

Public Narratives as Symbolic Resources for Gender and Development:

A Case Study of Women and Community Radio in South Sudan

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to understand how public narratives about women facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals, using South Sudan as a case study. The international community is committed to achieving gender and development goals such as women's empowerment, education and employment. The gender and development literature suggests that realising such goals requires understanding local cultural contexts. In particular, the literature often views traditional elements of local cultural context as obstacles (although some critical scholars question the idea of a traditional-modern binary). The gender and development literature has conceptualised local cultural context in various ways but has rarely considered *public narratives* about women – shared narratives larger than the single individual – which frame possibilities for action. Public narratives allow for a comprehensive understanding of culture and account for its temporality. Drawing on focus groups, interviews and radio programmes from rural South Sudan – a country where there is still much to achieve in gender and development terms – this thesis first examines what public narratives about women exist in rural South Sudan and how women use them in their lives. To examine the ways in which they facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals, it then looks at their use in two symbolic sites: the content broadcast on NGO-funded community radio and the community discussions engendered by such content. Thirteen public narratives about women are identified, which the South Sudanese themselves describe as either “modern” or “traditional”, and which women draw on to deal with a range of life concerns. Interestingly, on community radio, both modern and traditional narratives are used to argue *for* gender and development goals. Similarly, in discussions among community members, those who argue *for* gender and development goals use both modern and traditional narratives, while those who argue *against* use only traditional narratives. These findings suggest that a public narrative approach is well suited to illuminate the complexities and contradictions of local cultural context; they also suggest that a traditional-modern dichotomy should be taken seriously, as it can have meaning for people in certain places. Finally, they show that traditional elements of local cultural context do not necessarily constitute barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals. Rather, they can be used to reimagine gender and development goals in ways that are locally and culturally relevant.

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List of acronyms

| | |
|--------|--|
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| CPA | Comprehensive Peace Agreement |
| EPI | Extended Programme on Immunization |
| GAD | Gender and Development |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| ICSS | Interim Constitution of South Sudan |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| IOM | International Organisation for Migration |
| IRIN | Integrated Regional Information Networks |
| KAP | Knowledge, Attitude and Practice |
| LSE | London School of Economics and Political Science |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| MSF | Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NRC | Norwegian Refugee Council |
| PSA | Public Service Announcement |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SPLA | Sudan People's Liberation Army |
| SPLM | Sudan People's Liberation Movement |
| SRHR | Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights |
| SSRRC | South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WFP | World Food Programme |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| WID | Women in Development |

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Gender and development

The international development community is committed to improving the lives of women in developing countries and promoting gender equality and women's rights. Over the past two decades, the world's gender and development goals have been laid out in a series of policy documents, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (United Nations, 1995), the Millennium Declaration (United Nations, 2000) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015). In the interests of achieving what is commonly referred to as gender equality and women's empowerment (United Nations, 2000, 2015), these documents include goals such as increasing women's educational enrolment, promoting women's ownership of and access to land and resources, reducing maternal and child mortality, and increasing women's participation and leadership in political, economic and public institutions. Such goals (detailed further in Chapter 2) are intended to redress worldwide gender imbalances. For the purposes of this thesis, they will be referred to as the world's gender and development goals.

To realise such goals, recognition and understanding of local cultural context is essential (Campbell, Cornish, & Skovdal, 2012; Campbell, Foulis, Maimane, & Sibiya, 2005). In this thesis, local cultural context refers to what Campbell and Cornish have called *symbolic* context, or "the world of culture" (2010, p. 848). The gender and development literature is replete with studies that show how insufficient understanding of local cultural context has impeded the achievement of gender and development goals in different settings (Boyden, Pankhurst, & Tafere, 2012; De La Puente, 2011; Doss, 2001; Goetz & Gupta, 1996; Hames, 2006; Kamal, 2007; Müller, 2006; Muzyamba, Broaddus, & Campbell, 2015; Neogy, 2010; Ramnarain, 2015; Razavi, 2007; Read-Hamilton & Marsh, 2016; Sialubanje et al., 2015; Upton, 2010). Many of these studies identify "traditional" or "customary" elements of local cultural context

– such as the paying of bride price in South Sudan (Lacey, 2013) – as obstacles to the achievement of gender and development goals.

