

Original Research Reports

Investigating Processes of Internalisation of Values Through Theatre for Development

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Abstract

Used in many communities, Theatre for Development (TfD) allows performers and audiences to interrogate their cultural history and their society to promote positive social change. While many scholars have investigated the impact of TfD on audiences, very little research has investigated the psychological impact on the performers. This study attempts to fill this research gap by interviewing participants in a theatre creation project about their views on contentious social issues before, during, and after the creation of scenes involving such themes. We hypothesized that, by performing counterattitudinal and/or unfamiliar behaviours, cognitive dissonance should arise in the performers, which should result in some level of internalisation and attitude change. Results support the hypothesis, particularly in regard to the themes of ethnicity and gender (in)equality, and point to the value of using TfD processes in divided communities. This has implications for many fields, including international development, gender studies, education, and clinical psychology.

Keywords: internalisation, attitude change, cognitive dissonance, Theatre for Development, tribalism, gender

Muthasari

Sanaa za maonyesho kusaidia kuleta maendeleo ya kijamii zinazotumika katika jumuia mbalimbali zinawapa wanasanaa na watazamaji fursa ya kuchunguza historia ya tamaduni zao na jamii zao ili kuhamasisha mabadiliko ya kijamii yenye kujenga. Ingawa wanazuoni wengi wamepeleleza athari za sanaa za maonyesho katika kusaidia kuleta maendeleo ya jamii kwa watazamaji wa sanaa hizo, utafiti uliofanywa kuchunguza athari za kisaikolojia za sanaa hizo kwa wanasanaa wanaohusika na sanaa hizo wenyewe bado ni mdogo sana. Nia yetu katika uchunguzi kupitia andiko hili ni kuziba pengo katika utafiti huo kwa njia ya kuwahoji wanaohusika katika kazi za sanaa za maonyesho za kusaidia kuleta maendeleo; kuwahoji kuhusu fikra zao juu ya matatizo ya kijamii, kabla ya kuyaunda maonyesho yenye dhamira zihusuzo matatizo hayo, wakati wakiyaunda, na baada ya kuyaunda. Tulianza uchunguzi wetu tukiwa na fikra kuwa wanasanaa wakishughulikia mienendo inayopishana na tabia zao au ngeni kwao, watazua fahamu au tambuzi zisizolingana na mazoea yao. Kutokana na tokeo hilo, wanasanaa watajipatia mabadiliko ya ndani kwa ndani yatakayowaweza kubadilisha mitazamo yao. Matokeo ya utafiti wetu yanaunga mkono fikra yetu hiyo, hasa kuhusu dhamira za ukabila au utaifa na za jinsia. Yanadhirisha umuhimu wa sanaa za maonyesho kusaidia kuleta maendeleo katika jamii zilizo na migawanyiko kati ya makundi ya watu. Matokeo hayo yanaathiri maeneo mengi ya usomi, pamoja na maendeleo ya kimataifa, masomo ya jinsia, ya elimu na ya masomo ya kisaikolojia katika uwanja wa matibabu mahospitalini.

Maneno muhimu: uingizaji wa uzoefu nafsini, ubadilishaji wa mienendo, mipishano ya fahamu au tambuzi, sanaa za maonyesho kusaidia kuleta maendeleo, ukabila, jinsia

Non-Technical Summary

1. Background

Theatre for Development (TfD) uses theatre to create spaces that allow for difficult social, cultural, and political conversations to happen within a safe but actively engaged environment. It is a methodology that invites audience participation and conversation, with conversations starting via the performer. This study asks whether using TfD models can create the psychological process of internalisation within performers. Internalisation is the process by which one's behaviour changes one's attitudes or beliefs, and generally comes about organically: attitudes and beliefs are formed by engaging in daily behaviours and societal roles. They can also be changed when engaging in new or different behaviours creates cognitive dissonance, a state of psychological discomfort created by confronting an attitude or behaviour that is counter to one previously held. Can performing in a theatrical role have the same effect? This was studied in the context of "Kwe Kalyet", a play developed by a long-term, interdisciplinary research team and their performer participants in Kisumu, Kenya called "Old Stories in New Ways" (OSNW). "Kwe Kalyet" is an adaptation of a traditional Luo story, "Lwanda Magere", which describes historical violence between the Luo and Kalenjin peoples.

2. Why was this study done?

Many studies have investigated how TfD methods impact audiences; few have looked at the impact on performers. OSNW provided an opportunity to contribute to the fields of theatre and social psychology within the context of political turmoil and contentious social issues. Demonstrating the utility of TfD for changing attitudes within performers would be an asset to these fields and expand the applications for these methods

3. What did the researchers do and find?

The researchers spent three weeks in the summer of 2016 with the participants during OSNW's intensive theatre creation workshop. 15 artists agreed to participate in the study, consenting to interviews, focus groups, and naturalistic observation. The first round of interviews took place early in the workshop, focusing on participants' beliefs and attitudes toward themes relevant to the story, like gender (in)equality and tribalism, and their feelings about their characters. These interviews revealed that most of the participants held progressive stances toward these themes relative to the Kenyan populace. Cognitive dissonance was revealed in the form of discomfort, sadness, or anger with the behaviours of some characters. Focus groups demonstrated that the performers' attitudes and beliefs had largely changed to be more progressive than they had been at the beginning of the workshop period, partly resulting from the roles they had played. The focus groups also demonstrated that themes like gender (in)equality remained contentious: women saw the adaptation as more empowering for women than men did. Follow-up interviews were conducted in the final days of the workshop. These final interviews revealed that the participants all experienced a large shift in their attitudes to be more in favour of gender equality and ethnic unity than they had previously been. Many also experienced profound personal change that went beyond the themes of the story. Through the interviews, cognitive dissonance was apparent in all the performers, even those whose attitudes changed less and those who claimed to experience change but demonstrated that they had not. Naturalistic observation was also conducted, allowing the Principal Investigator (PI) to track emotional changes in the performers during scene work, a potential indicator of cognitive dissonance. It also allowed the PI to engage artists in discussing scenes that were likely to create dissonance given the artist's beliefs. Observation led the PI to conclude that certain participants claimed to have experienced attitude change but demonstrated behaviourally that they had not. For instance, some claimed their perspective on gender roles had changed progressively but continued to expect that their fellow artists would behave according to traditional gender roles.

4. What do these findings mean?

This study demonstrates that cognitive dissonance was created in the participants when they performed behaviours that differ from their beliefs, and that internalisation occurred in many of the performers, resulting in articulated and/or demonstrated attitude change. While it is difficult to say with certainty that performing a role will result in internalisation and attitude change, it is certainly possible, particularly with contentious social issues. Beyond the attitude change that was demonstrated through the performance of these themes, the participants stated that working with a multi-disciplinary,

multi-ethnic team of artists and researchers improved their collaboration and interpersonal skills. Although not directly related to internalisation and attitude change, these observations demonstrate additional benefits to using performing arts to unearth difficult conversations in communities. In conjunction with the demonstrated potential for internalisation and attitude change, TfD and support-minded collaboration can be invaluable tools in community and international development, conflict resolution, education, and multifarious psychological settings.

