuses and crimes against humanity in the country. One tweet with almost 31,000 retweets shows a video that demonstrates the legacy of mining and violence in the country. Some images from this video are shows below:

Source: https://twitter.com/officialblog_ur/status/1316649958519566336?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

#Repeal162

In Kenya in February of 2016 the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK), the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC) and Nyanza Rift Valley and Western Kenya Network (NYARWEK) filed petitions at the country's high court to have sections

162 and 165 of the penal code removed (Wangombe, 2019). While homosexuality is not officially illegal in Kenya, sections 162 and 165 criminalize sexual conduct between two adults of the same sex (Wangombe, 2019). These two sections, which render homosexuality as de facto illegal in the country, date back to the original Penal Code of 1930 when the country remained under British control (van Klinken, 2019). The language in these sections (which have not been changed following independence in 1964) conforms to similar 'sodomy' laws imposed across the British colonial empire that sought to morally reform and 'correct' 'native' customs (van Klinken, 2019). For instance, in referring to anal sexual intercourse section 162 uses the language of "unnatural offences" and "carnal knowledge against the order of nature" and section 165 is concerned with "indecent practices" committed both in public and in private (van Klinken, 2019. These two sections correspond to potential sentences of 14- and 5-years imprisonment respectively (van Klinken, 2019). Three years later on May 24, 2019, the Kenyan High Court responded to the petitions by announcing the decision *not* to repeal the sections of the criminal code in question (O'Donnell, 2019). Later that same year an appeal was filed by the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and as of May 2023 the case remains stalled within the Kenyan courts as activist groups continue to fight for an appeal and hopeful overturn of the original 2019 decision[8] (National Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission 2023).

As part of the ongoing struggle to overturn the initial ruling and to ultimately reform the country's laws to protect LGBTQIA2+ people, the hashtag #Repeal162 went viral on social media outlets including Twitter. The hashtag encompasses tweets that seek to disseminate information related to the on-going court case, as well as providing a digital space for people to

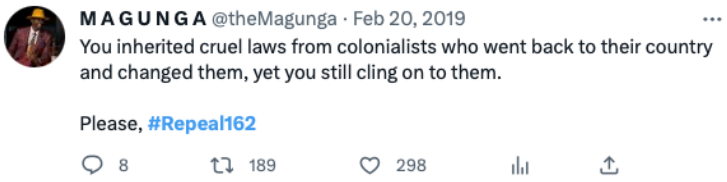
[8] At the time of writing the appeal hearing scheduled for May 15, 2023 had been postponed to a later date.

express their support or solidarity with the movement. Examples of either can be evidenced in the following series of tweets:

Source: https://twitter.com/galck_ke/status/1131521060480925696?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/waikwawanyoike/status/1131913504968065025?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Furthermore, under #Repeal162 some tweets make reference to the colonial nature of anti-homosexuality laws, such as the following:



Source: https://twitter.com/themagunga/status /1098221723667832832?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/nyakabs/status/ 966993864199467009?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/levisryann/status /1131928673525948416?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

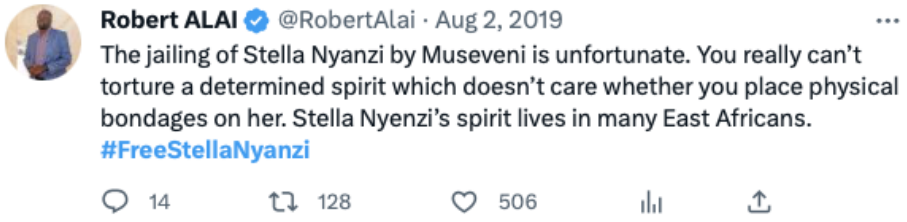
Tweets such as these point out that the aspects of the penal code being disputed have their origins in colonial-era laws and practices that positioned same-sex relationships as 'unnatural' and contrary to supposed Christian values. In other words, and as Epprecht (2013) argues, it is not homosexuality and same-sex relationships that are a colonial import, but rather the emergence of homo*phobia* and discrimination against LGBTQIA2+ peoples. In this sense, #Repeal162 also reflects a broader anti-colonial legacy that seeks to decolonize the laws of the country.

#FreeStellaNyanzi

As part of his lead-up to the 2016 presidential election, President Yoweri Museveni promised that were he to secure another term his government would provide sanitary pads for all schoolgirls in the country to address the prevalence of young girls forced to miss class because of menstruation (Olorunshola, 2017). In response to Museveni's failure to make good on this promise following his re-election, activist and then research fellow Stella Nyanzi began the campaign #Pads4GirlsUG on Facebook in 2017 to raise funds to provide the necessary sanitary pads herself. While the campaign itself was a success, collecting over 7 million pads in the first

two weeks alone, the government under Museveni responded by charging Nyanzi with 'offensive communication' and 'cyber harassment' resulting to her eventual imprisonment in July 2019. The arrest followed a series of Facebook posts by Nyanzi where she criticized Museveni's government for reneging their initial campaign promise, as well as calling into question the first lady's reputation as 'Mama Janet' for her failing to hold Museveni to his promise (Akumu, 2017). Nyanzi was eventually released from prison in February 2020 but over the course of her 18-month imprisonment a Twitter campaign under the hashtag #FreeStellaNyanzi went viral.

Throughout Nyanzi's imprisonment supporters came together under the hashtag to advocate for her immediate release from prison. In doing so, tweets called out the repressive regime that had jailed her and the attempt that was thus made to silence her voice. Support for Nyanzi stood in parallel with disapproval for the structures of power that sought to weaken her activism. This dualism is highlighted in the following tweets:

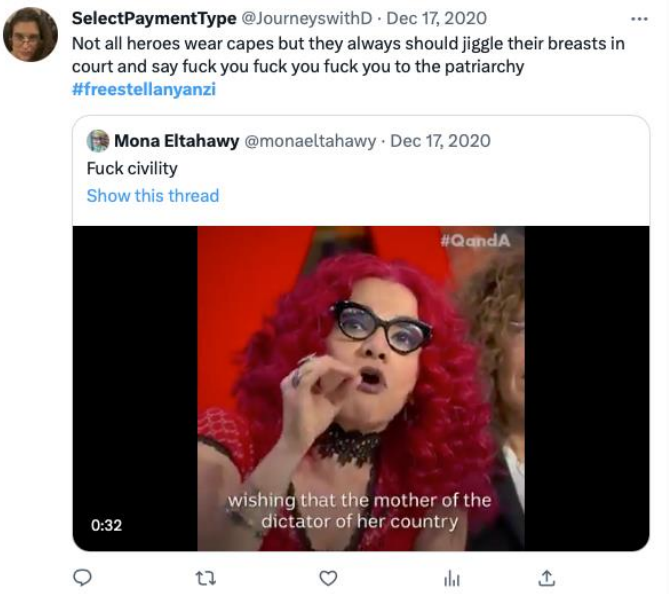


Source: https://twitter.com/robertalai/status/1157312887217688577?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/hebobiwine/status/1149930638067322881?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/ugfeministforum/status/1156883078507376641?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Despite her release in early 2020, the hashtag continued to circulate on Twitter and promoted more generalized support for her work as an activist and as a critical voice of dissent in the country. The following two tweets demonstrate this form of support:



Source: https://twitter.com/journeyswithd/status/1339761886234112001?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/gbvnet/status/1230428593056108553?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

As well, the hashtag captured Nyanzi's advocacy during the initial months of COVID-19 enforced lockdowns as she protested with those who were unable to provide adequate food supplies for themselves and their families. Examples of the use of the hashtag in this way is demonstrated in the following tweets:

Source: https://twitter.com/eyalablog/status/1263102546677133313?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/boldlikenyanzi/status/1263085186482417665?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Overall, the narrative of the #FreeStellaNyanzi campaign can be read as support for the 'radical rudeness' of Nyanzi's activism in which she continuously called out those in power through acts of public insult and social disorderliness.

Activism and Agency

Unfinished revolutions.

Lynch (2012) characterized the revolutions of the Arab Spring as 'unfinished revolutions' to indicate that they were only one step in the fight against authoritarian regimes, rather than the final iteration of the people's struggle. Similarly, Otiono (2021) uses this appellation to categorize the contemporary use and future potential of social media activism across the continent. I argue that the notion of unfinished revolutions can be extended further to support a reinterpretation of how success in social media activism is measured. As stated in the introduction, much of the enthusiasm for the transformational potential of the Arab Spring has been quelled in recent years given the inability of this protest movement to secure long-lasting, positive regime change. However, if the success of any one online activist campaign is *not* measured by its ability to bring about lasting structural and systemic change (a lofty goal considering the decades of failures by trained professionals and policy makers), but instead by what such campaigns achieve in the *process* of their advocacy, there is much more grounds for optimism.

Re-ordering a perspective on 'success' supports the argument that cyber-utopias best refer to the actively created counter-narratives where young people articulate a shared vision for the future. In this sense cyber-utopias are less about the supposed naivety of young people (Bosch et al., 2020), but rather are reflections of their ability to imagine and construct alternate socio-political landscapes. Far from being solely within the realms of the fantastical and illusory, the

narratives constructed through online, social media activism helps to bring about a new political culture. As Mateos and Erro Baja (2021) argue:

> "[…] rather than being visible in the short-term (regime changes, electoral victories by parties or forces supported by the demonstrators, changes in economic policies, etc.) [online activism] should be understood as processes that are making a major contribution to repoliticizing the collective social and political imagination and ushering in a new political and democratic culture" (pp. 662-663).

Thus, social media activism is best situated along a historical and political continuum that *together* have a profound impact on the political consciousness of its participants. Moreover, a long-term view of social media activism demonstrates the ways in which young people consistently create their own ideas about more peaceful and positive futures. This is significant insofar as these activities take place outside of formal peacebuilding infrastructure and thus are evidence of the agency and awareness of young people. Moreover, social media activism as a process that builds a new political and democratic culture also speaks to the importance in peacebuilding of repairing underlying cultures and social relations. As detailed in previous chapters, without the reparation of social bonds and cultural connections, any additional peacebuilding activity will have limited success. Thus, social media is significant to peacebuilding more broadly because it provides a space where young people are engaged in envisioning and to some extent building a new social and political culture. In much the same way that an everyday approach to peacebuilding showcases the ways in which more formal, programmatic peacebuilding activities come to life, social media activism may similarly represent a space where existing ideas and practices are infused with social meaning.

The case of #FreeStellaNyanzi is a helpful demonstration of an unfinished revolution. This is firstly because the hashtag itself was the result of a different online movement, that of

#Pads4GirlsUG which demonstrates the seamless evolution of one form of activism into another. In terms of the #FreeStellaNyanzi hashtag, while it began to show support for Nyanzi and to advocate for her release from prison it has continued to live on as a gathering point for a more expansive conversation around radical rudeness as a form of political resistance, feminism, and LGBTQIA2+ rights. For instance, just prior to Nyanzi's release from prison she released a book of poems titled *No Roses From My Mouth* that featured work she had produced during her 18-month sentence. From this development new hashtags such as #BoldLikeStellaNyonzi and #NoRosesFromMyMouth emerged alongside #FreeStellaNyonzi and continue to circulate on Twitter. Similarly, in late 2020 Nyanzi ran in the country's national election for a spot in parliament, sparking the development of a new set of hashtags such as #FromPrison2Parliament and #Stella4Kampala, which showcases the fluid nature of online movements.

Matsilele and Ruhanya (2021) argue that "digital and physical spaces should be treated as interdependent or constitutive which minimizes a range of existing dualism between 'online' and 'offline' and between 'public sphere' and 'public space'" (p. 383). Following from this logic I argue that the transformation of the #FreeStellaNyonzi movement and hashtag demonstrates the intimate connection between online and offline activism. What began as an offline effort to fill in a gap left by an unfulfilled political promise was bolstered by an online campaign, which in turn led to an offline arrest resulting in another online movement to push for offline justice, and so on and so forth. It is this iterative process between the two spheres that not only shapes the trajectory of online activism, but I argue is also at the unique core of what it means to participate in online activism. This is to say that online activism is constitutive of a dynamic interplay between advocacy and action, as well as between related or parallel movements. Thus, it is counter-productive to assess the success of any one movement alone, and rather necessitates an

examination of the broader effects that a series of related events may have both online and offline. Moreover, the case of #FreeStellaNyanzi is evidence that young people not only create *ideas* about imagined futures, but that they merge these ideas with tangible, offline action that crosses into the public space. Social media activism is significant to youth peacebuilding agency because of the implications it has outside of the virtual sphere. In contexts where offline activism is risky or dangerous, having a digital space to galvanize support, create a sense of community and shared values, and practicing exercising one's voice may be crucial supports for offline engagement.

In the case of Uganda and of activism surrounding Stella Nyanzi, what is clear is that Stella Nyanzi as a singular individual has sparked a broader coalescence of young people around a new political imaginary. As a fierce feminist, advocate for LGBTQIA2+ rights, and disruptor of the repressive political status quo, Nyanzi acts as a gateway for young people to begin exercising their voices and pushing for change. The evolution of the #FreeStellaNyanzi movement demonstrates the space that social media provides for young people to practice narrating an alternate future. Indeed, as Dawson (2012) argues, social media "acts as sites for socially committed storytellers, or as sites for practicing marginalized discourses" (p. 327). Thus, while Nyanzi plays an important role in continuing the momentum for change, it is the young people online who pick up her calls and ultimately sustain the broader movement. Nyanzi's role as an instigator for continued action is described by Whittington (2021) of *The Observer* who contends that Nyanzi has become the "modern face" of radical rudeness of a form of political protests, inspired a string of similar protests around the country, and has elevated the notion of activism as an everyday part of life for young Ugandans. The importance of continued

action, even when the outcomes may only be small relatively to a broader goal, is best stated by Nyanzi herself:

> "People have said to me: perhaps radical rudeness will not oust Museveni. And I say: perhaps the intention is not to use rude poetry and big breasts in public to oust Museveni; perhaps the idea is to invite others to be able to poke holes in this huge over-glorification of a mighty, untouchable demigod and, if many of us are poking small holes, perhaps the mighty trunk of the tree will fall." (Davies, 2022).

In summary, positioning social media activism within the realm of unfinished revolutions offers a window into the way social media, as one component in the iterative relationship between online and offline worlds, can work to upset existing power relations, albeit in seemingly small steps. The way young people mobilize around a social issue online speaks to the broader perspective of this project in which young people are taken as already existing knowledge producers. Thus, 'power' is not something that needs to be *given* to young people. Rather, young people already possess immense agency and power, and more emphasis is needed to help them *actualize* this agency. However, as has been described in chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis, to view young people in this way would be to fundamentally rupture the foundational assumptions of the liberal peace paradigm. Thus, I argue that social media, when viewed along the spectrum of unfinished revolutions, opens space for multiple knowledges to take up space, and to disrupt existing discursive structures that determine who can make claims to knowledge and how.

Repression & agency as a combined, iterative process of power negotiation.

When the measure of success is shifted from outcome to process, the ways that power is contested, negotiated, and reconfigured are drawn into focus. Protests at their core, be they on- or offline, are about holding power to account where "power is viewed as disconnected from the grassroots that are disaffected with the government and institutions" (Mateos & Baja Erros, 2021, p. 661). Social media in this sense operates as a site of tension over power, as well as a tool that the otherwise marginalized can use to speak and be producers of their own content

(Sebeelo, 2021). Bosch (2017) refers to this form of activism as 'sub-activism' and argues that it is "not about political power in the strict sense, but about personal empowerment seen as the power of the subject to be the person that they want to be in accordance with [their] reflexively chosen moral standards" (as cited in, p. 225). Although I differ from Bosch's interpretation insofar as *sub*-activism seems to imply a lesser form of activism, I concur with the notion that social media activism affords *individuals* a platform to vocalize their *own* narratives. In other words, I find the concept of sub-activism useful to the extent that it captures the "creative force from below" that makes up contributors to social media activism (Dawson, 2012). In this sense social media activism is significant to peacebuilding to the extent that young people themselves are engaged in setting goals and targets, mobilizing as a united front, and identifying courses of action. In other words, social media affords young people a relatively safe space to hold power to account in ways that are in accordance with their own values. It should again be reiterated that young people online are not represented of *all kinds* of young people. Rather, the argument that this section lays out is only to identify some examples of online youth agency and activism to initiate new conceptualizations of what it means to participate in social media campaigns. Moreover, online participation is particularly significant in contexts of conflict where doing so offline may be challenging at best and potentially life-threatening at worst.