Gender and development research tends to conceptualise and study local cultural context through different theoretical and operational lenses, using concepts such as *practices, social norms, gender roles, beliefs and attitudes*; however, few gender and development scholars have considered *public narratives* about women – “narratives attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual” (Somers, 1994, p. 619) – which frame possibilities for action. A focus on public narratives has the potential to advance gender and development scholarship in two ways. First, it provides a comprehensive theory and methodology to understand both people’s *ways of life* and their *meanings* – the two essential elements to understanding culture (Bruner, 1990). Current concepts, in isolation, do not do so, as I argue in Chapter 2. Second, public narratives incorporate the previously neglected dimension of *temporality*, which is an important feature of local cultural context. Despite these advantages, few, if any, gender and development scholars have adopted a public narrative approach to study local cultural context or examined how public narratives about women might enable or impede the achievement of gender and development goals. The central task of this thesis will, therefore, be to understand how public narratives about women facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals, using South Sudan as a case study.

1.2 South Sudan

South Sudan has been selected as a case study to explore the research question, because it has some of the world’s worst gender and development indicators. Although statistics on South Sudan are usually caveated, due to the extreme difficulty of conducting fieldwork there, South Sudan is said to have the worst maternal mortality ratio in the world (IRIN, 2012). South Sudanese women, who have five children on average (WHO, 2013b), face a one in seven chance of dying in pregnancy or childbirth (UNDP, 2012), and female life expectancy, at 57 years, is the

11th worst in the world, out of 177 countries (World Bank, 2014). According to UNESCO, 25% of women are literate, compared to 39% of men, giving it the sixth worst female literacy rate in the world, and making it 16th worst in terms of gender parity, out of 159 countries (2015). Other sources put the female literacy rate even lower, at 16% (World Bank, 2012). Gender parity in terms of primary school enrolment is similarly poor. Only 40% of children in primary school are female, putting South Sudan second last in the world, out of 157 countries, ahead of only Angola (World Bank, 2011).

Much of this is due to South Sudan's lack of development. Having only gained independence in 2011, after a popular referendum, South Sudan is currently 169th out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2015). This is a legacy of the two Sudanese civil wars, which spanned almost 50 years, from 1955 to 2005, with a decade of peace between 1972 and 1983 (LeRiche & Arnold, 2012). During the second civil war, 80% of the South Sudanese population was displaced, either internally or externally, and 2 million people were killed (Bubenzer & Stern, 2012) – a significant number given that South Sudan's population was only 8.1 million in 2005, when peace was agreed (World Bank, 2005). During the war, the South – whose population is predominantly Christian and of various African ethnicities – fought the North – whose population is predominantly Muslim and Arab. Southerners also fought each other (Bubenzer & Stern, 2012); indeed, the conflict between Southerners is what sowed the seeds of the present-day civil conflict, which broke out in December 2013, after data for this thesis had been collected.

Women's roles changed during the conflict with the North. Before the war, households were headed by men, and girls and women were valued primarily for their ability to bear children and bring wealth to their birth families through the institution of bride price (Evans-Pritchard, 1951). This is, arguably, still the case. To marry a woman in South Sudan, cows are paid to her birth family. By giving birth to daughters, the woman brings wealth to her husband and his family, because the

daughters are married for cows, and by giving birth to sons, she ensures the continuation of the family line. A wife is expected to be hard working and obedient. Divorce is difficult, as the only way to dissolve a marriage is to return the cows that were paid – something a woman's birth family is generally unwilling, or unable, to do. Women, therefore, often have little choice but to remain in their marriages, regardless of the circumstances (Bubenzer & Stern, 2012).

During the civil war, however, women began to take over as heads of households and assume positions of responsibility in their communities, as men went to fight (Aldehaib, 2010). Many women left the domestic sphere and assisted with the war effort, mainly in auxiliary roles such as porter, cook, nurse, translator and administrator – although they were also encouraged to procreate, to replace those who were dying in the war. Marital separation became more common, usually as a result of desertion rather than the returning of bride price, and strict sexual mores relaxed slightly (Bubenzer & Stern, 2012).