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Historically embedded social and cultural issues can be difficult to overcome due to the taboo nature of challenging them. The field of Theatre for Development (TfD) aims to create a space that allows for difficult social, cultural, and political conversations to happen within a relatively safe, but actively engaged environment. This study asks whether using TfD models creates the psychological process of internalisation, or the process by which one's behaviour changes one's attitudes or beliefs, within performers. This will be studied in the context of *Kwe Kalyet*, a play being developed by a long-term, interdisciplinary research team and their performer participants, in Kisumu, Kenya called *Old Stories in New Ways* (OSNW). The play is intended to stimulate a discussion of social change based on issues the artists identify as important to themselves and their community. There are several studies regarding the impact of educational performing arts and TfD on the *audience* (see, e.g., [Selman & Heather, 2015](#)) but little research has been done regarding the psychological impact on the *performers* in this style of theatre. This study therefore picks up where previous research leaves off by asking if the process of engaging in TfD can create the internalisation necessary to change one's attitudes.

In Kenya, longstanding political turmoil has led to an imbalance of ethnic or tribal representation in governance, causing a sense of disenfranchisement in several notable ethnic groups. In the run-up to the 2007 Presidential elections, the Presidential candidate who claimed the popular vote was not installed, resulting in the incumbent controversially claiming the Presidency for another five years.

The tenuous social and political climate in Kenya is multifaceted, but the violent fallout of the 2007 elections fell largely along ethnic lines. Riots broke out in the Kibera slum and across Kenya. In the next two months, nearly 1500 people were killed, 3000 injured, and 650,000 internally displaced. Politically-ordered targeted killings along ethnic lines were prominent. The Luo, already disillusioned with the political process, lashed out along with the Kalenjin against the dominant ethnic group; the Kikuyu fought back. All parties committed gross crimes, including destruction of property, kidnapping, torture, rape, and murder ([Brownsell, 2013](#); [Dowden, 2009](#); [Meredith, 2011](#)).

In 2010, Kenya voted 67% in favour of a new constitution that included devolution of power to local authorities and a bill of rights, and worked toward settling land disputes. Electoral and police and security reforms were also

undertaken; of significance was the stipulation that any presidential candidate must win not only the popular vote, but also secure at least 25% of the vote in 24 of the 47 districts in an effort to mitigate parties and support being drawn along ethnic lines. Despite continued plays to ethnic identity and intermittent clashes, the 2012 election proceeded largely peacefully, and Presidential hopeful Uhuru Kenyatta was installed as the President ([International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, n.d.](#)).

Supporters of the opposition leader Raila Odinga, who are predominantly Luo, initially opposed the results, and the last 5 years have seen growing discontent among the Luo people. Ethnic rivalries have continued, albeit diminished compared to the 2007 crisis. In June 2016, a cattle raid in the borderland between Kalenjin and Luo territory resulted in several deaths and a flare-up of tensions. 2017 was an election year, and despite the relative peace of the 2012 election, there were fears that it could be another volatile election.ⁱ

A goal of *Kwe Kalyet* is to stymie potential violence by opening a space for dialogue within and between ethnic groups and working toward political stability and peace within Kenya. The key issue of ethnic tension was identified alongside gender (in)equality as being the biggest political issues facing Kenyan people today, and indeed were the themes which resulted in the most substantial attitude change by the end of the study.

Theatre for Development relies on a broad set of methods in order to ignite and engage audiences on the subject of positive social change. Owing in part to the work of Boal and Freire, TfD considers the audience as an active participant in the theatrical moment, either as a literal participant invited to take part on stage (as is the case with Boal's spect-actor [[Boal, 1974/2008](#)]), or implicitly "invited" to take part in the social discourse presented by the performance; the audience becomes a co-investigator and co-learner with the actors as everyone strives to understand the same social environment ([Freire, 1983](#)). This is an audience-focused methodology that is nonetheless actor-derived, with the conversation started via the performer.

Kwe Kalyet was developed as a process of engaging Kenyan citizens through an evocative exploration of a traditional Luo story. By engaging from a story-first, versus issue-first perspective, *Kwe Kalyet* will anchor its theatrical action to the community, as opposed to creating an issue-of-the-week theatre. By starting where the community is at (as expressed in their cultural story) the adaptation provides insights into the artists' community's spoken and unspoken beliefs, while challenging some long-held social values and actions. Through practical engagement between citizens and artists who are also citizens, *Kwe Kalyet* intends to intentionally contend with the impact and power of this resonant story as it is adapted to a new social context. Theatre becomes a powerful tool in dealing with taboo topics, in this case, self-identified issues such as gender relations and tribalism, as it creates an environment for discussing sensitive, difficult, or dangerous topics by presenting common reference points; audiences can speak about characters and situations portrayed by the drama, rather than being forced to engage in difficult discussion with each other ([Selman & Heather, 2015](#)).

Roleplaying, which is an integral part of the creative process used by TfD, has been used in psychology since the 1940s, beginning with Gestalt and Adlerian Psychological practices, setting precedent for the use of performing arts in therapy; theatre has also been used in various educational settings, including early childhood education ([Wagner, 1976](#)), prisoner education and rehabilitation ([Herman, 2009](#); [Watson, 2009](#)), sexual education for teens ([Selman & Heather, 2015](#)), and community development settings regarding health, sanitation, and gender-based violence ([McGivney & Murray, 1991](#)). These provide a theoretical base for this study, but also demonstrate a hole in the current literature: a strong focus on participant internalisation processes are present, with little demonstrable research on the effects of performing roles in these situations as actors.

Cognitive Dissonance and Internalisation

First described in 1957 by Leon Festinger, cognitive dissonance is the uncomfortable psychological state that is created when dissonant cognitions—meaning thoughts or behaviours that are inconsistent with those already held or exhibited by an individual—are made salient. When one experiences the state of cognitive dissonance, one will unconsciously attempt to alleviate the discomfort. There are several ways that this happens: one can remove the dissonant cognition by ignoring it; one can add new consonant cognitions—that is, attitudes that are consistent with the previously held attitudes; or one can reduce the importance of the dissonant cognitions (Festinger, 1957, p. 6). Although it was not specified by Festinger himself, a fourth dissonance reduction strategy in the form of increasing the importance of a consonant cognition follows logically from the previous three, and is included in dissonance theory literature today (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 1999). If these reduction strategies fail—and Festinger believed that often, they will—one is left with no alternative but to change the attitude which is impacted by the dissonant state, resulting in internalisation of the behaviour and thus long-term attitude and behaviour change. It is this last reduction strategy which Festinger was most interested in; this study seeks to build on the value of this dissonance reduction strategy.

Dissonance theory has continued to generate interest and research, and has been expanded into an entire field of study, branching into many different, sometimes contradictory, theories and explanations. Of particular interest in the last 25 years has been methods of identifying cognitive dissonance. While attitude change had previously been the predominant indicator of dissonance creation and reduction, some scholars have argued that “attitude change is at best an indirect indicator of whether dissonance has been induced or reduced” (Devine, Tauer, Barron, Elliot, & Vance, 1999, p. 302), and have instead focused on the affect of an individual who is in a situation where dissonance should be created. Since cognitive dissonance is psychologically uncomfortable, “it should be revealed as elevated feelings of discomfort” (Devine et al., 1999, p. 309). In other words, one should feel flattened affect when in a dissonant state, and should feel normal or even heightened affect once dissonance has been reduced or eliminated. This also addresses the fact that cognitive dissonance does not always lead to attitude change, but may be alleviated through other dissonance reduction mechanisms, or ignored entirely. Others have considered that cognitive dissonance can be created vicariously, by witnessing in-group members perform behaviours or say things that are dissonant with the beliefs of the group, which can result in the individual internalising the dissonant cognitions of the in-group member and changing their own behaviours and attitudes (Cooper, 2010). To complicate the topic more, some scholars believe that dissonance reduction does not always occur, and that certain dissonant cognitions, particularly when the pre-existing cognition is especially resistant to change, can co-exist; cognitions that are deeply ingrained, that are part of a larger web of cognitions, or which would be embarrassing or painful to move away from publicly, are more likely to remain (Wicklund & Brehm, 2004). These are the most important expansions in the context of the present study; for a full review, see Harmon-Jones and Mills (1999) and Cooper (2012).