The #Repeal162 movement helps to articulate a two-fold argument related to power. Firstly, it demonstrates the iterative process through which power is negotiated by a series of repressive measures by the state, and counter efforts by activists online to find new ways to subvert control. Secondly, it demonstrates the claim-making process that is inherent to social media activism in which young people exercise their ability to make claims upon a state. While I do not suggest that *all* social media activism and campaigns will have the same impacts as

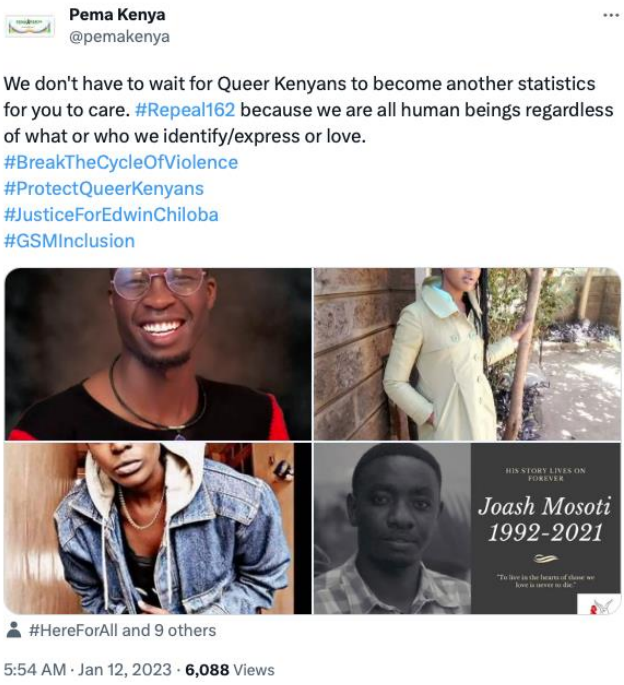
#Repeal162, I argue that this campaign provides a useful insight into the transformative peacebuilding potential of social media activism.

To begin, as stated earlier, the enthusiasm for the transformational potential of social media activism is hindered by the increasing use of social media tools by repressive states to further their control, as well as the emergence of political 'crack-downs' on dissenting voices online (Otiono, 2021; Kadoda & Hale, 2015; Idowu, 2020). However, to disregard social media activism on these grounds is to make the incorrect assumption that power is solely top-down and unidirectional. Following from Foucault (1977), power is multi-directional and multi-faceted. This is to say that power and knowledge production in the digital sphere is fluid and multi-faceted. The #Repeal162 movement, when situated along a continuum of action (as argued for in the previous section) demonstrates the iterative and negotiated nature of power. Amid the #Repeal162 movement in 2018, Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta signed a law stated to 'protect' social media users from online abuse but which critics argued would be used to criminalize and repress free speech (Reuters Staff, 2018; Muendo, 2018). This move also follows a tense period following the contested 2017 election in which the government purposely jammed broadcast signals of leading television stations in an attempt to silence the then opposition leader (Freedom House, 2023). Moreover, efforts to silence online dissent by ordinary citizens have been ongoing since 2014, including the questioning and arrest of online bloggers and social media users, increasing rates and taxes on internet use, and promoting disinformation (Human Rights Watch, 2018; Ogola, 2021). These moves follow a broader trend on the continent in which "troubling attempts to govern social media usage and effectively impede progressive public discourse and the universal right to assemble peacefully have become increasingly ubiquitous and fairly normalized throughout Africa" (Mhaka, 2020; see also Allen & Kelly, 2022).

Despite these measures in Kenya and elsewhere on the continent, the #Repeal162 movement continued to garner support. In a similar way as #FreeStellaNyanzi shifted into broader debates, #Repeal162 has also merged with broader online discussion related to LGBTQIA2+ rights. The following Tweet demonstrates this broader form of advocacy, including in support of Edwin Chiloba, a queer Kenyan LGBTQ activist killed in January of 2023 in what many suspected to be related to his sexuality (Omondi 2023).

Source: https://twitter.com/jackykemigisa/status/1131916157454376960?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

These images demonstrate how #Repeal162 has become inextricably linked with activism on multiple fronts, including a broader queer rights movement, internet freedom, and the decolonization of legislation:



Source: https://twitter.com/pemakenya/status/1613489575027933184?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/inendorg/status/1613136835655438336?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/kelinkenya/status/1613561532230823936?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

The various shifts and turns in the use of #Repeal162 do not necessarily demonstrate the same type of direct linkage between government attempts to block freedom of expression online and citizen's navigation around these barriers as found elsewhere (Selnes & Orgeret, 2020; Hashim, 2021). For instance, in the wake of an increased social media tax in Uganda, some young people used VPN software to circumvent the tax (Selnes & Orgeret, 2020). Youth in Gambia and Zimbabwe have also made use of VPNs and other proxy servers to get around the barriers imposed by their governments (Matiashe, 2019). However, what is demonstrated through the case of #Repeal162 is that the same *logic* of negotiation can be applied insofar as when progress on one front becomes stalled (as in the case of the court case related to sections

162 and 165 of the penal code), avenues to push forward on different but related goals are created.

Given the nature of power negotiations online as multi-faceted and fluid, there is potential to simultaneously advance several goals at once. Social media allows users to participate in political debate in a variety of different ways such as posting, quoting, sharing, engaging politicians and political parties, amongst many others (Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Kamau, 2017). This relates to young people's claim-making authority online as it allows individuals to be engaged concurrently on multiple fronts. As Matsilele and Ruhanya (2021) argue in the case of Zimbabwe, social media dissidence has helped "to reclaim citizen voices and spaces" and resist authoritarian practices with the goal of making power accountable and democratic (p. 392). It is also to again highlight the interconnections between on- and offline worlds in social media activism insofar as processes of claim-making exist in both spheres. As Hutchinson (2019) argues, claim making on Twitter specifically involves the combination of tweeting, retweeting, and sharing tweets, as well as civil disobedience such as strikes and protests, all of which are geared towards demanding social change.

In conclusion, I argue that the most significant aspect of the #Repeal162 movement is *not* its ability to overthrow a system of governance, nor to change in any fundamental way the legacies of global power inequities that sustain a colonial status-quo. Instead #Repeal162 is significant because of the space it opened for young people to practice holding power to account in a way that centred their own voices, through a mechanism that was largely their own. Further to the notion of unfinished revolutions, the practice of holding power to account is not one that can be measured by any one singular incident, but rather is a process of continued action with multiple, potentially overlapping 'boiling points'. Thus, it is the *continued* demonstration of

agency by way of *sustaining* a counter-narrative to power that is the most significant aspect of social media activism.

Online Youth Spaces

Lastly, understanding youth political agency online through a lens of *process-oriented* claims on power necessitates looking at the *space* that is made and occupied by young people on social media. Social media has been touted as opening a new space for active citizenship and more direct forms of participatory democracy (Bohler-Muller & van der Merwe, 2011). The existence of a more inclusive space for young people to actively engage with politics is significant given that the lack of sufficient space for youth political participation is often cited as substantial barrier to young people's engagement in politics (Chatora, 2012; Bosch et al, 2020). Moreover, as has been described elsewhere in this project, young people often lack similar accessible spaces to participate in peacebuilding activities in a meaningful way. Social media therefore is an avenue where young people can create alternate forms of participation in contexts where they are otherwise excluded from political discussions that directly bear upon their own lives. For instance, in the gerontocratic society of Nigeria (and many other sub-Saharan countries) young people are dissuaded from political opportunities in offline environments (Dambo, Ersoy, Eluwole, & Arikewuyo, 2022). However, as they and others (ie. Schipani, Pilling, & Munshi, 2021; Dwyer & Molony, 2019) argue, social media provides a space for young people to mobilize into a "potent political force" (Schipani, Pilling, & Munshi, 2021).

Moreover, feminist critiques suggest that lack of access to information and technology has a disproportionately negative impact on the ability for women to exercise their political agency (Hashim, 2021). Social media and online dissent are therefore useful in authoritarian and patriarchal societies where access to these necessities is acutely limited. For example, in a study

of the legacy of women-led activism in Sudan and the 2019 protests that led to former President Omar al-Bashir's ousting, Hashim (2021) found a confluence between antiquity and modernity:

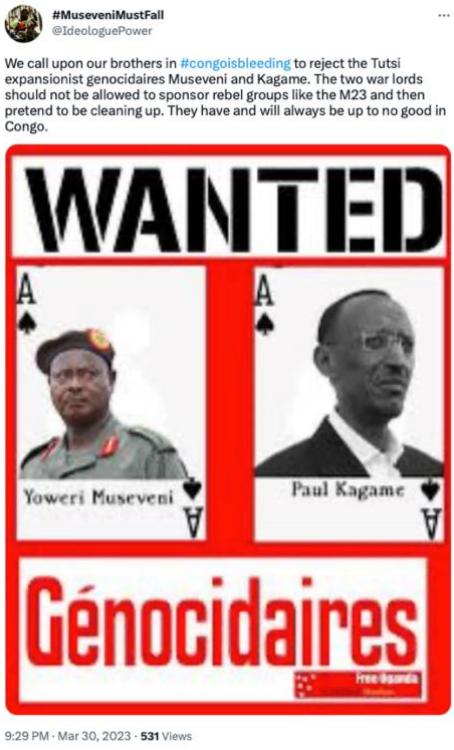
> "[…] women, issuing protesting directives on their smart phone, began to take to the streets wearing long discarded toabs (pronounced thawbs). The practicality of the smart phone and the symbolism of the white toab, worn by grandmothers who protests colonial rule, were not lost on older generations of Sudanese. The intersection and reinforcing weave of women's cultural, political, and trade organizations in the years leading to independence remained in the national political consciousness, even as the regime criminalized civil society and waged war instead." (p. 89)

This finding suggests that social media does not necessarily provide spaces for *new participation* by women, but rather opens an alternative space for their continued activism in patriarchal societies where offline activism may be restricted or dangerous. It also highlights the role social media can play in highlighting certain actors, in this case women, thereby raising the profile of their activism. For youth that belong to a marginalized or stigmatized group in society, be they women, members of the LGBTQIA2+ community, or of lower socio-economic status, online activism therefore can be interpreted as an effort to negotiate the tension that may exist between choosing to advocate for ones self and community while also being cognizant of personal safety. While different groups and individuals will likely have different criteria for engaging in online activism, the point I highlight here is that online agency may be one avenue through which to relatively safely engage politically in an otherwise socio-politically unsafe environment.

Before proceeding I return to notion of cyber-utopia to clarify the positive potential of online spaces. I do not suggest that online spaces and social media activism is immune to the more insidious aspects of the internet such as cyber-bullying, online harassment, and the reproduction of offline exclusions and prejudice in an online world. I instead suggest that online

spaces encompass *made* communities where broader groups of people can together create the rules of engagement. This is to say that the relatively non-hierarchal nature of social media allows for each user to contribute to the overall group dynamics. The ability to call out 'bad behaviour' or misrepresentations of ideas allows for a continued negotiation of the terms of engagement. While this may also lead to disagreements and disperse group identities, I choose to focus on the positive opportunity this provides for young people who may otherwise of limiting opportunities to have their voice added to formal political discourse. Thus, I stipulate that online youth spaces are not a fanciful illusion but are on-going sites of negotiated community building, which in itself represents an important component of building more peaceful communities.

The concepts of techno-sociality and the internet as a rhizome are useful here to highlight the potentials for trans-continent and global alliances to be built through social media activism. The #CongoisBleeding campaign is a good example of the types of trans-continental and global connections that can be made through social media activism. In a search of the top tweets using the hashtag #CongoIsBleeding, solidarity with the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria, the #FreeSenegal movement in Senegal, and the #ShutItAllDown movement in Namibia came up. Similarly, the #CongoIsBleeding campaign on Twitter highlighted the role of the neighbouring governments of Rwanda and Uganda in fuelling the conflict in the DRC. The following tweets demonstrate the recognition of these regional dynamics:



Source: https://twitter.com/ideologuepower/status/1641613640192098306?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/dorcasaiglonne/status /1530981311250321408?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Through the lens of techno-sociality and the rhizomatic nature of the internet this aspect of #CongoIsBleeding is a demonstration of the interconnected dynamics between conflicts, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where national borders cut across historical and political allegiances. The union of #CongoIsBleeding with #RwandaIsKilling thus demonstrates the ability for young people in an online space to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the causes they advocate for and to form unions with individuals across geographic space. Again, while these opportunities are not available to all types of youth equally, the use of social media for online activism can still be seen as a step towards reducing barriers to transnational unity and coalition forming that would otherwise exclude a far greater number of young people.

Lastly, through the #CongoIsBleeding campaign Twitter users can also directly communicate to people or groups of people in positions of authority such as Elon Musk (who's company Tesla is a larger consumer of Congolese minerals (Posner 2020)), the International Criminal Court, and even Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The following tweets are some such examples:

Source: https://twitter.com/rekzon/status/1316371362064334848?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/_1realchica/status/1318669011840913415?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

Source: https://twitter.com/lydiaaofficial/status/1316883697258405888?s=61&t=S65aHzv96Yi5rYaVkUYVmA

However, the ease in which users are able to communicate to authority figures does not necessarily mean that those messages are being heard by people in positions of power given that social media accounts are often managed by subordinate staff members or teams. Nor does it even suggest a direct correlation between pressure tactics on Twitter and offline action being taken. However, the space that social media provides for young people to connect to more globalized movements or groups of individuals is arguably one of the most unique strengths of social media activism. This strength is significant to peacebuilding more broadly because it showcases the importance of transnational connections on the way young people engage with ideas about peace. Peacebuilding activities in their formal sense rarely address contexts from a regional, let alone global perspective, opting instead for finite 'solutions' that target specific communities. The way young people engage with social media demonstrates that there is

significance to acknowledging the interconnections between conflicts and that addressing these connections may strengthen the ability to address the root causes of conflict.

Moreover, it is the transnational aspect of social media that enables individuals to "circumvent traditional gatekeepers, shifting political power to ordinary citizens and giving them voice and potential influence" (Kamau, 2017). The ability for young Africans to connect online around political causes is so prolific that the term 'Africtivistes' has been coined, showcasing that despite the digital divide that exists between at a class, gender, and urban/rural level, considerable collaborative networks have emerged and should not be disregarded. The work of Africtivistes, while not entirely free from the potential cooption or repression by the state, is arguably demonstrative of the power to create new spaces where protests can take place (Mateos & Baja Erros, 2021, p. 662). It is the unique hybrid nature of these online spaces to connect online and offline activism, as well as the connect national, continental, and global movements that lend force to social media activism. In quoting Nigerian political scientist Claude Ake, Mateos and Baja Erro (2021) argue that it is not a matter of *if* real transformative change will be achieved through social media activism, but rather *when* it would take place.

Conclusion

I conclude here by returning to the idea introduced at the onset of this chapter of an 'African Spring'. I argue that if an African Spring is conceptualized as the direct reformation of authoritarian governments by way of social media activism, it has indeed not yet taken place. However, this chapter has demonstrated that such a conceptualization fails to capture the most significant components of social media. In particular, an African Spring cannot be measured by the same criteria as the Arab Spring because the terms of engagement have changed significantly over the last decade. Therefore, I argue that the idea of an African Spring should be

reconceptualized to better account for the agency that is demonstrated by young people in the *process* of social media activism. This is to say that an African Spring is currently underway insofar as young people across the continent are engaged in fluid and iterative processes of active and engaged citizenship that takes place in spaces that that emphasize their own voices. It is the processes of consciousness raising and trans-continental unity, the creation of counter-narratives and imagined futures, and the practice of making claims against authority that define young people's agency online and that have the most significant peacebuilding implications.