Formal peace finally came in 2005, with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Over the next eight years, 2.5 million people who had been displaced by war returned to South Sudan (International Organization for Migration, 2013), bringing with them the customs and cultures of the places where they had lived and, in many cases, grown up – places like Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and present-day Sudan (Grabska, 2014). The peace agreement saw the creation of an Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan (ICSS), which represented a significant milestone for women. It formally recognised equality between men and women, promised to work towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, spelled out the rights of women – including the right to participate equally with men in public life – and stipulated that there should be a 25% quota for women at all levels of government (Government of Southern Sudan, 2005). In practice, the 25% quota has not been achieved at all levels, and some people argue that women have had greater influence over national affairs through their participation in civil society

organisations than through their participation in government (Ali, 2011; Erickson & Faria, 2011). Nevertheless, there is a widespread public consciousness of “the 25%” – which has become shorthand for anything to do with gender in the post-CPA era (Ali, 2011).

Development scholars have noted that in post-conflict states, the status of women can improve, revert to what it was pre-war or deteriorate, depending on how the establishment of public order and the building of state institutions and structures are managed (Ali, 2011; Bruck & Vothknecht, 2011). The articles about women in the interim constitution of South Sudan are promising insofar as they guarantee equal rights for women under statutory law, and many new laws have been passed which aim to improve women’s status; yet, Castro and colleagues have shown how new legal frameworks and laws can encounter different combinations of acceptance and resistance to change, when they are introduced to, and incorporated into, societies which may be organised around very different types of social relations (Castro, 2012; Castro & Batel, 2008; Mouro & Castro, 2012).

The impact of the new constitution and laws on the lives of women in remote rural areas, far from the capital city, is poorly understood. So, too, is the way in which women have incorporated these new possibilities into their everyday lives. This is one of the reasons why this thesis focuses on rural South Sudan. There is far less research on women in rural South Sudan than in urban South Sudan, despite the fact that 83 percent of the population lives in rural areas (UNDP, 2012). Moreover, rural areas tend to be associated with less progressive views of women, making them a good arena to study the ways in which public narratives about women facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals.

This thesis builds on the small, but growing, pool of research that seeks to understand the lives of South Sudanese women. Within this body of research, some attention has been paid to women’s health, showing that the health needs of women

in South Sudan are urgent and the barriers to healthcare provision high (Butt, 2011; Dræbel, Kueil, & Meyrowitsch, 2013; Mugo, Zwi, Botfield, & Steiner, 2015). The research also suggests that cultural beliefs, such as the belief in traditional healers (Dræbel & Kueil, 2014) and the belief that miscarriage is the result of unpaid bride price (Adhiambo Onyango & Mott, 2011), complicate the provision of healthcare. Equally, some attention has been paid to violence against women, suggesting that such violence, particularly domestic, is highly tolerated (Elia, 2007; Jok, 1999; Lacey, 2013; Scott et al., 2013; Tankink, 2013; Walender, 2016), and that there is a high tolerance for gender inequitable norms and practices overall (Scott et al., 2014). There are a few studies that show how women's role changed during wartime (Pinaud, 2013; Weber, 2011), and there is limited research on girls' education, suggesting that girls' enrolment in school is not sufficient to achieve empowerment (Holmarsdottir, Ekne, & Augestad, 2011). There are also two or three articles, chronicling how women in the South Sudanese diaspora seek to champion the empowerment of women in South Sudan (Erickson & Faria, 2011; Faria, 2010), and a few excellent books and articles detailing the lives of women generally (Bubenzer & Stern, 2012; Grabska, 2013, 2014). It is to this small, but growing, literature that this thesis makes an empirical contribution.

1.3 Research design and research questions

In order to investigate how public narratives about women facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals in rural South Sudan, this thesis poses a number of sub questions, which guide the research. These are summarised in Table 1.

The first sub question, which lays the groundwork for the rest of the inquiry, asks what public narratives about women exist in the rural South Sudanese context. To answer this question, the thesis aggregates stories told about women from 15 life story interviews and nine focus groups, representing the views of 94 research participants, both male and female, in three different rural research locations.

The second sub question asks how women use public narratives as symbolic resources, for different purposes, in the course of their lives. This is to build an appropriately strong foundation of understanding from which to launch an investigation into how public narratives facilitate or constrain the achievement of gender and development goals. The thesis examines this question by re-analysing the 15 life story interviews with women, introduced in the previous chapter, focusing on the functions that different narratives serve.