Despite the complexities inherent in utilising cognitive dissonance, it is a useful theory in the context of the present study because of the potential to create internalisation within a subject as an outcome of cognitive dissonance induction. The fourth dissonance reduction strategy, where one changes one's attitudes to be in line with the demonstrated behaviour, is an example of internalisation. Internalisation refers to the process by which one's behaviour changes one's attitudes or beliefs. This occurs when one “personally identif[ies] with the value of a behaviour and thus fully accept[s] as their own” (Deci & Ryan, 2012, p. 421). Behaviour creates attitudes in part because of cognitive dissonance, or the human desire for congruity between mental representations and their

physical manifestations. Evidence for this can be found in the Stanford Prison Experiment (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973), where a group of college students so abused other students while playing the role of prison guard that they came to believe in that which they said about and did to their “prisoners.” This foreshadowed the acts of dehumanization exhibited by American military personnel against prisoners at Abu Ghraib during the Iraqi war of 2003-2006. Internalisation generally comes about organically: we are conditioned from infancy to behave in certain ways because of cultural expectations, and we internalise behaviours and change attitudes as we are exposed to different environments; one can also internalise behaviours as a result of forced behaviour.

Methods of recognising when internalisation has or may have occurred have also been highlighted, including absolute ownership of a belief, a sense that the belief is long-standing, and undue emphasis on the positive qualities of the belief, following a period of cognitive dissonance and the choice of attitude change as the method of dissonance reduction (Wicklund & Brehm, 2004).

With all of this complicated literature, it is no wonder that the fields of cognitive dissonance and internalisation continue to evoke interest and scholarly scrutiny. Although a comprehensive search returned just 40 results for the combined search terms “cognitive dissonance” and “attitude change” in the last decade, some advancements include the extent to which commitment is a necessary condition to evoke cognitive dissonance (Vaidis & Gosling, 2012, expanding on Aronson & Mills [1959], who suggested that the effort one puts into a counterattitudinal behaviour will impact the degree of cognitive dissonance and attitude change, such that more effort results in stronger dissonance and resulting attitude change), neurological indicators of cognitive dissonance (Harmon-Jones, 2000; Harmon-Jones, Amodio, & Harmon-Jones, 2009), and the effects of “surface acting,” or demonstrating an emotion that is not felt in the context of customer service and emotional labour, on job performance and satisfaction (Bhave & Glomb, 2016; Pugh, Groth, & Hennig-Thurau, 2011). The latter two studies are the closest to the study of cognitive dissonance in the context of performing a role, and still do not demonstrate the utility of it in changing attitudes within an actor. Importantly, our study did not follow the pervasive forced-compliance paradigm: the process of developing *Kwe Kalyet* allowed and encouraged participants to work collaboratively to devise the play, voice their opinions on the trajectory of the project, and disengage at will. The participants were, however, encouraged to step outside their comfort zones, and get comfortable with being uncomfortable. With this theoretical information in mind, we set out to determine whether creating and performing in a play that explores contentious social issues, which would see many of the performers engaging in counterattitudinal or unfamiliar behaviours, could create cognitive dissonance as demonstrated by any or all of the features mentioned above, leading to internalisation, and ultimately, attitude change.

The Story

Before discussing the results, it is important to provide the literary, cultural, and academic context in which the results can be situated. The *Old Stories in New Ways* (OSNW) project aimed to take the story of Lwanda Magere, a traditional story in the Luo ethnic group of Western Kenya and enhance, adapt, and transform it to contend with contemporary social issues in its home community. A condensed version of this story is taught to all Kenyan children as part of the national education curriculum, and is especially important to the Luo community: it was taught to each of the participants in their homes and communities by their parents and elders. Variants of the story can be seen in popular media, blogs, social imagery, and literary publication including a full-length play script by Kenyan playwright Omtatah Otoiki (1991).

The story describes ongoing battles over land and cattle between the Nandi people and the Luo people, who share a border in the mountains of Western Kenya. Lwanda Magere, a powerful Luo warrior, endowed with mythical powers, came to the fore to defeat the Nandi. He led his men on cattle raids during the night, taking more and more Nandi resources on each raid. The Nandi decided that they needed to ascertain the secret of Lwanda Magere's powers if they were to have any hope of defeating the Luo. The Nandi elders hatched a plan to send a young woman from their clan to Luoland as a second wife, with a mission to learn his secret and bring it back to her people. She did as she was told, and for a short time, there was peace between the Nandi and the Luo.

Feeling as though he had finally defeated the Nandi once and for all, Lwanda Magere got careless: he fell ill while Mikayi ("First Wife" in Luo language) was not around, and called Nyalang'o (the Nandi girl)ⁱⁱ to administer his medicine to him. She was instructed to cut his shadow and put the herbs in the incision. Confused, she did as she was told, and was horrified to see his shadow bleed. The secret was his shadow! She immediately ran back home and told the Nandi elders. However, there was a problem: the girl was pregnant. She and the child were banished from the community.

The following day, the Nandi conducted a raid on Luoland. When the Luo warriors met them in battle, the shadow was visible in the sunlight. A Nandi warrior struck the shadow with his spear, killing the powerful leader. Wounded, Lwanda Magere staggered toward his home, where he turned into a giant rock. Today, this rock sits on the border between Luoland and the Kalenjin territory where the Nandi reside; the Luo believe that a tool or weapon sharpened on this rock will be blessed with Magere's strength, which still inhabits the rock (Selman & Battye, 2016, pp. 159-160).

Despite its broad history of adaptation, the story remains narratively thin, and remains problematic when addressing the complexity of contemporary themes of gender (in)equality, tribalism, classism, leadership and corruption, polygamy, and peace. There is little to no background information: nothing about the history of the Luo or Nandi people or their interrelations; no discussion of the early life of Lwanda Magere, Mikayi, or Nyalang'o; and no follow-up regarding Nyalang'o or her child. The OSNW project aimed to address these questions and asked performers to "think on their feet," engaging a creative process that took the base story and expanded it to create a dynamic, problem-centric re-telling of the familiar tale.

The themes noted above were central to the adaptation of the story as they were all identified as being important and relevant to contemporary Kenya, and certainly the particular region in which the project is being conducted. The performers were asked to think about how these themes could be represented in performance that stayed true to the story, but also highlighted social and cultural problems. The result is a performance that reveals social problems through the story without prescribing a solution to encourage discussion, debate, and ideally social change within an audience. Some examples of "thinking on their feet" include determining what happened to Nyalang'o and her child and how the characters can represent moving toward women's empowerment and peace between the Nandi and the Luo; exploring the relationship between Mikayi and Nyalang'o to highlight benefits and pitfalls of polygamy and the need for cooperation; and researching Nandi customs to accurately represent both sides of the story in the relevant scenes. By practicing processes of change on their feet, the performers moved from the thin "old story" to the enhanced, complicated "new way."