In terms of youth agency, I argue in favour of a balanced perspective of the avenues social media affords in light of its several limitations. The lack of traditional gatekeepers on social media can allow for more youth-inclusive spaces. This can be particularly significant for women who may otherwise be denied a space for their continued offline activism. However, although traditional gatekeepers to political participation may not exist online, this is not to say that participation is entirely open either. Critical divides as well as language and literary barriers are at the forefront of social media's limitations to give *all* youth the same opportunities to exercise their agency and voice. Thus, it is necessary to situate the positive potential of social media within the bounds of a collective of mostly young, relatively educated and highly urbanized youth (Malephane, 2022). However, there is promise within the collaborative networks that can be forged online within and between movements. Moreover, I do not argue that social media activism and online narratives should be the only indication of youth agency. Rather, I only suggest that looking to social media activism helps uncover a vast context of sub-activism that exists in parallel with formal political participation. In the context of peacebuilding this is significant given that it demonstrates that young people are actively engaged in pushing for change on their own terms.

Secondly and related, the powerful creative story-telling potential of social media activism demonstrates one way in which young people are involved in defining for themselves the futures they desire and how to achieve them. This speaks to the broader theme of this paper that young people are already architects of peace, yet they are rarely acknowledged as such. The ability for young people to coalesce around shared imaginations online indicates a powerful force for change. Even against resistance and repression from their own states, young people continue to use the tools they have available for them to push for change. Moreover, as this chapter has demonstrated, social media and in this case, Twitter operates as an important site of knowledge construction by young people that should not be discounted when engaging with offline politics. As Bohler-Muller & van der Merwe (2011) have argued, while social media is *also* a space for light-hearted and frivolous engagement, this chapter has demonstrated that it is a rhizomatic space that is also host to serious and transformative collective action.

Lastly, this chapter's discussion was important to frame within the fields of post- and critical development studies because of the implications these fields lend to combating a construction of young people as 'lazy' or disengaged. When framed as a response to failed development practices, the campaigns of #CongoIsBleeding, #FreeStellaNyanzi, and #Repeal162 showcase young people that are struggling against repressive regimes and systems of injustice. But similarly, to Honwana's (2012) understanding of 'waithood', the youth in these campaigns are not sitting idly by and waiting for their fortunes to change. Rather, they are playing an active role in advocating for change and constructing shared ideals of a different society.

Thus, the absence of young people from formal political participation does not connote apathy towards politics. Rather, looking to different spaces, particularly those that young people organically use (such as Twitter and social media) allows for an entirely different perspective in

which young people find and create their own forms of alternate participation. When looking to such spaces the idea of a victim-violent dichotomy (discussed elsewhere in this dissertation) is also called into question. Looking outside of a solely liberal frame of peacebuilding showcases an alternate perspective of young people, one in which they are not only agents of positive change but are also actively involved in creating their own spaces for engagement and political participation entirely outside of external intervention. Thus, there is less of a need for peacebuilding interventions to create more or new spaces, and much more of an impetus to acknowledge spaces and forms of engagement that young people already utilize, and to open the bounds of peacebuilding up to include these.

Chapter 5: Hybrid Peacebuilding and Hip-Hop

Introduction

Music is considered a useful medium for peacebuilding on the basis that it is an accessible way for people to express voice and agency, which in turn can empower and validate a person's experience, thus initiating a reiterative process of social change (Mutero & Kaye, 2019). Similarly, music is useful because it creates spaces where people can come together to connect and interact with others, where communities can express their challenges, and ultimately gain a greater sense of connection to the peace process (Dean, 2019). The self-expression that takes place in music-making can thus promote greater understanding between people, help rebuild social relationships and foster healing of the social fabric after conflict (Rival, 2019). Music, while connected to peace and harmony, is also connected to violence and dissonance. Thus, there are two sides to music including both the ability to heal as well as it's tendency to incite violence or victimization (Hintjens & Ubaldo, 2020) that need to be grappled with. In this chapter I explore these different roles of music, specifically Hip-Hop, to examine the extent to which it contributes to a conversation of the role of 'hybridity' in peacebuilding.

This chapter will proceed as follows: firstly, I provide a brief outline of hybridity's appearance and use within peacebuilding literature and the various criticisms that have been levied against it as it has evolved over several years. Next, I argue that to address these criticisms and to retain the concept's usefulness, a feminist, relational approach is needed. I then detail three ways that Hip-Hop not only already operates according to a feminist relational approach, but how it is also useful in contributing further to this approach. The three arguments to this end are as follows. Firstly, I argue that Hip-Hop is an organic form of hybridity that naturally blends young people's relations to both the local and global. When understood as forms of hybridity,

Hip-Hop music draws attention to the broader structures that young people are responding to in their lyrics. Second, I argue that Hip-Hop is a space that is created by and for young people and largely remains a space where young people have a relative degree of freedom of expression. Although this freedom leads to disagreements, these tensions help to reveal a more nuanced picture of the dynamism of what it means to be a young person in a particular context. Lastly, I argue that as a form of self-expression and a medium through which to explore one's own identity, Hip-Hop can help break down some of the binaries regarding 'youth' and 'authenticity' that are intrinsic to yet limit the effectiveness of hybrid peace arrangements.

In this chapter I have chosen to look beyond music that is directly related to or created for a conflict or post-conflict scenario. This is to say that I am less interested in the war melodies such as those used during the Mau Mau revolution or the types of music that is the product of intervention-based peacebuilding (such as the programs described by Mutero and Kaye (2019) or Edmondson (2018)), and am more concerned with the everyday music that is produced outside of an explicit conflict setting.

A Brief History of Hybridity in Peacebuilding

The concept of hybridity can be broadly defined as "as composite forms of practice, norms and thinking that emerge from the interaction of different groups, worldviews and activity" (Mac Ginty & Sanghera, 2012). Hybridity shifts away from notions of static and sealed entities, towards an understanding that all societies are based on complex social negotiations and the exchange of ideas and practices (Mac Ginty & Sanghera, 2012). While the idea of hybridity has recently gained traction in peacebuilding studies, it has also been referred to as a 'travelling concept' because of its different usages across disciplines (Forsyth, Kent, Dinnen, Wallis, & Bose, 2017). For instance, legal anthropologists have long been interested in how different legal

practices clash and inter-mingle, human rights scholars have studied the challenges of translating global norms into local contexts, and development theorists have questioned the relationship between formal and informal institutions in international interventions. Thus, there is no one fixed definition of 'hybridity' but rather it is a dynamic concept, and its meaning is shaped by and through the context it emerges in.

In peacebuilding studies, the concept of hybridity first emerged during the 'local turn' of the field. As described elsewhere in this thesis, the local turn came as a reaction against the failings of peacebuilding interventions in the Cold War era such as those in Somalia, Rwanda, and the Balkans. The shift therefore represented a move away from top-down models of peacebuilding based on foreign interventionism to one that is more explicitly attentive to local level dynamics and actors. Hybridity surfaced as a useful concept to this end as it emphasizes the relationship *between* local and global elements. However, its usage within the field has been shaped over time as understandings of 'local' and 'global' have changed.

Paffenholz (2015) has argued that peacebuilding studies has actually undergone *two* local turns and that these shifts represent the changing nature of hybridity's utility. The first turn, as argued by Paffenholz (2015), was a direct response to the interventions of the immediate post-Cold War era that heavily emphasized state-building and foreign intervention at the expense of local actors. This turn focused on giving local populations greater ownership over the peace process and external actors are conceptualized as playing a supporting rather than leading role (Paffenholz, 2015, p. 859-860). For instance, Campbell and Peterson (2013) argue that state-building exercises have failed to achieve lasting peace because it is often an ahistorical and apolitical process that "aims to create the same type of liberal democratic institutions that emerged from this chaotic decades-long process, but it aims to do so over less than a decade and

without a clear idea of the incremental steps or process through which these state institutions could form" (p. 339). Similarly, they argue that often state-building exercises become overly bureaucratic and fragmented given that they use standardized, technocratic templates that do not map onto the complex, fragmented, and dynamic realities of post-conflict scenarios (Campbell and Peterson 2013, p. 339). Further to this point, Pugh (2013) has also argued that state-building reinforces an elitist notion that legitimacy is lodged in "authorities favoured by the 'international community', rather than in the customary social contracts and grounded legitimacy of socially meaningful institutions" (p. 17).

In response to such criticisms, hybridity emerged as a way to better account for local level dynamics in peacebuilding exercises. This is to say that within this turn hybridity represents a *supportive* relationship between the local and the global where local elements simply need to be better understood and incorporated into the peace process. The attempt was therefore to shift away from a dichotomous and static perception of the 'local' and the 'global', to a dynamic process of interaction between the two where the local is afforded a greater degree of influence that had previously been assumed.

However, Paffenholz (2015) also argues that a second and more recent local turn has emerged that directly questions the logic of peacebuilding as state-building more broadly. According to Paffenholz (2015), this turn emerged in the 2000's and questioned the underlying colonial and imperial imperatives of peacebuilding interventions and thus it is this particular turn that falls more in line with the stated objectives of this project to offer a post-colonial critique of peacebuilding. For example, Paris (2002) argues that international peacebuilding resembles an updated version of colonialism's *mission civilisatrice* in which liberal market democracy is taken as the internationally sanctioned model of "legitimate governance" and the "standard of

civilization" that states must accept in order to gain full recognition by the international community (p. 650). Similarly, Vayrynen (2019) argues that peacebuilding reproduces epistemic colonial violence, or 'slow violence' insofar as it often renders the voices of the peace*kept* inferior to those of the foreign peace*builders*. Mac Ginty (2015) also argues that meta-policies such as state-building are often based on the notion that the foreign 'state-builder' knows best, thereby reproducing a colonial distinction where the local is presented as static, traditional, and ultimately in need of external intervention. In other words, the foreign peacebuilder is assumed to be the 'natural' helper while the local is presented as relatively helpless.

Paffenholz (2015) also argues that this second turn questions the collaborative relationship between the local and the global that was envisioned in first turn. Specifically, in response to the continued failure of the international community to achieve sustainable peace in post-conflict societies, the local is defined by resistance and *in opposition* to the global or the international (Paffenholz, 2015, p. 861). Hybridity in this contemporary turn therefore represents a site of tension between the local and the global where the 'local' is primarily a site of resistance against the violent order of the 'global' (Paffenholz, 2015, p. 861). For instance, Richmond (2010) argues that hybridity is defined as resistance to liberal peace and is expressed in the form of local agency or "resistive attempts of the local actors through their agency in encountering the hegemony of the liberal peace" (p.41, as cited in Anam, 2018). In this way the local turn further draws on post-colonial studies insofar as it attempts to acknowledge the 'subordinate group's' agency and emancipatory action (Anam, 2018). Peterson (2012) argues that the "traditional 'colonial power' under scrutiny (primarily European states, but also neocolonial powers such as America) is replaced by liberal, externally driven aid interventions" (p. 11). They also contend that focusing on local populations of agents (as per the first turn) has the tendency to obscure the

historical and ongoing colonial violence, systemic exploitation, and oppression that may be at the root of many conflicts and that would implicate those seen as the peace*builders*.

Critiques of Hybridity

Although Paffenholz' distinction helps showcase the changing nature of hybridity in peacebuilding, it does not indicate a consensus. Rather, while many scholars endorse the principles of Paffenholz' second local turn (such as Ahall, 2019; Honwana, 2012; and Podder, 2015), there is also a significant amount of discontent regarding the discrepancy between the *principles* of hybridity and what the concept actually *does* in practice. Namely, hybridity has been critiqued for reproducing the very binaries that it supposedly seeks to overcome. Indeed Peterson (2012) argues that despite hybridity's claim to move beyond simple binaries, in practice it often rests upon essentialized notions of the 'other'.

There are a variety of ways in which this binary is reproduced. Firstly, in practice hybridity has a tendency to 'flatten' out local level dynamics and power relations, thereby reifying the local as static and homogenous. For instance, Millar, Van der Lijn, and Verkoren (2013) argue that in practice hybridity has become embroiled within the professionalization and project-oriented nature of peacebuilding, thereby losing its radical and transformative edge. They argue that hybridity tends to "oversimplify matters by treating 'interveners' and 'locals' as singular and static units" and that "works on hybridity increasingly appear to consider hybrid outcomes as plannable and predictable. Much of the recent literature has had a tendency to conceive of hybridity as one more element of project implementation; some-thing else the international actors can create and perfect in the local environment" (p. 139). Similar arguments have been levied by Mac Ginty (2015) and Hunt (2017). In response to this criticism, Martin (2021) has proposed the notion of local-local dynamics. They claim that the 'local' is often

synonymized with local *elite* civil society and therefore is not representative of the vast heterogeneity of the what the local actually is (Martin, 2021). Further, when the everyday dynamics, or the microlevel of peacebuilding is brought into focus, it is clear that hierarchies extend far beyond the local-international dichotomy (Martin, 2021, p. 387). Thus, the concept of local-local dynamics attempts to move beyond this narrow conception of the local, towards one that explores how power can manifest in a multitude of ways at the local level and how diverse people in a local setting interact. In attempting to gain a more nuanced appreciation of the local, the notion of local-local dynamics coincides with the assertions from Mac Ginty (2015) and Peterson (2012) that hybridity is not the coming together of two pure forms but rather the hybridization of hybrids. This is to say that "the entities that are supposedly engaged in hybridization are likely themselves hybrid, hybridized from an earlier set of encounters (and so on and so on back through history" (Peterson, 2012, p. 21).

Secondly and relatedly, when hybridity becomes instrumentalized within the peacebuilding apparatus, it can also end up *supporting* the liberal status quo, rather than acting as a vehicle for transformative and emancipatory change. For instance, Anam (2018) argues that although hybridity tries to reduce the domination of liberal systems and norms of peacebuilding, in practice it has a tendency to function as a way to *expand* liberalism itself in non-Western societies. They contend that "the idea of a hybrid peace approach does not come to retreat liberalism in the field of peacebuilding. Rather, it is basically proposed to accommodate various institutions and norms where local-particular values and interests can be negotiated with the so-called 'universal human values' advocated by the liberal peace approach" (Anam, 2018, p. 42). Similarly, Nadarajah and Rampton (2015) argue that hybridity's claims to novelty and a break with the liberal peace orthodoxy are premature because often these arrangements reproduce the

logics of inclusion and exclusion, the eurocentrism, and the dualisms and hierarchies that are inherent to liberal peace (p. 50). In this sense hybridity is simply utilized as a way to promote the status quo, albeit with slight modifications, or what the authors refer to as a "folding into" the liberal order (Nadarajah & Rampton, 2015). Njeri (2019) has similarly argued that hybridity in practice often functions more so as a tool of legitimation to protect 'business as usual' rather than to meaningfully promoting local agency and emancipation.

It is in response to the argument that the liberal peace paradigm has a tendency to assimilate and flatten more radical and transformative elements, that this chapter will examine hybridity from an all together new perspective (through Hip-Hop as a form of youth peacebuilding) to significantly shift its relationship to a liberal paradigm. In particular, I argue that when hybridity is not instrumentalization, but rather viewed in its organic manifestations, it is a much more impactful lens through which to view the relationship between the local and the global. This is to say that hybridity is not something that can or even should be created, but rather is a process of relations that naturally emerge when the local and global meet, and that these interactions in themselves are spaces where young people articulate their own ideas of peace and post-conflict life.

Omach (2021) illustrates the maintenance of the liberal status quo in the case of northern Uganda where Acholi traditional authorities and everyday realities were at odds with international peacebuilding actors. They argue that despite efforts to revitalize local chiefdoms and include them in the peacebuilding process, the chiefs that were recognized were themselves a product of the colonial assignment of chiefs as a form of indirect rule and therefore are not a neutral reflection of local power arrangements (p. 944). Moreover, they argue that despite efforts at local incorporation into the peacebuilding process, only the traditions and customs that

conformed to liberal standards were ultimately incorporated (Omach, 2021). Thus, despite efforts at a hybrid peace arrangement, in practice peacebuilding in this context fails to challenge the status quo as the structural relations of colonial difference are reified to the extent that local situations were interpreted through the lens of the external interveners.