In order to understand the ways in which public narratives are used when people come into contact with gender and development goals, symbolic sites had to be identified, which represented meeting points between gender and development goals and rural South Sudanese communities. Two such sites were selected for this thesis. The first is the content broadcast on NGO-funded community radio. The content broadcast on NGO-funded community radio constitutes an ideal place to study gender and development goals and public narratives about women, because, due to the production context, discussed further in sections 2.5.2 and 3.7, the content is influenced by NGO priorities but determined by community members. The third sub question, therefore, asks how community radio uses public narratives in programming on gender issues. The thesis answers this question by examining 14 pieces of community radio content on gender issues, representing just over five hours of radio content.

The second symbolic site is community discussion about gender issues, provoked by community radio. This also represents a meeting point between gender and development goals and rural South Sudanese communities. To generate such discussion, clips from community radio, advocating different gender and development goals, were played in focus groups for community members. The fourth sub question asks how the community uses public narratives in interpreting such radio content. This question was answered by analysing the discussion that was

generated in the aforementioned nine focus groups, after community radio content was played.

Table 1: Summary of research questions

| Overarching Question | How do public narratives about women facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals in rural South Sudan? |
|-----------------------------|---|
| RQ1 | What public narratives about women exist in rural South Sudan? |
| RQ2 | How do women use these public narratives as symbolic resources, for different purposes, in the course of their lives? |
| RQ3 | How does community radio use public narratives in programming on gender issues? |
| RQ4 | How does the community use public narratives in interpreting community radio content on gender issues? |

1.4 Thesis overview

The remaining chapters of this thesis are devoted to answering the research questions presented in Table 1. Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical and empirical literature on which this thesis builds. Chapter 3 presents the overarching methodology – although much methodological detail is reserved for the empirical chapters. Chapter 4 answers the first research question, demonstrating that the South Sudanese have what they perceive to be two different sets of narratives about women – “modern” narratives and “traditional” narratives – which in many ways appear to contradict each other but nevertheless coexist harmoniously. Chapter 5 answers the second research question, showing that women use both traditional and modern public narratives as symbolic resources in the course of their lives to deal with survival challenges, explain episodes of family rupture, pursue their child-focused, educational and employment aspirations, and explain barriers to those aspirations. Chapter 6 answers the third research question, showing that community radio also uses both traditional and modern narratives – but this time to advocate for gender and development goals. Chapter 7 answers the fourth research question – showing that those community members who agree with the gender and

development goals advocated via community radio use both modern and traditional narratives to do so, while those who disagree only use traditional narratives. Chapter 8 then returns to the overarching research question and discusses implications for both theory and practice.

The thesis makes three theoretical contributions to the gender and development literature. First, it introduces public narratives to the literature as a theoretical and methodological lens, through which to study local cultural context, and demonstrates how a public narrative approach can yield rich insights into the way people live their lives, in all their complexities and contradictions. Second, it demonstrates that, while some critical gender and development scholars may question the traditional-modern binary from a theoretical perspective, there are empirical contexts where such a binary should be taken seriously, as it has meaning for people within those contexts. Third, it demonstrates that, despite what much gender and development scholarship suggests, the traditional elements of local cultural context do not necessarily constitute barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals; indeed, they can be used to reimagine gender and development goals in ways that are locally and culturally relevant.

Chapter 2: Theory and Literature

In this chapter, the theoretical and empirical literature on which this thesis builds is reviewed. This thesis takes a public narrative approach to the study of local cultural context in development settings, asking how public narratives about women facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals. It does so by examining rural South Sudan and community radio. To situate the main contributions of the research, and the four research questions, this chapter outlines the world's gender and development goals, and presents a review of three relevant literatures: 1. The gender and development literature – specifically its study of local cultural context and the conclusions it has drawn; 2. The narrative literature and its theoretical insights, which underpin a public narrative approach. 3. The media literature and its theoretical insights – particularly those which are useful in answering the third and fourth research questions pertaining to media.

2.1 Gender and development goals

In 1995, at the conclusion of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the United Nations adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (United Nations, 1995), a global blueprint containing strategic objectives to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. In 2000, 189 countries passed the United Nations Millennium Declaration, outlining a set of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which would guide international development for the next fifteen years (United Nations, 2000). Gender equality and women's empowerment were among these goals. The MDGs expired in 2015, to be replaced by an even more comprehensive set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015). Again, gender equality and women's empowerment were among the goals, as were a range of gender-related targets. Taken together, the gender-related strategic objectives, goals and targets of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the MDGs and the SDGs can be conceived as the world's gender and development goals.