Methods

To measure potential change, we used a discursive method of interviews and focus groups to ascertain participants' outlooks on topics such as gender (in)equality, age roles, legal rights and responsibilities, and ethnic divides during the collective development of a play involving these topics. We conducted interviews with 14 of the 15 performers throughout the process, with the goal of seeing if those views changed in any way from the initial interviews to the post-workshop interviews. Two focus groups were conducted near the end of the three-week process, consisting of five to eight artists each, and representative of the participants. A total of 15 participants participated in the focus groups as one participant who had chosen not to be interviewed in the initial phase of the project changed their mind and agreed to participate in a focus group.

Participants

We chose the participants from among the artists working within OSNW, a large, long-term theatre creation project jointly administered between the University of Alberta and Ignite Afrika Trust in Kisumu, Kenya (Selman & Battye, 2016). OSNW began in June of 2015; researcher Courtney and theatre consultant Battye spent three weeks living and working with these performers in June and July, 2016, during a major workshop and theatre creation segment of the OSNW project as independent researcher and production dramaturg respectively. These participants were professional or amateur performing artists, numbering 22 in total and representing three major theatre groups in their community, as well as a dance team, two singers, and a small number of independent artists. Of these artists, 15 agreed to participate in this study. This sample consisted of seven women and eight men, reasonably representative of all the groups in the larger project, and ranging in age from 22 to 34 years (median = 26). This age is slightly higher than the median age of Kenya (19 years), but reflects the massive youth bulge present in Kenya today, with 85% of all Kenyans being below 35 years of age. 14 of the participants were of the Luo ethnic group, which is the majority group in this community; one was of the Kisii ethnic group, but grew up in the predominantly Luo community, speaks the language, adheres to the customs, and is married to a Luo. We conducted follow-up interviews with eight participants. We chose participants for follow-up based on their interactions and behaviours in the three-week workshop and/or comments during focus groups. For example, participants who indicated during the focus groups that they had experienced significant change, those from whom we needed more information or clarification stemming from the focus groups, and those who demonstrated discomfort or emotional changes during the workshops were given follow-up interviews; due to time constraints, we did not re-interview those who indicated that they had not experienced any attitude changes or who demonstrated little cognitive dissonance or emotional change (as perceived by the researcher while interacting with the participants for three weeks or as indicated by themselves during the focus groups).ⁱⁱⁱ Interviews and focus groups took 30 to 60 minutes each, for a total of 885 minutes, or nearly 15 hours.

Interviews and Observation

We conducted open-ended, conversation-style interviews by asking questions to the participants, beginning with their involvement in the project, their experience with the process of developing ideas through theatrical experimentation, the characters, and their own emotional state. From there the interview questions moved outwards to investigate the participants' thoughts and feelings on the themes of the story, and how these relate to the social and political climate of Kenya. Follow-up interviews maintained this structure, but targeted behaviours and attitudes that were observed during the workshop process to allow comparison with initial attitudes. Mid-point focus groups

consisting of five to eight participants each allowed the participants to discuss these same themes in a group format. All but one of the interviews were conducted in English, and audio-recorded for transcription and quotations. The participants were all conversationally fluent in English, although given that it is their second or third language, occasionally other performers were asked to translate specific words or concepts. One interview was conducted in Luo and translated. All recordings were professionally transcribed with the assistance of the PI. This discursive method was chosen to allow the participants to represent, in their own words, the way they view the world. The study required that we know what their beliefs were surrounding the project themes, and asking them directly rather than assuming based on cultural norms was the most ethical and expedient method. Structured interviews do not allow for the kind of flexibility needed to ensure that the participants felt they were being heard.

We also conducted naturalistic observation of the participants' behaviours, interactions, and affect throughout the creation process to identify potential areas of cognitive dissonance creation and to note areas of contention that could be brought up in the follow-up interviews and/or focus groups. This observation consisted of watching the daily workshop activities and conversing informally with participants. The information was recorded in field journals during the workshops, as well as through photographs and videos. This information was used to inform focus group and follow-up interview questions.

Remaining sensitive to the cultural and social norms of the community was of vital importance throughout the study. The authors acknowledge our Western feminist viewpoints and relative privilege as white scholars living in a global colonial framework. By situating ourselves within this discourse, we acknowledge that we can never truly understand or represent the issues faced by these communities, and require that we engage in ongoing self-reflection and interrogation of our biases and privileges to ensure that we allow these people and their communities to speak for themselves rather than speak for them.

Analysis

We analysed the interviews using thematic analysis strategies. The themes presented in this article—namely, gender (in)equality, tribalism, and personal changes—were highlighted as the most commonly discussed in the interviews and focus groups. These themes were further analysed by respondent to ascertain patterns based on participant demographics such as gender, age, marital status, parental status, employment status, educational background, and length of time as a performer. While these demographic features all demonstrated interesting nuances in responses, gender and age of participant were the most striking and thus are the primary delimitations reported on here.

Findings and Discussion

The previously mentioned themes were repeated across the interviews and focus groups, regardless of the age, gender, or ethnicity of the participant. In comparison to general trends among Kenyans, the participants believed themselves to be more socially progressive: most of the participants stated that men and women are equal and should be afforded the same rights and opportunities. Further, they stated that all ethnicities should be treated the same politically and legally and that intermarriage should be permitted and accepted. For example, one participant stated that “we are all Kenyan, so we should get intermarriages allowed. You can intermarry from any tribe” (Respondent L, personal communication, June 24, 2016)^{iv}. Many also stated that Kenya struggles politically

with finding adequate, responsible, honest leadership, and that peace is a goal for which the Kenyan populace—particularly the youth—should strive. With regard to polygamy, the participants had mixed feelings at the beginning of the workshops. Some viewed it as a social evil: one participant described the issues they faced growing up with a father who had two wives and how he was unable to provide for his children, stating that “I remember it affected me to a point of my mom ended up doing more, providing for my schooling. So, personally, polygamy, as it is today, it has really affected me and my view of it is that...I would not want to be a polygamist” (Respondent K, personal communication, June 25, 2016). Others viewed it as desirable and necessary to the continuation of a man’s bloodline, claiming that “it helps, especially those men who are not able to have a baby [boy] with their first wife” (Respondent J, personal communication, June 26, 2016). Still others left it as a personal choice and chose not to weigh in with an opinion.

Cognitive Dissonance Induction

Following from Devine et al. (1999), flattened affect and discomfort was observed in many of the performers throughout the workshop, indicating that cognitive dissonance had been induced. When the women were asked how they felt playing the role of a subservient, humble housewife who had no voice and little power beyond her role as a first wife, many of them made statements such as “it feels bad” and “I feel sad” (Respondent H, personal communication, June 28, 2016), or that “the way this woman is being treated is not good” (Respondent I, personal communication, June 26, 2016). Many of the performers, of all genders, responded similarly when asked how they felt playing the role of someone who holds tribalist views; for example, one of the men, playing the role of Nandi elder, reported feeling uncomfortable with being responsible for inciting such obvious ethnic violence. According to him, he would like to see the role change, believing that “diversity becomes our strength...[he] really want[s] [their] diversity to be celebrated.” This same participant was also uncomfortable playing a warrior, as the warriors of old are no different than the police of today, “guns for hire” who are nothing more than corrupt men who answer to corrupt leaders; this role had him constantly ask himself if “[his] conscience is really right doing this” (respondent K, personal communication, June 25, 2016).