Lastly, in 'flattening out' the local and failing to adequately address the structural dimensions of the status quo, hybrid peacebuilding efforts may in effect augment the existing power dynamics that are at the root of a conflict, or potential create new ones. Peterson (2012) argues that while hybrid arrangement *can* be emancipatory for *some*, they can also generate new forms of injustice and power differentials given that not all people within the local have the same access to external interveners. Martin (2021) showcases this in the example of a local peacebuilding organization, Fambul Tok, in Sierra Leone. They argue that Fambul Tok made use of typologies of the 'local' that drew on simplified and homogenized tropes of 'exotic African traditionalism' to gain legitimacy and support (including monetary) for their organization (Martin, 2021). Furthermore, in implementing their initiatives, often in rural communities, urban Fambul Tok staff were found to embody and enact an authority figure position (often speaking the language of urban 'developed' areas) thereby reinforcing an NGO staff-participant hierarchy (Martin, 2021). This is not to demonize organizations like Fambul Tok but rather to showcase how in-country elites who are able to speak the language of both the local and the global have the ability to capitalize on existing hierarchies in communities and entrench them further in a way that the *recipients* of peacebuilding efforts do not.

While this example highlights an urban/rural distinction, there have been increasing attention to the ways that hybrid peace arrangements can also further entrench existing gender hierarchies. For example, McKay (2002) has argued that war-ending processes themselves are

highly gendered and often favour patriarchal institutions and processes to the extent that peacebuilding often reflects male dominated discourses and practices at the expense of women's priorities. In the context of the northern Uganda, Baines (2011) notes that although the roles young men and women occupy in conflict are segregated along gender lines (ie. men being more likely to act as active combatants and women being more likely to becomes mothers or 'wives'), the choices they make are all structured by a broader state of 'coerced militarized masculinity'. In such a context gender relations and expectations of what it means to be a 'man' or a 'woman' are distorted from what they may otherwise be in peacetime and therefore complicates assigning responsibility and justice seeking in the post-conflict context (Baines 2011). Moreover, while the shifting gender terrain of conflict can afford women some degree of authority and decision-making power (albeit structured by the highly inequitable and violent context of coerced militarized masculinity), given that the broader peacebuilding context remains highly masculinized, women often quickly lose what little influence they may have gained in a conflict setting (McKay 2002). Thus, if peacebuilding initiatives are not designed with gender relations as a core priority, they threaten to re-establish gender hierarchies even in situations where conflict has challenged such hierarchies. Moreover, these examples demonstrate that the peacebuilding landscape is structured along age and gender divisions, both of which can complicate and restrict the participation of marginalized voices such as young people, particularly young women, as active and positive decision makers.

An Alternative Way Forward

In light of the criticisms of hybridity's practical usage, there have been increasing calls to once again shift our understanding of the concept. In particular, a *relational* approach to hybridity has emerged as a useful new direction. At its core, a relational approach is concerned

primarily with the *relationships between* entities (such as the local and the global) as opposed to the *characteristics of* those entities. By this logic the type of categorical and binary thinking that hybridity tends to reproduce is replaced by the assumption that the local and global are both more porous, fluid, and transgressive than has typically been understood (Hunt, 2017). Kappler and Lemay-Hebert (2019) argue that a relational approach better accounts for the ways that actors are constantly repositioning themselves in relation to both the global and the local, depending on context and circumstance. While this is similar to the arguments presented above regarding local-local dynamics and hybridity as a hybrid of existing hybrids, it differs in that it is primarily concerned with the dynamics between different entities, rather than the entities themselves. In other words, while earlier waves of hybridity either homogenized the local (as demonstrated in Paffenholz' first turn) or attempted to add nuance to the local (Paffenholz' second turn), both were based on attempts to define the local in some fashion. Alternatively, a relational approach assumes all entities to be too complex and fluid to be placed within any analytical categorization and therefore removes this aspect from the equation all together.

Hunt (2017) showcases the need to move beyond a fixation on the classification of entities in their assertion that all actors possess 'composite identities' where "any single actor may not be acting under a single identity at all times or in a particular instance" (p. 215). Importantly, they also note that it is not always possible to identify what 'hat' (or hats) a particular entity is acting under (Hunt, 2017, p. 214). This is similar to Kappler's argument that re- and de-localization are parallel processes. Kappler (2015) asserts that "actors not only play according to the rules as dictated by the surrounding structures, but play out their agency in terms of making deliberate decisions in how to present themselves vis-à-vis cooperating and competing actors in any given peacebuilding context" (p. 878). This is to say that actors may

choose to either ‘re-localize’ their identity as a way to assert ‘authenticity’ or ‘de-localize’ their identity in an effort to gain a greater degree of legitimacy associated with an international (ie. Western) peacebuilding imperative. Hybridity from this perspective thus moves away from a theoretical classification and towards a focus on what happens during an interaction between different entities in practice.

Along a similar vein, the concept of ‘friction’ has also been offered as an alternative to hybridity. It comes as a direct response to what Millar, Van der Lijn, and Verkoren (2013) refer to as ‘plannable hybridity’, or the tendency for hybridity to become one more element in a standardized universalized template of peacebuilding. Drawing on Tsing’s (2005) initial articulation of the concept, friction is said to stress “the emergent and unexpected nature of unintended and unplanned consequences”, “the unexpected and unstable aspects of global interaction", and “the generative process that allows creative re-imaginations as an organic response to 'awkward engagements” (as cited in Millar, Van der Lijn, & Verkoren, 2013). In other words, friction is said to better capture the unexpected and organic aspects of the meeting of the local and the global (Bjorkdahl & Hoglund, 2013). It also is said to defy standardized project implementation to the extent that it is conceptualized as an uneven, unexpected, and uncertain process where the local and the global mediate and negotiate difference and affinity (Bjorkdahl & Hoglund, 2013, p. 294). Therefore, while hybridity often operates on the assumption of a predetermined outcome (either a positive and supportive path to peace in the first turn, or conflict and resistance in the second), friction as an approach argues that it is in the *meeting* rather than the outcome that peace is built.

Although friction is offered as an alternative to hybridity, it is my argument that hybridity is not yet in need of a replacement. Instead, I suggest that because it is still a relatively novel

concept in the field of peacebuilding, the criticisms levelled against it can be correct in a third wave of conceptualization. Just as Paffenholz's first two turns represented critical junctures in the way hybridity is discussed and utilized, I suggest that a relational approach is at the heart of the concept's current transformation which I will from here on refer to as the 'relational shift'. This argument builds on the calls by Hunt (2017) Kappler and Lemay-Hebert (2019), Shepherd (2014), and McLeod (2018) amongst others who have advocated for the inclusion of a relational approach to the field. Thus, while I accept the premises of 'friction', I believe with a new orientation they are able to be captured in the existing concept.

A relational approach to hybridity also overlaps with feminist or intersectional approaches. Partis-Jennings (2017) argues that a feminist approach to hybridity prompts engagement with the affective and *relational* dimensions of peace and how the personal is political for *both* the local and international actor. McLeod (2015) similarly argues in favour of recognizing the personal as political, and further stipulates that feminist ideas open the way for a richer and more nuanced analysis of power and an acknowledgement of the different ways people experience conflict (p. 52). In this way it overlaps with a broader relational agenda insofar as it sheds itself of the need to rely on categorical assumptions of actors and instead focuses on the unique experiences of people and how it shapes how they come to and interact with the peacebuilding process. Kappler and Lemay-Hebert (2019) make similar arguments to support an *intersectionality of peace* approach. This approach uses a thick conceptualization of intersectionality to "challenge identity politics, group essentialism, and assumptions of in-group uniformity" that have prompted criticisms of hybridity's usefulness (Kappler & Lemay-Hebert, 2019, p. 169). The authors further argue that intersectionality supports the deconstruction of binaries, normalized theories, and homogenizing categories. Thus, a feminist approach as

advocated by Partis-Jennings (2017) and McLeod (2015) are aligned with a relational turn in their questioning and deconstruction of the earlier assumptions and binaries that hybridity has been based on. They argue that such an approach "enables us to unpack power dynamics at play in PCS [Peace and Conflict Studies]" and "contributes to our understanding of why specific voices are marginalized and silenced, when others are privileged and considered authoritative" (p.162). An intersectional and feminist perspective on hybridity are useful tools to reveal in more depth the textured, complex, and diffuse ways that power operates in hybrid peace engagements.

I highlight here that working from an intersectional approach as defined by the above noted authors involves more than looking to the experiences of different social identity groups. While examining the differences between the experiences of disparate gender identifying groups, ethnic or racial groups, or different socio-economic groups, amongst many others, is no doubt important, the form of intersectionality advocated here also includes a 'thicker' conceptualization of the term. This is to say that intersectionality as defined by the above authors, and as it is used in this chapter and overall project, considers the underlying structures of power at play and the ways that these are also profoundly gendered and aged. Applying this perspective to youth peacebuilding includes not solely examining, for example, the experiences of young girls and boys, but also attending to the ways that broader structures of militarized masculinities have defined the conditions of possibility (as defined in the introductory chapters of this thesis) of liberal peacebuilding. Similarly, intersectionality here is not only about examining the ways that young people in a specific geographic part of the world (East Africa) are marginalized in peacebuilding and attempt to push against their restrictions, but also about understanding the structures of power that have situated 'legitimate' knowledge within Global North institutions and centres of decision making. Thus, while social identities have been and will continue to be a

point of examination, I clarify here that the definition of intersectionality offered is consistent with a thick and critical feminist conceptualization of gender *relations* rather than gender *identity* per se.

Feminist approaches to peacebuilding have revealed the ways that peacebuilding is a highly gendered space in and of itself. For instance, Forsyth, Kent, Dinnen, Wallis, and Bose (2017) argue that for hybridity to remain useful it must grapple with not only how hybrid arrangements affect gender, but also the broader gendered presuppositions in a given context. In what can be read as a response to this call, Ryan and Basini (2017) explored the 'gendered power' in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 and the National Action Plans (NAPs) for post-war Liberia and Sierra Leone[9]. They argue that gender power in this context resulted in the privileging of some women's groups over others and the tendency to revert to essentialized definitions of 'women's issues'. Ultimately, groups that were better connected to foreign, international actors, as well as those that fit the 'international agenda' of 'protecting' 'vulnerable' women, were those most likely to be represented. Similarly, Partis-Jennings (2017) argues that the practice of peacebuilding is predicated on a logic of masculine protection that results in an affective environment in which gender is understood. Thus, a feminist approach also helps to extend hybridity by informing the more expansive gendered logic that shapes the very contexts and spaces where peacebuilding is carried out.

[9] The UNSC Resolution 1325 institutionalized a 'Women, Peace, and Security' (WPS) agenda within international peacebuilding. It was the first formal and legal document from the UNSC that required parties in a conflict to prevent the violation of women's rights, to support women's participation in peace negotiations and reconstruction efforts, and to protect women and girls from wartime sexual violence. This resolution emphasizes local ownership and implementation of the agenda. Thus, the NAPs were created to facilitate local integration and drew upon local women's groups to do so.

Lastly, a feminist perspective that seeks out marginalized or otherwise silenced voices has also prompted discussions regarding the role of young people in peacebuilding. Indeed, there is growing recognition of the value of young people's knowledge regarding conflict and how to transform it into peace (some of the most prominent advocates include Agbiboa, 2015; Azmi, Brun, & Lund, 2013; and Oosterom, Maran, & Wilson, 2019, amongst others). In addition to acknowledging the value of their perspective, it has also helped re-conceptualized young people's security by questioning the relational nature of social and political practices, as well as the oppressive nature of power structures in which young people are situated (Jacob, 2015, p. 24). This is to say that just as a feminist agenda has revealed the gendered assumptions within peacebuilding, so too has it helped unearth the age-based conventions build into peacebuilding processes. These include the mainstream theoretical conceptions of young people as vulnerable and in need of protection, and conversely as violent and a threat to peace processes.

Lastly, young people, particularly during times of conflict, exist as a relational space themselves given that they straddle the boundaries of childhood and adulthood (Nosworthy, 2009). Thus, a relational approach that can capture the array of experiences and multiple (sometimes contrasting) roles that young people move through is a suitable method. McEvoy-Levy (2006) argues that young people may be 'troublemakers' or 'peacemakers', or *both*, depending on the context they find themselves in. Moreover, she argues these roles are fluid and young people often traverse through and between different roles as they see fit. Thus, a static approach to peacebuilding that may categorize youth as a monolithic entity would likely miss the important nuances of how young people experience conflict and peace.

Hip-Hop and Feminist Relational Approach to Hybridity

It is my assertion in this chapter that looking to East African Hip-Hop can offer an avenue to actualize a relational and feminist approach to hybridity in youth peacebuilding. This claim is supported by the arguments to follow that 1) Hip-Hop is itself an organic form of hybridity, 2) it represents an inclusive space for youth and young people, and 3) it is inherently embedded in a process of representation that often breaks down the binary view of local and global entities or actors.

Hip-Hop as organic hybridity.

Hip-Hop in East Africa represents an organic form of hybridity that naturally combines both local and global elements. This is in part due to the fact that the story of Hip-Hop in East Africa is the story of the import of an American-style genre and its hybridization (also referred to as vernacularization in other contexts) to fit within local contexts. For example, in Tanzania, Pierson (2020) notes that Hip-Hop in the country, referred to often as *Bongo Flava*, emerged in the 80s and 90s during a wave of rapid globalization that saw an influx in exposure and access to American products, including music. The term *Bongo Flava* is derived from the words '*Bongo*', "a sobriquet for Dar es Salaam and a term derived from *ubongo* or brain in Swahili" (p. 523) and '*Flava*' which is vernacular for flavour, or as Pierson (2020) describes from their interactions in Tanzania, representative of a "musical pilau - the trans-Indian Ocean rice dish notable for its spice mélange combining various tastes" (p. 523). *Bongo Flava* represents such a dish insofar as it drew inspiration from American-style rap while localizing to fit within the shared frustrations of Tanzanians in the wake of unfulfilled promises related to democratization and liberalization during this period (Pierson, 2020). Thus, *Bongo Flava* came to be associated with and representative of the unique street-savvy and vigilance required to live within the new realities of

globalization and neocolonialism that manifested throughout the late 90's. This type of social commentary was able to take root because of the long history in Tanzania prior to colonialism and engagement with the West of using song to comment on social and political issues (Perullo, 2005). Next door in Uganda, Rollefson (2017) similarly argues that the Hip-Hop genre appeared in the country at a particular moment in time that saw the convergence between 'dehumanizing neoliberal globalization' and the harsh realities of living in a post-colonial state (as cited in Singh, 2020).

The similarities in the emergence of Hip-Hop in these two countries represents the foundation of Hip-Hop in the region as one that is intrinsically a coming-together of local and global elements. In other words, this form of music is a useful and relevant space to imagine a relational approach to peacebuilding because at its core it is less concerned about what is global and what is local but rather it is grounded in attempts to explore and express the new tensions that emerge when the two meet. For example, two of the most popular artists to emerge alongside *Bongo Flava's* growing popularity were Mr. II and Professor Jay, both of whom came to be known for their honest and relevant commentary on the ills that young people faced as a result of the new political and economic order. It should be noted that these two artists, and several of the artists showcased in this chapter, are male artists who heavily draw upon masculinized ways of being. While chapter 3 focused specifically on the experiences of females and women, this chapter offers the inverse perspective by foregrounding the experiences of men. Below are two examples of songs by Mr. II and Professor Jay that exemplify a commentary on how they experience the world[10]:

[10] Translations and lyrics are reproduced from Perullo, 2005.