Table 2: International gender and development goals

| Issue | Evidence in Beijing documents/MDGs/SDGs |
|--|--|
| Gender equality and women's empowerment | The Beijing Declaration resolves to "remove all obstacles to gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women" (United Nations, 1995, art. 24). The MDGs seek, "To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable" (United Nations, 2000, art. 20, para. 1). The SDGs aim to, "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (United Nations, 2015, goal 5). |
| Women's rights | The Beijing Declaration resolves to "Ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child" (United Nations, 1995, art. 9). The MDGs state, "The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured" (United Nations, 2000, art. 6). The SDGs envisage, "a world of universal respect for human rights... in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed" (United Nations, 2015, art. 8). All three documents promise to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). |
| Girls' and women's education | The Beijing Platform for Action resolves to "Ensure equal access to education" for women and girls (United Nations, 1995, strategic objective B.1). The MDGs resolve, "To ensure that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education" (United Nations, 2000, art. 19). The SDGs declare, "Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education" (United Nations, 2015, art. 20), and reinforce this with targets at all levels. |
| Violence against women | The Beijing Declaration resolves to "Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls" (United Nations, 1995, art. 29). The MGDs resolve "to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" (United Nations, 2000, art. 25, para. 4). The SDGs aim to, "Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation" (United Nations, 2015, goal 5.2). |
| Health | The Beijing Platform for Action resolves to "Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care..." (United Nations, 1995, strategic objective C.1). The SDGs say they will aim to, "Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all" (United Nations, 2015, goal 3.8). |
| Maternal and child health | The Beijing Platform for Action seeks to "[reduce] maternal mortality by at least 50 per cent..." by 2000 (United Nations, 1995, art. 106, para. i) and to "[reduce] mortality rates of infants and children under five years of age by one third... or 50 to 70 per 1,000 live births, whichever is less" by 2000 (United Nations, 1995, art. 106, para. I). The MGDs seek to "[reduce] maternal mortality by three quarters, and under-five child mortality by two thirds..." by 2015 (United Nations, 2000, art. 19, para. 3). The SDGs seek to "reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births" by 2030 (United Nations, 2015, goal 3.2), and to "end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age..." (United Nations, 2015, goal 3.2). |

| Issue | Evidence in Beijing documents/MDGs/SDGs |
|--|--|
| Family planning | The Beijing Platform for Action seeks to "Provide more accessible, available and affordable... sexual and reproductive health care, which includes family planning information and services" (United Nations, 1995, art. 106, para. e), while the SDGs seek to "ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education..." (United Nations, 2015, goal 3.7). |
| Women's employment | The Beijing Platform for Action seeks to "Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment..." (United Nations, 1995, strategic objective F.1). The MDGs resolve to give "people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work" (United Nations, 2000, art. 20, para. 2), while the SDGs say, "Women and girls must enjoy equal access to... equal opportunities with men and boys for employment..." (United Nations, 2015, art. 20), and resolve to "achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men..." (United Nations, 2015, goal 8.5). |
| Women's public participation and leadership | The Beijing Platform for Action promises to "... ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making" (United Nations, 1995, strategic objective G.1) and to "Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership" (United Nations, 1995, strategic objective G.2). The MDGs resolve to "work collectively for more inclusive political processes" (United Nations, 2000, art. 25, para. 6) while the SDGs say, "Women and girls must enjoy equal access to... political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for... leadership and decision-making at all levels" (United Nations, 2015, art. 20). They further vow to, "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life" (United Nations, 2015, goal 5.5). |
| Women's groups | The Beijing Declaration maintains that, "The participation and contribution of all actors of civil society, particularly women's groups and networks... are important to the effective implementation and follow-up of the Platform for Action" (United Nations, 1995, art. 20). |
| Women's access to justice | The Beijing Platform for Action seeks to "Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice" (United Nations, 1995, strategic objective I.2) and to "achieve legal literacy" for women (United Nations, 1995, strategic objective I.3). The SDGs aim to "Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all" (United Nations, 2015, goal 16.3). They also say they will, "Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws..." (United Nations, 2015, goal 10.3). |
| Early and forced marriage | The Beijing Platform for Action seeks to "Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls" including early and forced marriage (United Nations, 1995, strategic objective L.1), and to "Enact and strictly enforce laws to ensure that marriage is only entered into with the free and full consent of the intending spouses; in addition, enact and strictly enforce laws concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age for marriage and raise the minimum age for marriage where necessary" (United Nations, 1995, art. 274, para e.). The SDGs state that they seek to, "Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage..." (United Nations, 2015, goal 5.3). |