Despite feeling emotionally disturbed by some of the roles which had the artists performing counterattitudinal behaviours, many of the performers justified it by saying that it was for the sake of acting. One participant claimed that “when [they] are acting, [they] really put the real life behind [them]” (Respondent B, personal communication, June 29, 2016). They do not allow their personal views to bias their performance, and they do not allow their character to enter into their personal life. Others expressed opinions that this behavioural shift is part of acting, and that playing counterattitudinal roles is “actually never difficult, because you...just have to do a part you’ve been given to perform” (Respondent A personal communication, June 29, 2016). One artist pointed out that in every story “you must have an antagonist. [They were] playing that part” (Respondent G, personal communication, July 12, 2016): sometimes performing behaviours with which one disagrees is necessary to serve the greater good of creating the play and making social change, so the discomfort is worth it. While this outlook suggests that internalisation of the counterattitudinal behaviour is not likely to occur, it could demonstrate one of Festinger’s dissonance reduction strategies, that of reducing the importance of the dissonant cognition: after all, what an artist says and does on stage is not necessarily reflective of their own beliefs or morals. This could also demonstrate resistance to change: the artists may not want to change their attitudes to be more ‘traditional’ and conservative since they pride themselves on being forward-thinking and progressive; one who prides oneself on favouring gender and ethnic equality does not want to become less tolerant as a result of performing such behaviours

(Wicklund & Brehm, 2004). Cognitive dissonance does not necessarily equate to attitude change; the latter is simply one possible outcome of the former.

While some of the participants continued to employ these justifications throughout the three-week workshop period and through the focus groups and second round of interviews, many did not. However, even some of those who did maintain this dissonance reduction tactic demonstrated some level of internalisation by the end of the process. Similarly, not all participants demonstrated dissonance reduction: one participant reported feeling afraid when they performed counterattitudinal behaviours due to the potential misrepresentation of their own beliefs, saying “you know, when people see you doing something bad and when they come back and see you at another angle and see you in a good one, then they always say ‘that lady is very bad. She’s now pretending to be good, but she’s very bad’” (Respondent E, personal communication, July 12, 2016). Another performer echoed this fear, indicating that in the past, they had been violently assaulted as a result of their character in an unrelated performance. Despite the differences seen in how the artists addressed their own cognitive dissonance, attitude change was seen in nearly all the performers on some level or another, with almost two-thirds of them experiencing profound personal or thematic changes.

Gender (In)equality

Many participants identified the character of Nyalang’o as a significant contributor to attitude shift on the subject of gender (in)equality. One of the participants said in their first interview that “instead of bringing peace, [Nyalang’o] also brought a lot of disunity between the two communities” (Respondent H, personal communication, June 28, 2016). This was a sentiment that was repeated, in various forms, by most of the participants in their first interviews and throughout the workshop period. During the later focus groups, the participants’ views largely changed: unpacking the role of Nyalang’o and exploring her own sense of (or lack of) agency and voice, the unequal treatment of women in historical and, indeed, contemporary Kenya, and the plight of a young, single mother who bore a ‘half-caste’ (i.e. mixed-race) child caused them to think differently about the character. The addition of an alternate ending that saw Nyalang’o choosing peace over continued destruction contributed to this change. The artist who made the initial comment regarding Nyalang’o’s decision reported feeling many emotions when she played Nyalang’o in the new final scene: First, “we are told [Nyalang’o] is shy.” Then, “she fell in love.” Nyalang’o felt sad that she had hurt Lwanda Magere, the man she had grown to love; she felt guilty because “if [she] tells this...secret, they will kill [Lwanda],” but also pride because “at the end of everything we have to bring people together, we have to bring peace,” and that is precisely what she did. She felt fear for how the Nandi people would treat her and her child after their return; and she felt empowered and joyous at having found her voice and having made the decision to speak up and push her community toward peace rather than continued war. The artist felt that “it was really [her] doing it. [She] almost cried. [Her] tears were almost there because seriously, [she] was feeling that.” She found a sense of empathy for Nyalang’o, and indeed for women in similar situations of early or unwed pregnancy, inter-racial relationships, or having to decide between their community and their family (Respondent H, personal communication, July 12, 2016).

Other performers voiced similar shifts in their attitudes: one performer learned through playing the role of Nyalang’o that one must own one’s mistakes, and allowed them to see the power and importance of forgiveness; one man who played Nyalang’o when no other women were available learned that women in his society are expected to “take much and know how to handle it” (Respondent K, personal communication, July 19, 2016) in terms of social and familial expectations, and that women can be incredibly hard on other women. This was in response to some

homophobic and transphobic comments he received from some of the women. In this community, “there’s an expectation that even the fellow women in the society expect about a decent lady,” and since he did not embody this in his role, the women felt it their duty to intervene in his performance (Respondent K, personal communication, July 19, 2016).

Another role that elicited strong reactions in terms of gender (in)equality was that of Mikayi. Mikayi is a traditional, subservient, humble woman, who is forced to watch as her husband falls in love with his second wife and ultimately sacrifices himself and the entire Luo community by giving Nyalang’o his secret. This role proved troublesome for some of the women who, in their everyday lives, tend to be more assertive and independent with regard to their own sense of agency and voice. However, one such woman learned that one cannot judge another woman and her reasons for staying in such an unequal relationship, because “you really don’t know the reason why she does that, so...you definitely have to change your aspect about her and maybe how you are seeing her” (Respondent I, personal communication, July 18, 2016); this same woman learned the importance of standing up for those who cannot, or will not, stand up for themselves. Two women reported that through playing Mikayi and seeing others play the role, they learned that they “need to respect [their] elders...and [they] need to work with the community, not only [their] community, but with other communities too” (Respondent E, personal communication, July 12, 2016). Another woman reported that, while playing Nyalang’o in a scene where she was intentionally hurting Mikayi, she felt incredible sadness and empathy for Mikayi and, as a result, learned that one should not intentionally hurt another, even if they are rivals or enemies. These women truly felt the emotions they were portraying on stage, which allowed them to put themselves in the minds of fictional women who believe and behave differently from themselves. Through this, they changed their own beliefs and found a sense of understanding and empathy for different women.

A third character that brought about interesting changes in the perspectives and beliefs of a number of the participants was that of Nyalang’o’s mother. Although a small role, this character is important in that she stands up to the elders and to Nyalang’o’s father and fights on her daughter’s behalf to not be sent to Luoland on what she calls a suicide mission. This character, who does not appear in the folklore, was only briefly explored in the OSNW rendition, and was only played by a few performers; however, some of the women reported feeling empowered simply by watching the women stand up to men on stage. One woman said that seeing the role “opened [her] eyes somewhere that yeah, [she] can actually speak out” (Respondent H, personal communication, July 9, 2016). This has implications for vicarious cognitive dissonance as described by [Cooper \(2010\)](#). Although the participants did not directly engage in any behaviour, seeing other women with whom they identify by virtue of their gender, race, and role engage in unfamiliar behaviours caused them to change their own beliefs to maintain consistency with the similar members of their ingroup.