"Hali Halisi" ("The Real Situation") – Mr. II
Our lives are hard, even the president knows
And we still have our smiles for every situation,
Every real situation
Everyday it's use and the polices, the police and us.
Police in the court is waiting for us.
The wardens and the jails are waiting for us.
In Tanzania, things are not good,
Things are still very hard.
Greetings to John Paul II
Angry citizens are burning people alive.
Those of us that do not have jobs, stay hungry.
When we are tired of peace, who are we going to fight with?
As years go by, I become tired of patriotism.
I see the same faces, the same leaders
From primary school until the present.
Do not play with politics,
Politics is a dirty game.
They just want to be famous.
Lots of Tanzanian politicians are liars.

"Ndio Mzee" ("Yes Elder") – Professor Jay
I would like to take this opportunity my friends
Can't you see how bad things are?
I would like to change Tanzania to be like Europe.
The first thing that I will do is abolish poverty.
Students will do their practical on the moon.
In the hospital, I will put as much medicine as there is sand.
I will open [bank] accounts for every young child.
Pipes will deliver water and milk to the entire country.
Villagers will forget [problems] with wells.
I will help witchdoctors build airplanes.
Every person will get theirs, conductors and ticket tackers
I will make Tanzanians happy,
"Yes Mzee".
I am accepted, am I not? "Yes Mzee".
So, I am your Savior my friends, "Yes Mzee".
And I will get rid of all your problems, "Yes Mzee".
These things, they are infuriating, "Yes Mzee".
And they really annoy me, "Yes Mzee"
So, things will change, okay? "Yes Mzee".
And, I will take the reins [as a political official] okay?
"Yes Mzee

The first song, "Hali Halisi" is a candid expression of the hardships that Tanzanians, particularly young Tanzanians encounter and "Ndio Mzee" is a satirical social commentary on the corruption of politicians in which Professor Jay acts as an elder himself who makes grand and false promises (Perullo, 2005). In this sense these songs are examples of the 'hybrid outcomes' in Hip-Hop that Ntarangwi (2009) refers to. Ntarangwi (2009) argues that Hip-Hop in East Africa produces hybrid outcomes to the extent that it weaves together artists' own historical past within current global realities, and melds local and global elements in a way that produces a product that is distinctly suitable for the local context.

Although Hip-Hop can be viewed as a manifestation of a form of expression that is more relational in nature, a truly relational approach to hybridity must also grapple with questions of our own ontological and epistemological assumptions as scholars, and the extent to which we are

acting as of voices of power and knowledge (Forsyth et al., 2017, p. 417). Thus, the ethos of this approach is to seek out the messiness of social life and to resist the urge to seek neat categorization. It is in this spirit that I now turn to a set of examples that contrast with the arguments I have laid out above.

The examples above are indicative of a local art form that expresses young artists' relationship to their changing and increasingly globalized worlds, the frustrations therein, and calls for reform or action. However, in more recent years there has been an increase in young artists that produce Hip-Hop that seems less closely related to the original songs of the 80's, and more closely resembles the flashy and extravagant performances of Western artists such as Jay-Z, Tupac Shakur, Kendrick Lamar, and Drake, amongst many others. For instance, Gasuza Lwanga and Atlas da African are two popular contemporary Hip-Hop artists in Uganda. Many of the themes addressed by these artists are related to masculine ideals of success, wealth, a reckless or party-based lifestyle, and women as sexual objects. One example of this is the song *Success*" performed by Gasuza, V*Boogie, Eazy Tex, and Atlas da African. The song features lyrics about 'hustling' and 'working hard' to gain success. Many lyrics boast about lavish lifestyles, money, and praise or jealousy from others. This is evidenced in the following lyrics:

"Champagne flowing like water go ahead and order (nothing)
Dressed in Versace these haters they can't stop me
Mad coz when I pull up the Rolly his shawty watch me,
Kampala am a Capone
Already blew 1000 a day what can you say? (Nothing)
The club is on Smash, UG girls got bodies"

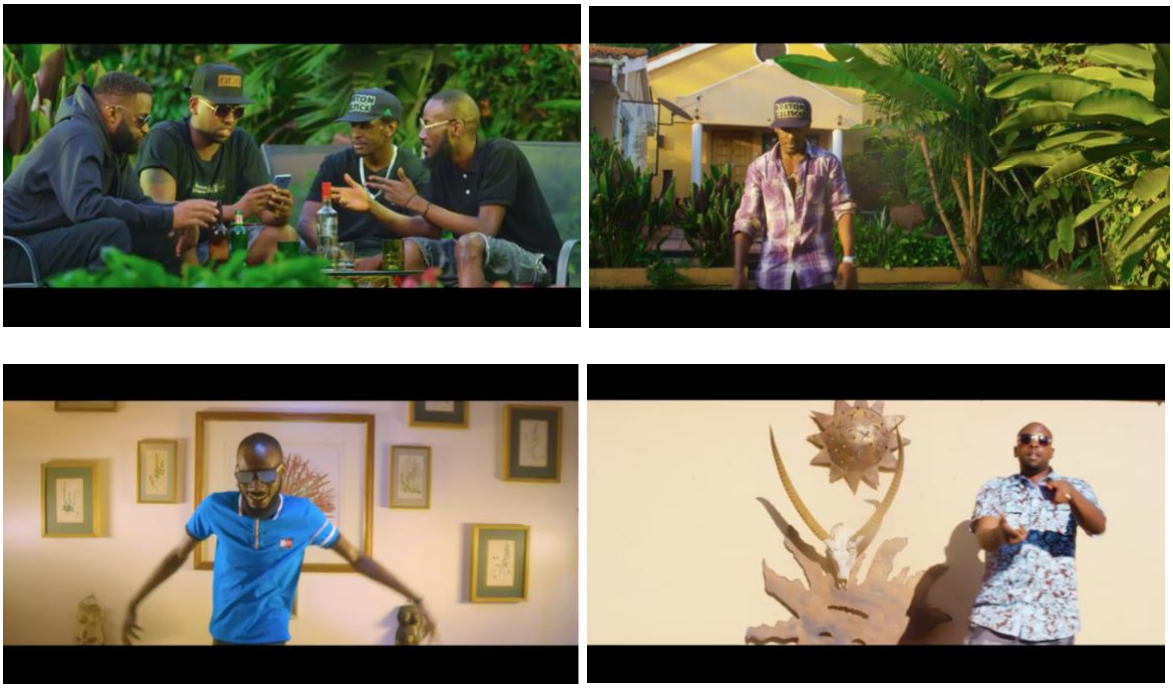
"I've been proposed too but never took the ring ring

VIP sitting will be treated like the kings ahh ahh ahh

In every way see mi champagne the bottle pops

Haters hating but they forced to give it props"

Some of the images in the music video that accompany these lyrics include the artists wearing mostly black clothes with stylish watches, necklaces and sunglasses, sitting around a garden table with a variety of alcoholic beverages, rapping inside and in front of a large, well-decorated house, and speaking on modern cellphones. Below is a collection of screen grabs from the music video that illustrate these moments:



Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hg9Ken7EEY
[Timestamps 0:26; 2:04; 0:33; 1:08 respectively]

The relationship between the lyrics and the images suggest that a successful life is one that involves material wealth, excess leisure time, and an overall lavish lifestyle. However, I hesitate to argue songs that are focused on an aspirational lifestyle such as these, or those that have more

direct social commentary such as those by Professor Jay and Mr. II are more valid or consequential than the other. Instead, if we are to interpret both sets of lyrics these through a relational feminist lens and focus on what they say about how the young artists relate to their social worlds they are telling of the kinds of broader structures that shape how artists express themselves. For example, Singh (2020) argues that through both activism and excess, Hip-Hop artists act in a singular response to their circumstances. In different ways these lyrics reveal articulations about striving for economic freedom and justice in the context of historical colonialism and contemporary neoliberal capitalism (Singh, 2020).

Thus, I argue that Hip-Hop is not only an organic form of hybridity, but it can also add depth to feminist relational approach because it is telling of the broader structures that impact the music that is produced. As exemplified by the work of Mr. II and Professor Jay, Hip-Hop in the 80's and 90's was largely a product of and response to the rapidly changing socio-political environment of the country and new realities posed by a newly formed democracy and a more liberalized and globalized economy. More contemporary music such as that by Atlas da African and Gasuza Lwanga that seems to contrast the former, can be read as a similar response to the type of environment that that either artist exists in today, one that it structured by the legacies of colonialism and contemporary wealth disparities in light of capitalist reconstruction of the economy. Thus, in line with a feminist relational approach to hybridity in peacebuilding, the analysis I have presented through the lyrics chosen are important not because of what they reveal about individualized experiences, but rather because they are a way to access the realities of larger power structures.

Hip-Hop as a youth-inclusive medium

Hip-Hop as a global phenomenon has its origins in a culture of change and a form of resistance. As a sub-culture and art movement, Hip-Hop has its origins in low-income boroughs of New York City such as the Bronx, Queen's, and Brooklyn in a context of worsening economic conditions for African American populations that were disproportionately impacted by the post-industrial decline and economic collapse of the 1970s, as well as on-going racial tension enflamed during the race riots of the 1960's (PQ, 2019). During this time young people took to the abandoned buildings and streets as spaces for artistic expression in the form of music and dance (PQ, 2019). Some of the earliest artists to emerge during this period include DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, Run-DMC, and Grandmaster Flash, who hosted infamous block parties where they shared their music with their communities (All Music, 2022). DJ Kool Herc's rise to prominence was initiated with his 'Back to School Jam' where he played music for his apartment building as part of his younger sister's effort to earn extra money for back-to-school clothes. Thus began a trend of emerging artists hosting similar block parties in which they claimed space within their neighbourhoods and people came together through music and dance (Allah, 2018). In addition to carving out spaces for community, Hip-Hop was also used in its beginning stages as a platform for social and political commentary. Afrika Bambaataa exemplifies this trend in his founding of 'Zulu Nation', a group of socially and politically aware artists in his community and his contributions to the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and local anti-violence programs.

Although Hip-Hop has strong themes of nefarious lifestyles, the objectification of women, and emphasis on wealth (that actively work to *exclude* some groups of youth or particular social identities), the socially conscious undertones of the genre is an important

characteristic that is still evident in contemporary music. This is evident in songs such as 'Black American Again' by Common, 'The Blacker the Berry' by Kendrick Lamar, 'This Is America' by Childish Gambino, and 'Power' by Rhapsody. Most importantly however, Hip-Hop as a form of socially motivated self-expression has and continues to be an art that is utilized by young people themselves. Indeed, some of the most famous and globally recognized names in Hip-Hop began their careers in their youth or young adulthood[11].

The culture of Hip-Hop as youth expression and resistance is a defining feature of the genre that maintains itself across geographic translations. For example, in Nairobi imported American-style Hip-Hop fused with more long-standing local traditions of using song to convey political messages and demonstrate collective defiance. This legacy is most notable in the connection between Kenyan Hip-Hop and a "Mau Mau consciousness" in which artists see themselves as continuing the legacies of the 1950s freedom fighters (as cited in Peck, 2018, p. 115). In this sense, contemporary artists continue the ethos of Mau Mau ancestors through advocacy for the disenfranchised. Through Hip-Hop, Nairboi's underground scene has given birth to a "creative modification" where legacies of the past and influences from other cultures are combined to articulate a uniquely local form of expression. Wa-Mungai (2007) describes this process as one in which "youth culture trains its gaze outwards from the local to the global in order for them to look back into the local" (p. 48). On the one hand this is again an illustration of Hip-Hop as an organic hybridization of the local (Mau Mau legacies) and foreign (the genre of music). More importantly though, the culture of contemporary Hip-Hop in Kenya demonstrates that its artists are continually finding new ways to make sense of the transnational flows of

[11] For example, Kendrick Lamar released his major-label debut album when he was only 25. Similarly, Dr. Dre and Notorious B.I.G, two other prominent names in global Hip-Hop, started their careers in their early 20's.

culture (Peck, 2018, p.114). Consequently, the result of these fusions between past and present, local and foreign has been the creation of spaces by and for young people to resist and challenge social ideologies, practices, and structures that maintain their subordination (Marsh & Petty, 2011).

In this way Hip-Hop is a useful tool to implement a more feminist approach to peacebuilding insofar as it has created space for marginalized voices, in this case youth voices, to express themselves in a way that challenges or questions the status-quo when doing so may not be possible in other spaces. Hip-Hop also presents an interesting paradox wherein while it can offer a more inclusive space for young people to access political voice, some aspects of the genre including the overtly sexualization of female bodies, actively create barriers for some young people. In this sense Hip-Hop is not offered as a 'silver bullet' or an example of a universally inclusive space for peace action .. Instead, the purpose of examining Hip-Hop in this way is to demonstrate how it can be used as a space through which break down *some* barriers, albeit while leaving others intact. Furthermore, Hip-Hop is relational in so far as it not only gives space for some youth to articulate their own relationships to their social and political worlds, but it does so in a way that can connect young artists and young people to each other and their own communities. This is because while *participation* in the *creation* of Hip-Hop may not be accessible and welcoming for all, the enjoyment of the music itself can bring a larger population of young people together.

In Senegal, Hip-Hop first emerged in the 1980s as a response by young people to the social dislocation resulting from Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), political turmoil from untrusted elections, and a shifting cultural climate in the wake of expanding access to global media (Fredericks, 2014). It then took on new significance in the early 2010's as disaffected

young people used the genre as a key medium of protest and to make claims to voice, spaces of citizenship, and political expression (Fredericks, 2014). A troupe of rappers known as "Y'en a Marre" ("Fed Up") fostered a resistance movement in opposition to the then president Abdoulaye Wade, which contributed to his political defeat in 2012. Through songs such as "Faux! Pas Forcé" (*"Don't Force It"*) and "Doggali" (*"Let's Finish"*), the troupe rallied young people around collective struggles such as increasing rates of poverty, energy cuts, and growing concerns over government corruption (Nossiter, 2011). While not an example from East Africa, a similar trend of young Hip-Hop artists making the transition from music to politics is one that can be found widely across the continent. Examples of this include Burkina Faso's rapper "Smockey" who was at the forefront of political protests that helped overturn the 2015 coup, Ayman Maw in Sudan who performed in support of protesters against the rule of Omar al-Bashir, and Congolese "Lexxus Legal" who has been active in politics and protest movements since the violent protests in 2016 under Joseph Kabila's government (Knowles, 2021). Most recently, rapper turned political activist and presidential candidate Bobi Wine gained notoriety amongst Uganda's youth population in his campaign against Yoweri Museveni.

Hip-Hop thus can operate as a tool to communicate shared experiences of post-colonialism, globalization, and inequality. While the specific struggles of young people are unique in each context, Hip-Hop helps to foster what Fredericks (2014) refers to as "new geographies of citizenship" where young people transgress norms of speech and political behaviour to assert new claims to their cities and nations. The growing trend across the sub-continent to this end demonstrates the transnational influence of the genre where young people can gain a voice for themselves in their own societies as well as asserting membership within a global Hip-Hop community (Fredericks, 2013).

However, while there are clear unifying characteristics to Hip-Hop in East Africa and the sub-continent more broadly, it is still in many ways an exclusionary space. Hip-Hop in East Africa, as well as many other parts of the world, remains exclusionary when it comes to its underlying gendered dynamics. To return to the example of Nairobi's underground Hip-Hop scene, the exclusionary gender dynamics are deeply rooted in the genre's history. The masculine gendering of the underground Hip-Hop scene comes in large part from its borrowing of Mau Mau tropes of the strong, male warrior and a male dominated history of war and resistance (Peck, 2018, p. 117). While specific references to the Mau Mau are less common in contemporary music, the gender politics of this era have maintained themselves in more subtle ways, such as the absence of women in music videos and the tropes that women are depicted through when they are present (Peck, 2018, pp. 118-120). For example, the following are images taken from top songs from two contemporary, popular Kenyan artists.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2WysHXT-PY [Timestamps 1:38; 1:28 respectively]

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyI1bh8BI90
[Timestamps 1:06; 2:44; 0:45; 1:20 respectively]

The first two images are from the video for Boutross' song "Yea Yea Yea" and feature Boutross rapping in various locations such as a blue set with money falling around him, and in a house with another male where both are wearing several pieces of expensive looking jewelry. These scenes are interspersed with images of a young woman in shorts, a revealing top, and a jacket dancing while money falls around her. The woman's full face is never made visible to the audience. The last four images are from King Kaka's video for his song "Dundaing". In this video King Kaka and the supporting male artists rap in various settings while female dancers dressed in bathing suits or other revealing clothing dance with them or are positioned in such a way that they appear as 'props'. Most of the images in this video feature the young woman, with several close-up shots of their bodies in which their faces are not visible.