| Issue | Evidence in Beijing documents/MDGs/SDGs |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Women and conflict mitigation | The Beijing Platform for Action maintains women's "full participation in decision-making, conflict prevention and resolution and all other peace initiatives is essential to the realization of lasting peace" (United Nations, 1995, art. 23), while the SDGs state, "We must redouble our efforts to resolve or prevent conflict and to support post-conflict countries, including through ensuring that women have a role in peacebuilding and State-building" (United Nations, 2015, art. 35). |
| Women and food security | The Beijing Platform for Action seeks to "improve access to food for women living in poverty" (United Nations, 1995, art. 58, para. j). The SDGs resolve "to end poverty and hunger everywhere" (United Nations, 2015, art. 3) and to "ensure access by all people... to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round" (United Nations, 2015, goal 2.1). They also resolve, specifically, to "address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women" (United Nations, 2015, goal 2.2). |
| Women and agriculture | The Beijing Platform for Action seeks to "provide paid and unpaid women producers, especially those involved in food production, such as farming, fishing and aquaculture... with equal access to appropriate technologies, transportation, extension services, marketing and credit facilities..." (United Nations, 1995, art. 166, para. e). The SDGs promise to "devote resources to developing rural areas and sustainable agriculture and fisheries, supporting smallholder farmers, especially women farmers..." (United Nations, 2015, art. 24), in order to "double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women..." (United Nations, 2015, goal 2.3). |
| Women's property rights | The Beijing Platform for Action resolves to "protect women's right to full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property..." (United Nations, 1995 art. 60, para. f). The SDGs resolve to "give women equal rights to... ownership and control over land and other forms of property... [and] inheritance..." (United Nations, 2015, goal 5.a). |

The world's gender and development goals cover a range of issues, presented in Table 2. Starting with gender equality and women's empowerment broadly, they go on to address issues such as women's rights, girls' and women's education, violence against women, health, maternal and child health, family planning, women's employment, women's public participation and leadership, women's collective organising, women's access to justice, early and forced marriage, women and conflict mitigation, women and food security, women and agriculture and women's property rights – to name a few.

These goals are important, because they structure the actions of different actors in the international development space, from bilateral and multilateral donors, to

philanthropic foundations, to nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) – including those working on media and communication for development.

They are also important because of what they ask of women and the societies in which they live. They ask women to be willing to lead certain kinds of lives – namely public lives, as participants in educational, economic and political institutions – and they ask the societies in which women live to support those kinds of lives.

2.2 Local cultural context

The gender and development literature suggests that, in order to realise the above gender and development goals, recognition, understanding and sensitivity to local cultural context are essential. In particular, within the literature, there is a body of empirical studies demonstrating that insufficient understanding of local cultural context has impeded the achievement of specific gender and development goals, at specific points in time, in specific settings. A review of this literature, with illustrative examples, is presented in Table 3. As outlined in the introduction, when I refer to local cultural context, I seek to foreground what Campbell and Cornish have called the *symbolic* aspects of context, or “the world of culture” (2010, p. 848), rather than the *material* aspects of context (the material realities of people’s daily lives) or the *relational* aspects of context (people’s relationships and networks) – although the three inevitably interact (Campbell & Cornish, 2010, 2012; Campbell et al., 2005).

2.2.1 Literature review procedure

Scholars who study gender and development come from a wide range of disciplines, including anthropology (e.g. Andrea Cornwall), development studies (e.g. Betsy Hartmann), economics (e.g. Naila Kabeer), education (e.g. Peggy Antrobus), gender and women’s studies (e.g. Chandra Mohanty), geography (e.g. Sylvia Chant), global public health (e.g. Gita Sen), media and communication (e.g. Karin Wilkins), social policy (e.g. Hakan Seckinelgin), social psychology (e.g. Catherine Campbell),

sociology (e.g. Valentine Moghadam) and philosophy (e.g. Martha Nussbaum). To identify a core body of interdisciplinary empirical research on gender and development, I, therefore, followed a three-step process for my literature review: journal identification, article identification and relevance assessment.