Ethnicity and Tribalism

Ethnicity is another theme which elicited massive attitude change and growth. The story of Lwanda Magere has very clear tribalist themes, and although one of the main goals of the OSNW project is to tease out these themes in an effort to address them in the larger Kenyan society, it was very clear throughout the workshop period that very few of the artists know anyone outside of their own ethnic group, and know precious little with regard to Kalenjin customs and traditions. However, the evils of tribalism and ethnic tensions are readily apparent, even without in-depth knowledge of other ethnic groups: tribalism is at the root of much of the violence and political upheaval present throughout the post-colonial history of Kenya; ethnic tensions are salient for all Kenyans, and

were articulated by each of the participants as being one of the biggest challenges faced by Kenya today. One participant reported that they had always held very strong tribalist views, believing that “Luos, they normally like only their tribe”, but that through the OSNW project, they had changed their mindset completely, stating that “the project changed [them] because when you see Lwanda wants to marry the second wife, the elders were like ‘no, don’t marry that lady from the other tribe’...[she] need[s] to stop this...we are just the same people” (Respondent E, personal communication, June 28, 2016) This participant saw a strengthening of their anti-tribalist views through the June-July 2016 workshop period.

The remainder of the participants espoused anti-tribalist sentiments at the beginning of the workshop period. However, the act of creating scenes which involve Kalenjin customs and traditions without having intimate knowledge of them clashed with the goal of addressing and reducing ethnic tensions. Luckily, one of the researchers in the OSNW project is of the Kalenjin ethnic group, and gave the performers valuable insight into the traditions, customs, and language of the Kalenjin people. This allowed them to perform the roles in a manner that was quite different from how they had imagined them, but much more authentic and true to the spirit of inter-ethnic co-operation. This had a profound effect on the performers. Every one of the 15 participants involved in the present study reported a shift in their way of thinking about the Kalenjin people and tribalism in general, demonstrating the largest attitude shift in this study. This reflects profound internalisation: the participants came to identify with the Kalenjin customs they embodied, realising they are not so different from their own customs, which resulted in changes to attitudes to be more consistent with their performed behaviours.

Two participants reported feeling bad and disinterested during a scene that involved the meeting of Lwanda and his Kalenjin in-laws because they were essentially making it up; Participant C (personal communication, July 12, 2016) said that the scene “was one of the most boring [scenes they’ve] ever been engaged in.” When they were taught the culturally correct way to enact this ritual, they felt they had “the insights and more in-depth info how [the Kalenjin] deal with the in-laws” (Respondent C, personal communication, July 13, 2016). They enjoyed it more and felt assured that they were properly representing Kalenjin customs. [Vaidis and Gosling \(2012\)](#) demonstrated that free choice in receiving discrepant information and commitment to the behaviour that results from this new information are necessary for attitude change; this result further supports their conclusions. Nearly all of the participants indicated that they had gained an appreciation for just how small the cultural differences are between the Luo and the Kalenjin people. This was one of the hardest-worked scenes in the workshop period, and it resulted in the largest amount of attitude change; this makes sense according to [Martinie, Olive, Milland, Joule, and Capa \(2013\)](#), who demonstrated that the longer one engages in a counterattitudinal behaviour, the stronger the cognitive dissonance and, as a result, the stronger the attitude change.

The Kalenjin OSNW researcher informed the artists that his people do not know the story of Lwanda Magere, which caught the artists off guard: not only is it part of the national education curriculum for all Kenyan students, regardless of ethnicity, they expected that a story that involved both ethnic groups and was one foundational block for the continued violence between the two would be known to both sides.^v This caused some participants to think that maybe “[the Nandi] did not even do anything against [the Luo]” (Respondent I, personal communication, July 9, 2016), and caused some to question whether the tension between them is actually due to some inherent difference or tradition, or whether it is “cooked up...to benefit one side or tribe” (Respondent J, personal communication, July 9, 2016). Others maintain that the story is real, but concede that more research is needed to understand why the Kalenjin do not have the story and why Luos are conditioned to dislike and distrust the Kalenjin if their cultural differences are evidently so small. The demonstrated attitude change in those who have begun to question the

reality of the story has implications for community-wide attitude change once the story is presented to the wider Luo and Kalenjin communities. If others question the story and see how similar the two ethnic groups are, maybe continued ethnic violence can be mitigated; this is part of OSNW's ongoing research.

Personal Change

Many of the artists reported great personal change that went beyond their change with regard to these specific themes. One woman reported that she has learned that communication within a family is important to ensuring the smooth operations of the family unit, stating that “[she] feel[s] like when you are in a family personally, at least you need to consult each other, you have to share ideas. [She is] now capable. Now even if [she will] be married or have somebody who's ahead of [her], [they] can now sit down and talk and [she] know[s] [she] will be able to interact with him” (Respondent L, personal communication, July 9, 2016). Another woman learned that, while she has always felt able to stand up for herself, she can also stand up for other women who cannot or will not stand up for themselves. Yet another woman has increasingly found her voice and made the decision to advocate assertively for herself in her marriage, find her own employment and source of income, and to pursue higher education; she felt that “when you see a personality who is so strong, especially from a character who is a lady, you feel it is true, ‘I really have to be this strong’” (respondent H, personal communication, July 9, 2016). Many of the participants reported that they saw a shift in how the men and women in the project interact, with the women becoming more likely to speak up and offer an opinion, and the men being more likely to afford the women a space to have a voice. The participants reported, and we observed, that increasingly, the women demanded respect and the men gave it.^{vi}

One participant saw a change in their emotional regulation and ability to control their temper. Prior to this workshop period, they found that some of the other participants were uncomfortable around them and hesitant to work with them because their “outbursts somehow tend to make people look at [them] weirdly.” They had a habit of lashing out and losing their temper at other artists, typically when they were not working as hard as this participant would have liked but it “[was] directly obvious what they were supposed to do”, or when they repeatedly made the same mistakes. Now, as a result of working in a performance context with people of varying skillsets, working styles, socioeconomic statuses, and education levels, they have learned to work with what people have to offer and to understand why they do what they do. This same participant also learned the value of different skillsets and to not disparage those that are “less artistic” than themselves (Respondent C, personal communication, July 13, 2016).

Many of the participants cited working within a coalition of artists and researchers as beneficial to their own ability to work within and across disciplines. In fact, many of them reported that working with the different researchers, who each had “their own different characters and ways of interpreting” the story (Respondent H, personal communication, July 9, 2016), a different working style and background and who are multi-ethnic, challenged them to think differently about the story, the themes, and themselves, and to interrogate their daily lived experiences. One participant expressed that they experienced a change in the way they rely on and trust other people. This change came from Lwanda needing to decide if he could trust Nyalang'o with the secret when he really had no other option; this caused them to think about times in their own life when they had chosen not to trust someone even though they needed to, and suffered the consequences of it. They told us that “sometimes you have to gamble” and rely on other people, even if the outcome could be negative, as it was for Lwanda, because not doing so could be even worse (Respondent D, personal communication, July 27, 2016).

Comments such as these suggest that attitude change may have gone beyond the content of the play and penetrates the performers' everyday lives. Performers internalised the behaviours of their characters so much that they were able to change the way they interact with their friends, family, and community, and found their voices as parents, spouses, and community members. The nature of theatre, which requires artists to work together and communicate across disciplines and skill-sets, also provided an opportunity for the artists to grow and change. The clear change inherent in the artists' beliefs demonstrates the benefit of TfD processes in community development and attitude change, as the performers move outside the theatrical process to continue the social development they experienced within it.

The Other Side

Performers experienced changes in their outlooks on gender (in)equality and ethnicity, and within their personal lives. However, it is important to note that not all members experienced such change, and some claimed to have experienced change while demonstrating something different in their daily interactions.