While this example features Kenyan artists, I argue that it is also indicative of the broader trend of Hip-Hop as a space that is highly masculinized and dependent upon sexualized gender norms in which woman are presented solely or prominently as sexual objects. In this way Hip-Hop has underlying tropes that present women in a singular and limited way that makes the genre a less accessible, or at least less welcoming space for female artists. In this way, although these examples of Hip-Hop present avenues for resistance in some spheres, they also reify existing inequalities in others.

This is not to say that female artists do not exist. In fact, many of the leading contemporary artists in East Africa are women. These artists include Rema Namakulu from Uganda, Zuchu from Tanzania, Nadia Mukami, Muthoni the Drummer Queen, and Stella Mwangi from Kenya, amongst many others. The presence of more female artists in the industry opens new spaces to contest the highly sexualized depictions of women in Hip-Hop, or the conservative gender norms for women in society more broadly (Ntarangwi, 2009). Indeed, there are prominent female artists who dare to take up space in a male-dominated industry without relying on patriarchal or sexist standards and codes of conduct. For example, Pierson argues that the masculine appearance of Zay B, a popular Tanzanian female artist, "can be read as a mode of bargaining whereby she tries on hegemonic styles in exchange for recognition" (p. 529). While Zay B's gender performance can be interpreted as conforming to rather than disrupting the masculine norms in the industry, she is nonetheless outwardly rejecting the norms of hyper-sexuality that are evidenced elsewhere. However, for other artists the performance of overt sexuality resonates as a form of power whereby the artists seem to be reclaiming ownership over their identities. For example, Muthoni the Drummer Queen's 2018 album "She" has been described as a "true Afro-feminist record" and a "spirited celebration" of modern womanhood in Kenya from different perspectives (Storm, 2018). Each song on the album features a different female protagonist faced with a predicament that forces her to re-evaluate her life and undergo a form of transformation (Mouth-Watering Records, n.d.). Therefore, while there are certainly still problematic gender tropes within Hip-Hop music, the agency of female artists to carve out their own spaces and to push back against these tropes should not be understated.

Thus, the gendered boundaries of Hip-Hop can be both reaffirmed and disrupted by its artists which demonstrates how Hip-Hop is a vehicle through which to express both the fluidity

and performative nature of gender, as well as to reify existing gender norms (Ntarangwi, 2009). Nonetheless, I do not argue any particular expression is more or less valid and impactful than the other. Instead, I argue that different expressions of gender are as important, if not more important, to pay attention to in a peacebuilding agenda than the unity that Hip-Hop can create. The way female artists, and artists more broadly, chose to enter the space does not need to be unified, nor *should* it be because not all female artists are the same. While a seemingly straightforward conclusion, it is indicative of a foundation component of the exclusion of young people from peacebuilding more broadly. As discussed earlier in this thesis, young people are often viewed within peacebuilding through a series of essentialized and limited frames that are unable to capture the vastness of the youth experience. Therefore, an essential component of including young people in peacebuilding is a commitment to including *all* youth and the various perspectives they may hold.

As I have argued elsewhere, this means not only including the perspectives that fit with a pre-determined agenda but committing to the voices that differ as well. Hip-Hop can therefore not be solely determined as a masculinized space that is equally problematic and restrictive for all women or feminine people. The reality that has been reflected here moves beyond a reversion to simple gender binary to explore how young people engage with the genre. Rather, the exploration of Hip-Hop has demonstrated that is a highly nuanced space where different gender expression negotiate their own ways of being. When extrapolating this notion out to peacebuilding more broadly, it demonstrates the organic ways that young people are capable of taking spaces that may otherwise be uncomfortable and hostile, and tactically situating themselves to affect change or compete for relevance. Thus, I do not argue that Hip-Hop is

inherently an equally inclusive space, but rather that the way that young people maneuver within it *makes* it an accessible medium.

To follow from the previous section's conclusion, the different ways that gender is expressed and negotiated through Hip-Hop is telling of the broader structures of societal gender norms at play. Whether through conforming to or resisting the highly sexualized imagery of women in Hip-Hop, or reclaiming what it means to be a woman in society more broadly, Hip-Hop functions as a window into the broader gender dynamics at play. As previously explained, a common and significant critique of peacebuilding is the short-term nature of many initiatives that fail to address the underlying dynamics that can maintain conflict past any formally recognized peace agreement. However, when taken seriously as a relevant form of expression, and thus worthy of inclusion in a broader peacebuilding agenda, Hip-Hop can offer an insight into how young people see and are responding to the structures that are the sources of their oppression or disenfranchisement, such as patriarchal notions of gender and femininity.

In conclusion, while a feminist relational approach makes space to include an array of different types of relations, I argue that there is value in bringing *divisions* as relations to the forefront of the conversation. This would be to lean into rather than reject or ignore that which defies the program-based logic of peacebuilding initiatives. Ultimately, youth are far from a unified group that can fall under any simple classification and Hip-Hop is a place to show and see/ hear the plurality in youth voice and youth experience. To showcase this is to add credence to the argument that the local is not monolithic, and furthermore neither are its actors. Youth are a rich social group with vastly different opinions and these differences shouldn't be turned away from but rather viewed as useful and importance in appreciating the many different ways that they experience their lives.

Hip-Hop as boundary breaking

Young people are often excluded from decision-making processes given the false assumptions about their age and that they are in need of protection or that they are threats to the peace process. Thus, while adults (often times elite adults) are in position of decision making, young people are assumed to be the recipients of such knowledge. This is not to say that young people are not in need of protection or can never endanger the peace process. However, these frames become problematic and exclusionary when they become static and all-encompassing. In other words, youth *also* have the ability to be agents of their own protection and to contribute to peace processes positively. Yet, the dichotomy of adults as knowledge producers and young people as the targets or recipients of this knowledge limits the extent to which the agency of young people is recognized. I argue that the capacities of young people are on display in the way they have engaged with Hip-Hip in East Africa, to the extent that they can be considered knowledge producers in their own right.

In Dar es Salaam for example, Hip-Hop has been used by young people as a way to confront stereotypes of their age group as 'hooligans' or as a 'lost generation' and to redefine themselves as creative and empowered individuals in society (Perullo, 2004). Here young people have utilized Hip-Hop to create a critical medium of social empowerment where they have been able to voice their political concerns to the public in an accessible and popular way (Perullo, 2004). While stereotypes of 'hooliganism' still abound, Hip-Hop has also produced a generation of new role models for youth, strengthened the bonds and sense of community through music, and provides a voice and empowering form of legitimation to young people (Perullo, 2004, p.97).

In the Swahili coast of Kenya in the early 2000's, young artists in Mombasa grappled with an emerging 'coastal identity' that excluded Swahili and Swahili-speaking Muslims of Arab and South Asian descent (Eisenberg, 2012). A *Mombasani*[12] identity emerged in which artists focused on the city's urban modernity and the experiences unique to the Kenyan coast (Eisenberg, 2012). However, this identity rested on a conceptual opposition to the Swahili coastal inhabitants and young Swahili artists of the coastal Old Town region, with its strong historical ties to the city's Arabic and Indian influences, found themselves without a place in this emerging form of cultural citizenship (Eisenberg, 2012).

From these two examples it is evidence that on the one hand Hip-Hop can be used to challenge the perception of young people as idle, passive, and potentially dangerous. This affords young people with a platform to demonstrate the strong capacity they have to engage meaningfully and thoughtfully in political conversations and to take ownership over their own societal representations. On the other hand, it can also foster tensions around belonging and cultural citizenship as demonstrated in the case of Mombasa. The important aspect to consider however, is that in both cases young people themselves are at the forefront of articulating their own identities and their own sense of ownership and belonging to a place. In speaking out in such ways, young people are actively rejecting the status quo that perpetuates gerontocratic traditions of public discourse that exclude young people (Fredericks, 2013). In other words, Hip-Hop can be viewed as a productive and useful mode of 'speaking out of turn' that challenges assumptions about what voices can make rightful claims to identity and citizenship. This can be viewed as a manifestation of the call by McEvoy-Levy (2006) that young people deserve to be

[12] Eisenberg describes *Mombasani* as having long been used as an in-group identifier among young people of upcountry descent who have lived most of their life in Mombasa.

recognized not only as *participants* in peace processes, but the *architects* as well with capacity to define their own roles and their own place within society.

Similarly, while Hip-Hip has the potential to break down some of the boundaries and binaries that exclude or suppress youth voice, it also has the potential to harden these boundaries. I turn now to a discussion of 'authenticity' in Hip-Hop to explore some of these dynamics.

With the growing popularity of African Hip-Hop over the last few decades and its increasingly global reach (Thorman, 2021), there has been a tendency for some artists to fall into tropes of an 'authentic' African experience that are appealing and palatable for global audiences. One group that helps identify this trend is X Plastaz, a Tanzanian group founded in 1996 that gained popularity and international audiences throughout the early 2000's. The defining feature of this group is their blend of international Hip-Hop elements with traditional Maasai music. The group's Maasai identity is represented by the member Merege, a Maasai musician whose customary dress stands out against the contemporary clothing of the rest of the group, as came be seen in the images below.

Source: https://images.app.goo.gl/8bvDwSVp4pEBRUiv6

Source: https://images.app.goo.gl/Azs5Un7XV4MQVD6b8

Although the group is popular in Tanzania, Thompson (2008) argues that their local success is derived largely from their international status and that they are better known locally for their *international* success rather than their actual music per se. The group's varying forms of success are also reflected in the different branding strategies used for local and international audiences. Thompson (2008) notes that in locally oriented promotional materials the group makes efforts to distance the Maasai identity as a defining feature of the group and rather emphasizing tropes of 'keeping it real' (ie. relating to the common struggles of young Tanzanians), accentuating their experiences touring abroad and collaborating with Western artists, and the role that their Dutch manager has played in their international success. Conversely, in the group's international branding they are much more likely to play up the feature of Maasai identity, drawing on romanticized ideas of the Maasai as 'noble' and 'exotic' warriors (Thompson, 2008).

Making use of essentialized notions of Maasai identity and 'African' traditions as exotic and in contrast to modernity inevitably reinforces a problematic view of the African continent. Rather than challenging a Western gaze, imagery such as that in 'Aha!' (showcased below) appeals to a touristic gaze that contributes to a problematic trope of the continent being marked by difference.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyI1bh8BI90
[1:01; 3:13; 3:22; 3:53 respectively]

This imagery does little to challenge the hierarchical binaries that are used to reinforce African countries as in need of foreign intervention. However, the group's use of multiple identities depending on the audience being appealed to is also a demonstration of the way young artists move fluidly between the global and local elements that define their lives. I argue that this reveals a tacit awareness by the young artists of the expectations and assumptions associated with being a 'successful' or 'authentic' artist. Therefore, the ways they make use of multiple identities demonstrates acts not only of informed agency, but also of responses to tensions in the meeting of the local and global. In this sense, the only 'true' form of authenticity is hybrid in nature and draws on the multiple, intersecting identities that people, and particularly young people, are defined by. Through a relational lens we can also see the dual processes of re-localization and de-localization (Kappler 2015) at play through the ways X Plastaz repositions themselves depending on the context and circumstances.

Moreover, this display of multiple, overlapping identities reveals the broader structures that these young artists (among many others) are responding to. The emphasis on the group's international success and their exploitation of a touristic gaze is telling of the imbalances and inequalities in the global Hip-Hop industry. While Hip-Hop creates space for socially conscious lyrics and political commentary, to achieve a level of international notoriety and influence in Western markets there are clearly certain 'scripts' or master narratives that are more effective. X Plastaz highlights one such script in the form of the performance of a colonial-era notion of the 'authentic' African experience. Yet many artists have also found success modelling the types of lavish lifestyles and behaviours of Western artists. Indeed, the type of radical and transformative music that predominated in the 80's now competes with (and in some cases is driven underground by) a new Hip-Hop scene in which artists are keen to achieve international success. As Pierson (2020) argues, these artists compete within the 'economy of swag' where the appearance of wealth and excess are performed yet rarely accessed by the artists themselves. Hip-Hip artists may in fact have very little control over the means of production and circulation on their music (Pierson, 2020) and thus the lifestyles being performed are not only inaccessible for many average citizens, but for the artists themselves as well. Hip-Hop in this sense can be interpreted as a "constructive act of performance" and the negotiation of broader contexts of social and economy fragility (Pierson, 2020). The result is therefore a paradox in which Hip-Hop exists as an accessible platform for social change and engagement in public dialogue, while also creating and perpetuating scripts related to 'authenticity' and 'success' that undermine its radical and transformative potential.

In conclusion, I argue that Hip-Hop is significant to a conversation of a more relational and feminist approach to peacebuilding because it helps challenge the binary representation of

'knower' vs. 'known' in peacebuilding. There is a tendency in hybrid peace arrangements to assume the foreign peacebuilder as the purveyor of peacebuilding knowledge and that the 'local' stands to benefit from this knowledge. However, young people's expressions of identity and belonging in Hip-Hop remind us that young people have the capacity to negotiate with the broader structures of their lives and have critical knowledge about their own lived realities that can inform peace processes. Even though competing narratives are produced amongst young people and young artists, it is precisely in the messiness and complexity of these relations where a relational, feminist agenda indicates meaningful action must take place. Music, much like peace itself, cannot be conceptualized along dichotomous lines. Youth Hip-Hop is not merely defined as complacency with existing systems or resistance to the structures of inequality and oppression. Rather, reality for young people in East Africa (as is the case elsewhere in the world) is a complicated blend of compliance and resistance and of global and local elements. Thus, to consider Hip-Hop as a useful medium of youth expression and self-identification is to contribute to a redefinition of the politics of knowledge concerning young people and who is best able to speak and create policy on their behalf.

Conclusion

In conclusion, young people do not necessarily need more music for peace programs, nor do they need greater capacity building interventions that focus on 'giving' young people voice. Through an exploration of everyday Hip-Hop music, it is clear that young people already possess the capacity to articulate their relationships to the broader structures of their lives, to create spaces themselves for dialogue and disagreement, and to define for themselves their place in society. Thus, to integrate music into peacebuilding in a more effective way it is not necessary to create more programs per se, but rather to create greater access to and freedom within the forms

of music-creation that already exists. Some examples of how this may be operationalized include expanding the access to production and recording spaces so artists may own the means of production of music themselves, creating opportunities and spaces for artists to reach wider audiences, and challenging government or corporate sponsorship of music that relies on set agendas or themes. I have argued in this chapter that ultimately, when given the freedom and space to create in their own organic ways, young people capably express their thoughts, ideas, and opinions, all of which are critical to a more inclusive peacebuilding agenda.

I have demonstrated that Hip-Hop is a useful way to exercise a relational, feminist approach to peacebuilding while also indicating the tensions that arise. I also acknowledge that there is a final limitation to Hip-Hop's utility in hybrid peacebuilding insofar as the radical and transformative origins of the music form are slowly being pushed underground. Whether a cause or result of the growing corporatization and politicization of the industry, the impact is that Hip-Hop's applicability to social justice activism has been limited. This can be evidenced in the song "Bahari Yetu" ("Our Oceans") by the popular Tanzanian artist *Chemical*, featuring the artists *Centano*, and *Honest*. The song was produced as a result of a partnership between UNESCO and the Rising from the Depths Network, group of international academic networks led by universities based in the UK (Rising From the Depths, 2017).

This song starts with several verses about the history of the Tanzania's relationship to the sea and how all people cared for the sea and fished sustainably. Following this the song depicts the former prosperity of the island before making a call to action. The chorus of the song pleads that: "The sea needs our care and protection, it is our heritage, let us protect it" and the remaining verses call on the people of Zanzibar to take action. Below is a verse that exemplifies the call to action of the song:

Fishermen: be concerned and feel responsible;

Discuss the dangers of illegal fishing.

Those against our aims: be advised.

Private companies and government: be responsible,

All be aware that the sea is our heritage,

Investment in development, but think of future generations,

The sea is our heritage; pass it on to our grandchildren.

In this call there are limited references made to the role of local governments in contributing to the current state of the coastlines and oceans and their responsibilities in moving forward. No mention is made of international pollution or the historical legacies that may have contributed to the current conditions. Ultimately, the call to action is careful not to demonize authority figures, be they local or international and therefore follows a relatively 'safe' and unobtrusive script. In doing so the burden of responsibility is placed on local communities.

I argue that this form of localization demonstrates what can be lost when music and Hip-Hop are taken out of their organic contexts and operationalized to fit within a certain agenda. To capture the unexpected by highly useful knowledge that is required for meaningful and sustainable peace, space must be made for the unknown. This requires not only resisting the project-oriented and technocratic nature of peacebuilding itself, but it means committing to engaging with young people in a way where they are free to express themselves, even when doing so leads to challenging the status quo.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This project has sought to explore the knowledge politics of peacebuilding as they pertain to young people with the intent of unpacking the role that young people in the Great Lakes region of East Africa can offer to peacebuilding more broadly. Through a scoping review and analyses of popular literature, Twitter activist campaigns, and Hip-Hop music, I have argued that young people are a formidable peacebuilding force. Overall, I have demonstrated that a normative liberal approach to peacebuilding is in many ways at odds with the type of power sharing that would be required to fully acknowledge and incorporate the many ways that young people are actively engaged in peacebuilding in their daily lives.

This chapter will conclude the project by firstly summarizing the key findings in relation to the research objectives and questions. The themes I use to discuss these findings relate to the notion of the 'darker side' of liberal peacebuilding, the parameters of youth exclusion from peacebuilding, youth as knowledge producers, and the relationship between youth-inclusive peacebuilding and liberal peacebuilding. Secondly, this chapter will reflect on the methodology used, including the limitations of this project. Thirdly, I connect this project to the broader relevant fields, particularly to the relationship between theory and practice in peacebuilding and peacebuilding knowledge production. Lastly, this chapter offers some brief recommendations for future research and policy.

Summary of Findings

The darker side of liberal peacebuilding.

The first research question of this project revolved around the extent to which a liberal peacebuilding model has been made authoritative. In the 'Historical Overview' chapter, I detailed the way in which a liberal peacebuilding model, centred on the seven key elements of

'good (democratic) governance', technocratic programming, state-centrism, elite knowledge production, and conflict *management,* security-focus, and advancing of an economic-centred model of development, has been institutionalized at a global level through its incorporation into key UN bodies. Moreover, this first chapter traced the evolution of peacebuilding through its relationship to development more broadly and the ways that both projects (development and peacebuilding) are rooted in the same histories of Western interventionism that sustains unequal relations of power. I also delineated a trajectory in which a version of childhood, predicated on the basis of *protectionism,* is similarly rooted in a specific cultural and historical background and yet has been universalized. Thus, the first chapter introduced the notion of 'peacebuilding' and 'youth' as organizing concepts that are imbued with social meaning. This finding is significant to the broader project because it implies that the maintenance of a liberal approach to youth peacebuilding is first and foremost rooted in *specific* conceptualizations of 'peacebuilding' and 'youth'. In other words, the firsts chapter established the notion that there is no one singular 'truth' or knowledge of youth peacebuilding, but that all knowledge is constructed, which to some extent dislocates a liberal approach from a central position.

The second chapter of this project was a scoping review that built on the idea that there can be multiple competing knowledges about youth peacebuilding. In building off the findings from the first chapter, the second chapter argued that in the context of knowledge production in academic settings, there are certain 'master narratives' of 'youth peacebuilding' that are structured by liberal norms. However, in maintaining a liberal framework of youth peacebuilding the more critical ideas and concepts become 'flattened out', as was demonstrated through the discussion of the instrumentalization of the 'local'. This chapter suggested that within the academic literature reviewed, the liberal peace paradigm is maintained through its ability to fold

in more critical ideas and adapt them to fit within existing structures. Moreover, the importance of this chapter lies in the claim I make that through a flattening out of critical ideas, alternate imaginations of 'youth' and 'peacebuilding' are limited.

Thus, the first two chapters of this project respond to the first and third research questions, that are as follows:

1. To what extent has *liberal* peacebuilding knowledge become authoritative?
2. What are some of the mechanisms that sustain conventional youth peacebuilding?

Firstly, I have suggested that a liberal peacebuilding model has become authoritative to the extent that it reflects a longer standing development trajectory that is based on a maintenance of colonial relations of power. Secondly, I have argued that the discursive constructs of 'youth' and 'peacebuilding' *in their normative, liberal form,* sustain the current status quo. This is to suggest that rather than viewing 'peacebuilding' and 'youth' as universal truths or singular entities, it is more helpful to understand that both function as discourses and organizing concepts in and of themselves. Furthermore, viewing these concepts as such suggests that the degree to which a liberal approach to youth peacebuilding has become authoritative is partly a matter of perspective.

To state that the authority of a liberal approach to youth peacebuilding is a matter of perspective acknowledges that a liberal model is only *one* model. I argue that when approaching the topic from an academic standpoint, or from a practical sense of international interventions, a liberal model is the most prominent. However, I have emphasized throughout this project that while dominant in certain spheres, a liberal approach is by no means the *only* conceptualization of youth peacebuilding that is available. Moreover, as is demonstrated in the latter chapters, I argue that a liberal approach is significantly limited in its ability to achieve long-lasting

relational and social change for young people. Thus, as I will discuss in the proceeding sections, finding more suitable alternatives requires a difference of perspective, or a shift in the frame of reference used to measure success and suitability.

This project has also demonstrated that adhering to the same discursive constructs of 'youth' and 'peacebuilding' that underpin a liberal model, has the effect of suppressing alternate interpretations. For instance, to view youth as capable actors that embody both victim *and* violent frames (as well as the many states that exist in between and outside of either of these two extremes) contrasts with the predominance of the protectionist narrative that undergirds a liberal perspective. The second chapter also illustrated the tendency for a liberal model to 'flatten out' or 'co-opt' any of the more radical and transformative alternatives that may be proposed which has the effect of tempering the most radical alternatives. I also suggested that a liberal model is ultimately sustained by its ability to (re)produce the subjective and epistemic borders even while incorporating more critical aspects. In this sense a liberal peacebuilding approach to youth is similar to Rist's (2008) reading of development insofar as it is sustained not by rejecting its critiques, but rather by finding a way to fold those into a pre-existing structure rather than to abandon the overarching structure all together.

Thus, the first two chapters of this thesis emphasized that the knowledge produced by and of a liberal approach to youth peacebuilding is not a universal truth per se but is *one* approach that has been powerfully *universalized*. These first two chapters also detailed the Eurocentric and colonial origins of a liberal peace model. Thus, the 'darker side' of a liberal peace approach stems from the discursive frames it upholds and the alternatives that it suppresses.

Parameters of youth exclusion from peacebuilding.

This thesis has presented a case in which young people are highly involved in peacebuilding in their own ways, yet a normative approach to peacebuilding fails to adequately account for their contributions. While I started this project with the foundational assumption that young people are excluded from peacebuilding, I suggest that a slight modification to this statement is required. I argue that a *liberal approach to youth peacebuilding* excludes young people. This statement places the emphasis on the exclusionary nature of this one specific, albeit powerful model, while also suggesting that alternate models exist where young people can play a more active role. Indeed, this thesis has provided evidence to suggest that when a liberal peace model is uncoupled from a central referent point, there is potential to imagine peacebuilding differently. Using an approach that starts from a position of recognizing young people as important peacebuilding knowledge producers in their own right, this thesis has built up a picture of peacebuilding as a broader and more fluid *process* centred on restoring relationships and social bonds.

As demonstrated in chapters 3-5, the degree to which young people are able to access even the less conventional forms of peace *work* is highly variegated. The distinction I make in chapters 3 is that 'peace *work'* encompasses a broader set of organic, everyday activities, and 'peacebuilding' best refers to the formal and structured activities that are often favoured by a liberal peace model. For instance, in chapter 5 I demonstrated the gender and class dynamics that affect how young people in East Africa participate in and respond to Hip-Hop music. Similarly, in chapter 4 I explored the intersections of various identities (gender, educational or literacy levels, rural or urban based, etc.) that shape young people's engagement with social media. In this sense youth exclusion and participation cannot be simply categorized. However, the

complexities of young people's various social identities and the different ways these shape the extent and shape of their involvement in peacebuilding are important to recognize because it acknowledges that young people are not a monolithic and static entity. The heterogeneous nature of 'youthhood' points to a key limitation of a liberal model, which is the limited discursive frames available to account for young people (largely derived from a protectionist logic). To this end the last three substantive chapter address the research question "What are some of the mechanisms that sustain conventional youth peacebuilding?".

Thus, this project has answered the second research question regarding the ways that a liberal peacebuilding model impacts the broader field in which alternatives are imagined. In particular, when read through a post-development and post-colonial perspective, a liberal peace model is fundamentally incompatible with potentially more transformative youth-led alternatives given that such alternatives call into question the foundational discourses that make up the liberal model. For example, to shift from a protectionist to an agency-based approach to young people contradicts a core component of the liberal peace model that constructs young people as in need of being peace*kept*. This is to say that there are power relations at the centre of liberal peacebuilding that necessitate the construction of young people as passive victims to be assisted, or as violent threats to be contained. Moreover, the elite driven knowledge production and professionalization that underscores a liberal peace is predicated on the assumption of a lack of knowledge on the part of those being targeted (the peace*kept*). Thus, to recognize and incorporate youth-produced knowledge would threaten the institution of peacebuilding insofar as it calls into question the relevancy of the vast number of technical 'experts' within the liberal peacebuilding machine.

To this end I have suggested in this thesis that young people are excluded from peacebuilding only to the extent that peacebuilding is defined by the narrow shape provided by a liberal model. However, divorcing a liberal approach to youth peacebuilding from its claim to 'truth' and universality allows for a more expansive vision of peacebuilding to take shape. Through the explorations of fictional literature, Twitter, and Hip-Hop, this thesis has demonstrated a few of the ways that young people are involved in *peace work* that falls outside of the limited frame of a liberal approach. In other words, these chapters have demonstrated that there is a plethora of activities that young people are involved in that can contribute to peace (what I have described as peace *work*) that are not captured by a limited, liberal perspective on peace*building.* These explorations also targeted the last two research questions of "To what extent do youth-led peace processes re-inscribe or challenge 'peacebuilding' as a liberal, political project?" and "What avenues exist for a more youth-inclusive vision of peacebuilding?". In answering these questions, chapter 3-5 demonstrate that when 'peace' and 'peacebuilding' are conceptualized in a broader way that is inclusive of cultural productions, youth are not excluded to the same extent, but instead are actively engaged in peacebuilding in their own ways. As argued in chapter 3, I do not suggest that all forms of youth peace work are *political* per se but rather than the organic, mundane, and everyday ways that young people make sense of their lives during and after conflict are invaluable to building the type of sustainable reconciliation that is needed to move a community forward after conflict.

In conclusion, I suggest that a liberal approach to youth peacebuilding is highly effective at limiting the extent to which alternatives are imagined. Given the institutional and norm-setting authority behind a UN-backed approach to peacebuilding, it is difficult to envision the large-scale adoption of an alternative approach. However, I do not suggest that alternatives should

therefore be abandoned. Rather, it is my perspective that there is a useful space for alternatives to exist in *parallel* with a liberal model. It is in such a parallel space, outside of the restrictive binds of a liberal and institutionalized model, that I suggest there is a greater ability to better acknowledge the ways that young people contribute to peacebuilding. In this sense I do not argue for a reformation of liberal peacebuilding but rather I suggest that an all together different way of thinking about youth peacebuilding is needed. I am therefore stipulating that the liberal peace paradigm not only *cannot* but also *should not* be reformed. This is not to say that liberal peacebuilding necessarily be wholly abandoned. Indeed, there are important facets of a liberal model such as the promotion of good governance and respect for human rights at the level of the state, amongst others that cannot be denied. However, the purpose of this project has been to uncover the limits of this normative model and thus, following from this analysis I here conclude that the truly transformative elements that are missing from a liberal model, are best pursued *alongside* (but not instead of) this model.

Youth as knowledge producers.

The analyses provided in this project support the claim that young people are knowledge producers in their own right. I have demonstrated that the discursive frames within a liberal peace model (structured largely around a victim/violent dichotomy) limit the ability to acknowledge the various ways young people produce knowledge about their own lives. In particular, chapters 3-5 explored the everyday ways that young people are actively involved in producing ideas about their realities during and after conflict. In chapter 3 I explored three novels about post-conflict settings in East Africa to demonstrate the capacity that young people have to make sense of the multiple complex realities that make up their own lives. In each of the stories analyzed there was a focus on young people navigating challenging interpersonal dynamics

against broader backdrops of war or violent conflict. This chapter argued that an everyday approach to youth peacebuilding is useful to the extent that it captures the ordinary ways that young people choose to either build peaceful relations or perpetuate animosity and thus the way that formal, higher level peace processes come to life. Peace in the everyday does not equate with a politicization of all that happens within this space but rather can capture the dynamic interplay between Politics and politics, formal and informal, and global and local.

Similarly to this last point, chapter 5 explored the concept of 'hybridity' as it relates to the coming together of international and local components in peace processes. I argued that Hip-Hop represents a relational and feminist agenda that is organic, youth-inclusive, and adds nuance to a the local-global binary. While not a perfect medium, as Hip-Hop is still rife with exclusionary politics and problematic gender assumptions, it is a space that is largely an organic youth space where meaning is made by young people themselves. It also represents a space that reflects the reality of many young people's lives in East Africa to the extent that it engages with the dynamic interplay between global and local, youth and adult, formal and informal, and Politics and politics. Thus, hybridity is best conceptualized as a zone of contestation where identities are fluid and meaning is continually made, unmade, and remade.

A finding from this chapter also relates to the loss of transformative elements of mediums such as music when they are institutionalized within an existing, top-down structure. Consequently, part of making peacebuilding more youth-inclusive is allowing space or young people to challenge the status quo and to have opportunities to see their challenges implemented in a more practical sense. A theme throughout this thesis has been that youth-inclusion in peacebuilding is contingent on there being an openness and willingness to youth dictating on their own terms how peace should be navigated. While in part this includes a freedom to

challenge existing structures, it also means accepting space for young people to try something new, fail, and to continue to be supported along the way. In essence, liberal peacebuilding has had its fair share of attempts and failures and I am merely suggesting that similar opportunities be provided to young people.

In chapter 4 I made a similar finding insofar as I argued that Twitter offers a space for young people to practice exerting their agency and challenging existing power structures. This chapter also highlighted the discrepancy that can exist between having agency of *voice* and then to be able to translate one's voice into tangible change. In particular, I demonstrated that Twitter and social media activism is somewhat limited in its ability to bring about lofty goals such as regime change or a reorientation of political priorities. However, I argued that the *process* of young people exercising their agency is nonetheless a valuable outcome because it results in the creation of a space for dialogue where there may otherwise be few other similar outlets.

Together, the last three chapters of this project have furthered the argument that greater youth inclusion in peacebuilding necessitates confronting the epistemic foundations of normative peacebuilding more broadly. Concepts from critical peacebuilding literature such as the 'everyday', 'hybridity', and 'agency' are useful to the extent that they provide avenues for this type of epistemic questioning. Thus, these chapters have answered the last three research questions:

3. What are some of the mechanisms that sustain conventional youth peacebuilding?
4. To what extent do youth-led peace processes re-inscribe or challenge 'peacebuilding' as a liberal, political project?
5. What avenues exist for a more youth-inclusive vision of peacebuilding?