One man emphatically disagreed that the women characters in the play were empowered or that they achieved any empowerment by the end of the workshop, despite the women in the group telling him that *they* felt that the story depicted a change in empowerment. Although this participant saw growth in the actresses and the way the men and the women in the group interacted, he felt that the story was not a factor in this, holding that women's empowerment in the play was "3/10" and the women only speak up during crisis points, not to prevent the crises in the first place, which is scapegoating rather than empowerment (Respondent C, personal communication, July 9, 2016). However, he conceded that, as another participant stated, "[the men] never empowered women: in this story what happened, the women gained their voice" (Respondent I, personal communication, July 9, 2016). Any changes, however small, in the women characters were a result not of the men characters bestowing empowerment on them, but of the women *taking* empowerment, which the actresses argue is the very definition of empowerment. This participant suggested that the growth in the actresses was independent of the content of the play; another participant echoed this by stating that the environment surrounding the development of the play had a larger impact on the gender relations than did the story line and the women characters. In the end, this participant and those who argued that the women characters grew agreed to disagree. This could demonstrate that, whatever the participant may claim to believe about women's empowerment, gender roles may be so ingrained in him that the attitude is resistant to change: he is unable to see the empowerment that the women themselves are claiming.

Another participant disclosed in their first interview that while they are in favour of absolute gender equality, they feel that "to some extent we are trying to clear the way for [women]," and that women have had all of their obstacles removed for them to the detriment of men, and as such women are now more empowered than men, upsetting the idea of equality (Respondent D, personal communication, June 28, 2016). When asked in their follow-up interview if seeing the struggles of women through the women characters and through the treatment of some of the actresses by some of the men (which was often less than equal, in our views) changed their opinion of this, they acknowledged that many of the societal obstacles women traditionally faced are still there, but that "women need to come out and also ensure that their voices are heard, instead of...becoming an impediment to their own development" (Respondent D, personal communication, July 27, 2016). There is an element of dissonant cognitions here, where the artist now acknowledges that the obstacles they viewed as removed are still in place but simultaneously holds their original view that women have been elevated over men. It is interesting that this participant did not seem bothered by this and made no apparent attempt at dissonance alleviation, suggesting that perhaps

cognitive dissonance has not been created in this instance, or that dissonant cognitions are being held simultaneously due to resistance to change.

Finally, many of the participants publicly proclaimed their progressive attitudes toward the theme of gender (in)equality, and in their interviews also stated that their attitudes regarding gender (in)equality were as progressive as ever and, in many cases, had been strengthened by participating in the project; yet we observed that some of these participants demonstrated a disconnect between their proclaimed attitudes and their behaviours throughout the workshop. For example, some of the women, despite arguing that all women should have a voice, were less likely than their men counterparts to offer an opinion or a critique in collective decision-making situations; when questioned about their silence, they stated that “maybe the other voice was [stronger] than yours” (Respondent B, personal communication, July 13, 2016) or that “it’s not right for a woman to speak in front of elders...so when you try to speak that way definitely they won’t give you room for that” (Respondent I, personal communication, July 18, 2016). In addition, some of the men offered solutions to crisis points in the play that could be perceived as problematic and sexist, such as forcing Nyalang’o to have an abortion or disparaging her for getting pregnant in the first place; the women rarely spoke out about how problematic this advice is—despite indicating privately to each other and in interviews that they felt it was terrible advice. Several women felt that it was their duty to serve the men their lunch, and many of the men accepted this and, in some cases, expected it; some of them even expected the catering team to serve their lunch, which was not their job.^{vii} Finally, the participant who indicated that she discovered that she could be an advocate for women who could not speak for themselves also indicated that she was uncomfortable with doing so publicly as she feared the perception of her family, particularly her husband, and the impact it might have on them. This speaks to how deeply ingrained gender roles and their associated behaviour expectancies are in this culture, and how resistant to change these attitudes are.

It is interesting that gender (in)equality is the only theme which seemed to yield such contradictory results: given that fostering equality and cohesion are primary goals of the OSNW project, attitudes surrounding tribalism and peace seemed to change in a positive manner across the board; with that said, however, it is important to remember that all but one of the participants are of the same ethnic group, which is the predominant ethnic group in this part of Kenya, and we had limited contact with them outside of the daily workshop hours, so we were unable to observe their daily interactions with members of other ethnic groups.

Looking Forward

This study demonstrates that cognitive dissonance was created in the theatre-making participants when they performed counterattitudinal behaviours or unfamiliar roles, and that internalisation occurred in many of the performers, resulting in articulated and/or demonstrated attitude change.

Many of these participants clearly demonstrated that they pride themselves on being liberally-minded with regard to the themes of the performance, as indicated in the earlier discussion on pre-existing beliefs on gender (in)equality, ethnicity, and politics. We therefore did not expect that their attitudes on these themes would change in a regressive direction when asked to perform a role that embodied and celebrated them. As previously mentioned, the fact that most of the participants claimed to have held more progressive ideas than the cultural norm suggests that internalisation may have already occurred; given that the OSNW project was a year into its development at the time of this data collection, this makes sense. It was important that data collection occurred at this point as

OSNW was moving into an intensive creation period where we expected to see most internalisation take place. But many of the participants reported having held such progressive ideas since childhood. For example, one woman recalled being taught by her mother that “[she] is her own person” (Respondent H, personal communication, June 28, 2016) and thus not simply the property of her husband, which empowered her when she eventually married. One man recalled that he has always held progressive ideas regarding gender (in)equality as his mother was a business owner (Respondent M, personal communication, June 24, 2016). It is possible that these 15 artists have always held more liberal views: many of them describe being raised by strong, independent mothers and equality-minded fathers, many of whom taught their children to love people of all ethnicities and to fight against corruption, and most of them have completed some level of post-secondary education. These factors could impact both their ideals and morals as well as their decision to become actors, particularly in a TfD model, which focuses on social justice and community development. However, it is unlikely, given the social environment and culture of stringent gender roles, ethnic tension, and corruption, that they have always truly held such ideals. [Wicklund and Brehm \(2004\)](#) argued that as attitudes are internalised, the participant will “project ownership [of the idea] backward in time, coming to believe that the ownership is a long-term affair” (p. 357). Furthermore, a number of the artists indicated, when asked to think about when and where their morals and ideals developed, that they experienced a shift toward more liberal thinking when they joined their respective theatre groups and began acting. It is also important to note that some pre-existing attitudes were strengthened via cognitive dissonance, as in tribalism and some examples of gender relations, potentially indicating the dissonance reduction strategy highlighted by [Harmon-Jones and Mills \(1999\)](#) whereby consonant attitudes are strengthened. Regardless, these considerations need to be weighed in the analysis of the participants’ potential attitude change.

What this study does not show is whether these attitudinal or behavioural changes will be maintained long-term, and whether or to what extent the stated changes are played out in their everyday lives. [Sénémeaud and Somat \(2009\)](#) demonstrated that attitude changes resulting from a forced-compliance paradigm cognitive dissonance study persisted at one month follow-up; a longer follow-up is needed to demonstrate continued persistence in attitude change. A longitudinal study to this end will be required. Ideally, more interviews will be carried out with these participants, particularly when they are in an intensive rehearsal period, and after their performances. These interviews could include conversations regarding their typical behaviours since the conclusion of the June-July 2016 workshop, if they have seen any additional attitude change during the rehearsal periods, and how they believe the OSNW project has impacted them and their colleagues.