The theme that emerges from these three chapters as it relates to these questions is that greater power sharing agreements are needed in which *both* adults and young people are recognized and respected as purveyors of peace knowledge.

Youth peacebuilding vs. a 'normative' model.

Overall, this project has demonstrated that there is a critical incompatibility between organic, everyday forms of youth peace work and the forms of proscriptive, top-down peacebuilding that have been institutionalized at a global level. Specifically, the organic and fluid nature of peace work that this project has explored is antithetical to the tendency for liberal peacebuilding to rely on standard, technocratic approaches to building peace. Yet, as I have demonstrated, to standardize the messiness of organic peace work is to erase the very qualities that make it meaningful. As I stated in chapter 3, it is within the messiness of everyday life, of zcomposite identities, and of fluid agency that higher level, formal peace processes come to life. In other words, the success of liberal peace projects in part lies on its ability to reconcile the complexities of everyday life.

It is also important to note that while this project has explored some avenues to more youth-inclusive peacebuilding, it is by no means exhaustive of the many ways that young people creatively navigate and make sense of their lives and social worlds after conflict. By the same token I do not suggest that any of the avenues discussed in this project are in themselves a perfect solution. In chapters 3-5 I have made note of the ways that no one space is completely and uniformly inclusive to all young people. For instance, in chapter 3 I explored how in each of the novels there was discussion of fractures and tensions amongst youth. Similarly, in chapter 5 I noted the class and gender dynamics of Hip-Hop and these can create barriers to inclusion and participation. However, the point I have reinforced in each of these chapters is that while not

perfect, adopting a more expansive view of what constitutes youth peacebuilding helps to open up new avenues for exploration that are not immediately apparent when solely viewing peacebuilding activities through a limited liberal model. Thus, this project has not sought to find a 'solution' per se to the challenge of youth exclusion from peacebuilding but rather to highlight avenues that have promising potential to fill in the spaces left by a liberal peace model.

In this project I have discussed the notion of power sharing as critical to greater youth inclusion in peacebuilding. I have showcased how power sharing between young people and adults is dependent on a re-examination of the politics of knowledge that determine what (and whose) knowledge is considered valuable and useful. The implications of this finding suggest that youth inclusion means more than a seat at the table and opportunities to have their voice heard. Meaningful youth inclusion in peacebuilding also requires reflexivity on the part of 'traditional' power and knowledge holders to relinquish their claims to 'truth' about peacebuilding. Yet, from the powerful discursive frames that undergird peacebuilding in its liberal institutional sense, the ability for such action may be limited.

Reflections on Methodology and Ethics

As discussed in the introduction, no field work was undertaken for the completion of this project. While partly a consequence of the limitations of COVID-19, I also suggested that relying on different types and sources of knowledges is a way to satisfy a commitment to anti-oppressive research. Most importantly the decision not to conduct field work came out of a reflection of the power dynamics at play during the data collection phase of field work. I have followed Potts and Brown (2005) to the extent that I agree with the idea that equitable and reciprocal relationships are at the heart of anti-oppressive and ethical research. However, without the existence of pre-existing collaborative relationships in East Africa, my ability to conduct ethical field research

was limited. I would like to note that I am not suggesting that all research of Global South communities by Global North researchers is inherently unethical. Indeed, just as Karim-Haji, Roy, and Gough (2016) suggest, there are useful opportunities for fruitful North-South collaboration where strong networks and relationships are present. I therefore agree that there is considerable value in the exchange of ideas between scholars from different parts of the world. However, upon critical reflection of my own resources and community networks *as an individual*, I accepted that the appropriate types of relationships, and opportunities for such relationships to take place in the time I was able to commit to this project were not available to the extent that I felt they could reasonably constitute ethical research. For instance, while I had several loose connections to organizations and individuals in northern Uganda, they dated back to a field research trip from 2015 during my Master's degree. I had not realistically fostered these relationships adequately enough to feel comfortable embarking on my planned project with them without a significant period of initial re-connection and relationship building. However, given the financial limitations of extending a project outside of the 4-5 year window available for this degree, I was not able to feasibly commit what I felt to be an adequate amount of time to establishing the strong partnership needed.

Furthermore, this project came out of a desire to question the boundaries of 'legitimate' knowledge and to question the 'typical' research process to some extent. I looked to literature, Twitter, and music because they are all mediums through which ideas about the world and one's place within it can be discussed yet are unlikely to be considered along the same vein as 'serious' forms of knowledge derived from high-level and academic spaces. It was important to approach knowledge production in this way because a foundational assumption of this project has been that young people are already knowledge producers but are not recognized as such. Therefore,

new methods do not need to be employed to 'access' their ideas but instead, I chose to look differently upon forums that they are already active in.

Overall, the methodological choices made supported my ambitions to carry out anti-oppressive research and to unsettle normative ideas about 'knowledge'. However, while I did not engage with the complex interpersonal relationships of first-person research and the ethical dilemmas therein, the way I chose to *interpret* the material I was using posed its own set of ethical considerations. One of the main challenges related to inclusion and exclusion determinations. For instance, I ultimately controlled which books, Twitter hashtags, and Hip-Hop songs were analyzed for this project. Given the vast selection to choose from, it was necessary to focus on only a very small and selective examples. In chapter 3 I selected novels on the basis that they spoke to a 'coming-of-age' period of life that was akin to the period of transition and waithood that I have used to describe youthood in this period. I also only chose novels that were written by East African authors themselves as a way to actively seek out non-Western perspectives. Moreover, in looking at novels that had female protagonists I also chose novels written by females who described their novels as being informed by their own life experiences. In chapter 4 I selected Twitter campaigns that showcased grassroots responses to local issues, as opposed to institutional or corporate-led attempts to address an issue that was selected by external actors. Lastly, in chapter 5 I chose to include East African music that followed in the tradition of *Bongo Flava* music as this genre has a history rooted in the localization of American-style rap and therefore has relevancy to a discussion on hybridity. To some extent these decisions impact the generalizability of the results, however this issue is also not unique to the type of methods used in this project. Any project containing a small sample size relative to a general population is likely to encounter similar challenges related to inclusion and

exclusion decisions. Moreover, the aim of this project has been focused less on the specific content of the various mediums used and more so on the mediums themselves and the extent to which they help push the boundaries of what is considered useful peacebuilding knowledge and the roles young people can play after conflict.

Limitations

As alluded to above, the most significant limitation of this project was the lack of first-hand and iterative input from the young people in question themselves. In research methods involving in-person interviews or focus groups, participants could be given the opportunity to review their transcripts, add additional interpretations, reflect on their participation, and potentially omit sections of their responses from the project. Youth could also have been engaged to help interpret the cultural productions under review for this work. No such mechanism for feedback and reflection were possible in this project and therefore while this project is based in inclusion of youth voice and exclusion, it did not *directly* hear from young people themselves. However, in looking to cultural artefacts produced by youth (novels, social media, music), I intentionally chose to focus on sources of youth voice that were readily accessible *without* the need to speak to them face-to-face. There are limitations in terms of the interpretation of this material and the extent to which my own interpretation matches the intent through which the material was produced. For instance, in a scenario in which field work had been possible and greater resources were available I could have undertaken a more inductive approach and provided space for young people to shape the overall project itself. In such a scenario I could have been able to ask young people directly what mediums are most relevant to them (potentially differing from the choices of Hip-Hip, Twitter, and novels chosen here), the shape of and extent to which they themselves view their everyday activities as contributing to

peace, and whether my own interpretations of how their actions line up with broader theoretical conclusions I was making. This approach would have required a much longer time frame to allow for an iterative process between myself and the young people, as well as additional resources to account for travel, translation, relationship building, and other similar expenses. However, it would have resulted in a more grounded theory approach which centralizes youth participation and voice at every stage of the research process. Despite these limitations I nonetheless suggest that there is merit in using the sources I have chosen as evidence of youth voice in themselves. In particular, the examples I have explored in this thesis reinforce the notion that there is less of a need to *create* opportunities for young people to contribute to peace, and instead more can be done to incorporate the activities that young people are *already* active in, into a broader peacebuilding framework.

Related, a second limitation of this study was the potential for bias in how I chose to read the materials I examined. More specifically, the lens through which I conducted this study was influenced by the intent to locate evidence of young people contributing to peace. Therefore, there was a risk that I may overly proscribe positive value to the data, or to see all action as inherently peace action. However, instead of avoiding evidence suggesting that youth are either *not* engaged in peace work or are *negatively* involved, I chose to draw this evidence out. As a result, I was drawn to the finding about the importance of 'messiness' and contradiction as useful to the peace process as opposed to contradictory.

Lastly, language proved to be a limitation of this project insofar as I was only able to access materials written in English. As a result, I was not able to engage with any of the materials produced in local East African languages. This limitation is significant given this project's focus on colonial relationships of power. I would be remiss not to point out the

significance of only conducting research in the colonial language of English. However, the scope of this project accounts for limitation as I have not set out to conduct an exhaustive assessment of materials and data I engage with. Rather, this project has been limited to examining the types of *potential* avenues that could exist for more youth-inclusive peacebuilding. Thus, should these findings be translated into practice, there would need to be a more rigorous effort made to include young people on their own terms, including in their language of choice. This point will be discussed further in the future recommendations section.

Contributions to broader field

Throughout this thesis I have sought to weave together high-level theoretical analysis with practical materials and alternative forms of knowledge. I thus contribute to peacebuilding debates by engaging more conceptual ideas with their implications on the practice and reality of peacebuilding. To this end I have situated this project alongside authors such as Steinberg (2013), Carey and Sen (2020), and Firchow and Anastasiou (2016), amongst others that regard peacebuilding as more than an intellectual activity, and one that is deeply embedded in the everyday realities of people's lives. I have added to this position by presenting what is lost when peacebuilding is instrumentalized and regarded as a standardized set of activities that can be uniformly implemented without being deeply embedded in how ordinary people, including young people shape and make sense of peace. By examining some practical realities of how young people are engaged in peace work (broadly defined) I have demonstrated how theoretical debates regarding the 'everyday', hybridity, and agency are useful to the extent that they retain the transformative and radical elements that allow these concepts to unveil different ways of thinking and being. In other words, these three concepts are helpful for a more youth-inclusive

agenda so long as they are not used in a way that would institutionalize them within the existing liberal peace paradigm, given the tendency for this paradigm to 'flatten out' critical concepts.

I have thus called into question the idea that the three concepts examined in this project can be effectively brought within the folds of a liberal peace paradigm and instead argued that a degree of separation between different *kinds* of peacebuilding has the highest potential to better include young people. This is to say that rather than attempting to alter a liberal peace model to achieve goals (such as youth inclusion) that it is systematically ill equipped to accommodate, *parallel* activities outside of a liberal peace paradigm may be a more effective route to affect change. This project has demonstrated that youth peace activities have much to offer to the broader peacebuilding project. However, a liberal peace paradigm is a relatively rigid and fixed entity, and it would be naïve to suggest that the changes needed to make peacebuilding more inclusive to young people can be achieved within this paradigm in a reasonable timeframe. While change is not necessarily impossible, I suggest that it may be more effective to create spaces outside of this model that have a more expansive perspective on what constitutes peacebuilding. A parallel systems approach also acknowledges the significance and importance of the goals of a liberal peace model to peace more broadly. In short, both a parallel youth-inclusive system *and* a liberal model have important contributions to make towards building peace but are best pursued on separate tracks rather than attempting to create one model that meets all of the complex and dynamic needs of a post-conflict context.

This project has also offered insights into peacebuilding knowledge more broadly insofar as I have unsettled what it means to *do* peacebuilding and to *be* a peacebuilder. By unpacking the epistemic foundations of youth peacebuilding, I have made the case that multiple competing knowledges about peace and peacebuilding exist at the same time. Thus, I have suggested

throughout this project that young people themselves should be considered legitimate peacebuilders with important knowledge. While they do not always fit within the bounds of a liberal-based peacebuilding model they are important actors in their own right. When discussing peacebuilding it is therefore important to qualify the *type* of peacebuilding being referred to. Overall, I have contributed to the field of peacebuilding by suggesting that peacebuilding has multiple meanings in different contexts and that sustained efforts are needed to decouple a liberal paradigm from the idea of peacebuilding more broadly. Only in doing so can there be meaningful space made for different actors and ideas to contribute to the conversation in a substantive way.

Future recommendations

The recommendations that I suggest as a result of this project relate to both policy and academic inquiry. I offer two areas for future research, a general knowledge production recommendation, and two policy proscriptions.

Firstly, in terms of future exploration this project has showcased the importance of investigating the ways that young people themselves produce ideas and actions related to peace. In this project I have relied on novels, social media, and music as three arenas to explore youth peace work. I suggest that future research into other spaces that are conducive to youth peacebuilding be investigated. Furthermore, as new concepts and debates emerge within Peace and Conflict Studies and Peacebuilding literature more broadly, I recommend that these be evaluated in light of the implications for young people (as I have done with the everyday, hybridity, and agency). Related to this suggestion, further research that is more practical in nature would be useful to determine how to integrate these ideas alongside more formal peacebuilding procedures. Questions to this end include: To what extent can formal (liberal) peacebuilding processes make space for and support youth-led peace work without co-opting its

organic and fluid nature? How do policies at both national and international levels support or inhibit organic youth peace work? What types of context-specific barriers exist that discourage youth peace work?

Secondly, in reference to the main limitation of this paper, I suggest that future research be conducted first-hand with young people themselves. I acknowledge the importance of allowing young people themselves to respond to ideas and interpretations that are about them directly, largely because youth are not a homogenous group. Thus, future research about how different groups of young people may respond to peacebuilding practices is highly necessary. However, I caution that any such research be done in adherence to anti-oppressive research principles. Critical to such research would be strong partnerships and a commitment to an equitable exchange of ideas, co-creation of knowledge, and an iterative process in which young people are able to voice their interpretations of research findings as they are developed.

Thirdly and in reference to knowledge production more broadly, this project has presented a strong case suggesting that youth peacebuilding knowledge is ineffective when regarded solely as a professional or academic exercise. I have highlighted throughout this project the importance of also including youth voices in these spheres in more meaningful ways. In the introduction of this project, I established a foundational assumption that all knowledge is situated. Throughout this project I have built on this idea to showcase that not only are there *multiple* peacebuilding knowledges, but that a hierarchy of knowledge exists that discredits knowledge from young people. However, rather than being inherent or inevitable, this hierarchy is one that is *constructed* and maintained by structures of difference. I have unpacked this finding throughout this project to suggest that a more robust acknowledgement of various forms of knowledge be encouraged in future peacebuilding work, be it intellectual or practical in nature.

Fourthly and on a more practical note, youth inclusion into peacebuilding, whether it be in parallel practices or within the liberal paradigm itself, cannot include only the young people who are easily subsumed into a particular project or are 'easy' to work with. As I have suggested throughout this thesis, power sharing between young people and adults necessitates a willingness to meet young people on their own terms, an openness to receiving contrasting opinions to the status quo, and an ability to engage with young people in their own languages. These conditions are important to mitigate the various intersectional identities with which young people may come to the table such as their gender, class, sexual orientation, race, or ethnicity, amongst many others. Moreover, building in a degree of flexibility to what are typically quite rigid processes to build peace works towards creating more openness towards different forms of knowledge and different types of knowledge producers. In other words, a degree of willingness to engage with a messy and complex nature of what it means to build meaningful peace at its most intimate levels is required to make peacebuilding not only more inclusive but also more meaningful and sustainable overall.

Lastly, I suggest that future peacebuilding activities would benefit from an acknowledgement that a liberal approach to peacebuilding, while normative, is not the only effective approach to peacebuilding. This is to say that when designing peacebuilding projects and designating funds, an adherence to the liberal model should not necessarily be taken as an indication of the project's value. I do acknowledge however, that to stray too far from a normative model may also risk losing opportunities for funding from significant bodies such as the UN and international NGOs. Thus, while alternative models and approaches are theoretically useful, in practice I acknowledge that they are much more difficult to sustain.

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