Furthermore, [Blackman and Cooper \(2012\)](#) demonstrated that making group identity salient while a participant performs a behaviour that is counter to their ingroup resulted in the participant being marginalized or denigrated, whereas those who had their individual identity made salient were more likely to change their attitudes in the direction of the counternormative behaviour displayed by the ingroup member. Given that group identity should have been salient in the context of the OSNW workshop, and particularly in regard to the differences between the Luo and the Kalenjin, Blackman and Cooper’s results and the results reported in this study conflict. Further research into the salience of individual versus group identity, particularly in the context of ethnicity or other innate identities (as opposed ascribed identities such as occupation or political affiliation), is needed.

At the time of writing, OSNW anticipated that the performances of the final product would have a semi-participatory element, where a character reaches a crisis point in a scene and turns to the audience to leave the question of how to solve the crisis open. While the audience will not be asked to respond in the moment, they will be given space to think about the crisis being posed. Further, the performance will end with the actors mingling with the

audience, opening the stage space to include the entire theatre building. Actors will converse and engage audience members directly after the performance to stimulate conversation. This will be an interesting addition to a longitudinal or follow-up study as the performers will have to respond to whatever viewpoints are offered to them. This could result in the artists engaging with incredibly counterattitudinal behaviours. The group started to explore this technique in the June–July 2016 workshop. When we asked the participants about their thoughts and feelings in these situations, some of them indicated that they enjoyed it because it gave them an opportunity to learn from each other and hear other perspectives regarding their character's dilemma that they themselves had not yet considered; one artist reported that they had a change of heart regarding loyalties to the community versus the self after one audience member (the audience in this case being the other artists and researchers in the OSNW project) advised the character to save their community rather than stay with their lover, saying that “before being advised [she] would have stayed with [her] boyfriend because [she] thought he was the whole world to [her]” (Respondent B, personal communication, July 13, 2016). Others found it difficult: some of the advice the artists are given can be morally or culturally problematic or downright offensive, in which case the artist must think quickly and creatively to reject or challenge the advice. With such mixed opinions and some demonstrated attitude change in the small amount of participatory theatre these artists have done already, this will be an interesting and beneficial addition to a longitudinal study.

Conclusions

Throughout the three-week theatre-creation workshop, the artists created and performed scenes that had them engaging in behaviours that were sometimes counterattitudinal, sometimes proattitudinal, and sometimes entirely unfamiliar. Our hypothesis was that creating and performing counterattitudinal behaviours should create cognitive dissonance, which should result in attitude change. We discovered that this is in fact the case: all of the participants demonstrated some level of cognitive dissonance while acting in such a role, and they all chose a dissonance reduction tactic. Many chose to justify their actions by claiming that they are simply acting and that they fully separate themselves from their character and vice versa; others demonstrated an attitude shift in the direction of the role they were playing, particularly in regards to gender norms and tribalism. One participant managed to simultaneously hold two dissonant cognitions regarding gender (in)equality and how it should be ensured, yet seemed unbothered by it and without cognitive dissonance. An unexpected—but not unwelcome—result was that performing a pro-attitudinal behaviour often resulted in the strengthening of a pre-existing attitude, as seen in those with anti-tribalist views and in the more minor themes of polygamy and corruption.

These results demonstrate that, while it is difficult to say with certainty that performing a counterattitudinal or unfamiliar role *will* result in internalisation and attitude change, the building blocks are there: internalisation and attitude change in performing artists is certainly *possible*, particularly with contentious social issues. A longitudinal study to determine if attitude change is maintained longer-term and leads to behaviour change would be an asset, as would further research regarding resistance to change. Moreover, these analyses are complicated by our own position as white, Western feminists working in a global colonial context. Moving forward, a continued adherence to principles of reflection, introspection, and mindfulness will be necessary to protect from inherent power imbalances in intercultural-cultural research.

Beyond the attitude change that was or was not demonstrated through the performance of these themes, the participants all stated that working with a multi-disciplinary, multi-ethnic team of artists and researchers gave them

invaluable skills in working with people who are different from themselves. They stated that they learned the value of thinking differently about themes and collaborating with people who have different but complementary skill sets. One participant stated that working with this team taught them to not think of different people as ‘others,’ but simply as different people. Similarly, working alongside people who bring different opinions, strengths and weaknesses, and personalities allowed them to learn from each other and develop as performers and as individuals. This was most clearly demonstrated in the women: many of the performers reported that they saw some of the more reserved women come out of their shells, and the women themselves stated that they felt empowered by working with other empowered women. The focus groups and interviews themselves also allowed a space for participants to think through and debate their own attitudes and those of their colleagues.

Although not directly related to internalisation and attitude change, these observations demonstrate a clear benefit to using performing arts as a bridge between people and communities. In conjunction with the demonstrated potential for internalisation and attitude change, it is clear that TfD, as well as collaborating with supportive people, can be invaluable tools in community and international development, conflict resolution, education, and in multifarious psychological settings.

Each and every participant in this study felt strongly that theatre has the capacity to change lives. We were inundated with stories of how these artists have seen the impact of TfD on their communities, within their respective theatre groups, and how they themselves have been impacted. We heard stories of community members seeking help for obstetric fistula following a community play, a decrease in unplanned pregnancy in a university following a participatory play regarding contraception, and a decrease in HIV rates in a community following a participatory play regarding condom use. We also heard stories of how the artists themselves have grown in their identity, their sense of empowerment, and their ability to advocate for themselves, their loved ones, and their communities through their acting careers and through the OSNW project. One thing is clear: even if internalisation and attitude change is not guaranteed, what is guaranteed is that TfD artists believe that what they do makes a difference in their communities and themselves.

Notes

i) A full review of the post-colonial history of Kenya is beyond the scope of this paper. For more information, see Chapter 15 of [Dowden \(2009\)](#); see also Chapter 5, pp. 400-404, and 701-704 of [Meredith \(2011\)](#).

ii) In Luo language, “nya” is the feminine form of “from;” thus, “Nyalang’o” means “from Lang’o.” Lang’o is the word the Luo use to reference the Nandi people; Nandi is a subgroup of the Kalenjin ethnic group.

iii) The participant who changed their mind about participating at the focus-group stage was not given a follow-up interview because there was no baseline information from which we could compare their results; one participant who would have been an excellent addition to the follow-up group had a significant language barrier and we were unable to secure a translator in time to interview them.

iv) For confidentiality purposes, all participants will be identified by a unique letter code rather than their names or initials. Personal communication denotes official communications made during interviews and focus groups.

v) Further communication with this researcher revealed that the Kalenjin people are taught the story in school; he meant that Lwanda Magere does not exist in Kalenjin folklore and has no cultural or political significance to the Kalenjin people. Additionally, the Kalenjin people do not have a story that is the antithesis to the Lwanda Magere story (Dr. P. Simatei, personal communication, August 24, 2016).

vi) One potential factor in this is that the Principal Investigator of OSNW is very vocal feminist who did not hesitate to create a space for women when it was needed.

vii) Some participants indicated that these men did show appreciation to the women, which was something we did not observe directly. It is also important to note that, while watching this interaction is troubling to us as Western feminists, the serving of food appears to have a cultural component which we do not fully understand and, indeed, cannot understand as outsiders.

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Competing Interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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