I first identified well-known and highly cited scholars writing on gender and development (such as those mentioned above). I then made a list of the journals, in which they were publishing, and identified journals, in which more than one was publishing. I observed that the common journals in which they were publishing were development journals; I, therefore, identified the development journals with the highest impact factors, and this is where I concentrated my search.

Using the Web of Knowledge database, I searched within these journals for articles that had the words “gender”, “woman”, “women”, “girl” or “girls” in the title. I also did searches outside of these journals for certain specific gender and development issues identified in Table 2, using “development” and issue-specific keywords such as “maternal and child health”. This yielded additional articles published in journals focused on particular areas of development, such as global public health and social policy. In addition, I conducted a broader search for articles on South Sudan.

I reviewed the titles and abstracts of articles for relevance, to see if they examined how local cultural context facilitated and constrained the achievement of gender and development goals – which led to further exclusion, and inclusion, of articles. For example, I excluded articles that were not actually examining gender, or development, or local cultural context – such as studies of individual-level factors predicting behaviours across countries that did not account for national cultural variation. Many of the studies excluded were, therefore, quantitative studies. I retained articles that specifically examined local cultural context and included some of the sources cited in these articles as part of my review. This process yielded a final pool of 40 to 50 core articles across 20 journals. The journals are presented in Appendix 1. I then closely read the core articles to understand their conclusions.

Table 3: Studies underscoring the importance of local cultural context in the gender and development literature

| Issue | Studies | Exemplar study |
|--|--|--|
| Gender equality and women's empowerment | (Fonjong, 2001; Kamal, 2007; Sawade, 2014) | Sawade (2014) identifies lessons learned from Oxfam's gender equality and women's empowerment projects in 31 countries. One of the key lessons from these projects, she concludes, is the importance of "a thorough analysis of... context" (p. 132). She maintains that "norms", "attitudes", "beliefs", "harmful practices", "culture", "cultural taboos", "views" and "traditional patriarchal values" present some of the most formidable challenges to the achievement of gender and development goals, and ultimately advises that, in gender and development projects, "cultural taboos need to be addressed and not ignored" (2014, p. 139). |
| Women's rights | (Muzyamba et al., 2015) | Muzyamba, Broaddus and Campbell (2015) explore the limits of rights-based approaches to HIV prevention among Zambian women. They show that Zambian women criticise rights-based approaches both for failing to take into account material realities and for conflicting with "gender roles", "priorities and beliefs", "traditional values", "cultural and religious values", "people's views" and "culture". The authors argue that greater attention must be paid to "people's everyday lives and realities" (2015, p. 15) in the design of public health programmes. |
| Girls' and women's education | (Begum, 2015; Glick, 2008; Moghadam, 1994; Müller, 2006; Stash & Hannum, 2001) | Müller (2006) looks at why Eritrea's national policy to achieve gender equality and increase the number of girls in secondary school has met with insufficient progress over the course of ten years. She maintains it is because of "cultural norms", "traditional gender roles", "attitudes", "beliefs", "cultural expectations", "traditions", "traditional gender identity" and "traditional culture" and cautions educational policy makers to pay closer attention to the value Eritreans place on tradition. |
| Violence against women | (Haylock, Cornelius, Malunga, & Mbandazayo, 2016; Read-Hamilton & Marsh, 2016) | Read-Hamilton and Marsh (2016) argue that, despite high-level UN efforts to respond to violence against women in conflict-affected settings such as Somalia and South Sudan, there is little evidence such prevention initiatives work. The authors maintain that this is due to "social norms", "gender norms", "gender roles", "unspoken rules" and "collective beliefs", which most violence prevention efforts in conflict-affected setting don't address. They advocate working to change social norms that encourage violence against women. |
| Health | (Dræbel & Kueil, 2014; Upton, 2010) | Upton (2010) looks at why government and NGO policy initiatives in Botswana have failed to slow the spread of HIV/AIDS among Batswana women. She points to "cultural norms", "cultural beliefs", "cultural values" and other "cultural factors" related to fatness and fertility as overlooked aspects of the context, concluding, "HIV/AIDS prevention programmes in Botswana have rarely focused on cultural factors... [M]ore attention needs to be paid [to these factors]..." (2010, p. 523). |

| Issue | Studies | Exemplar study |
|--|--|---|
| Maternal and child health | (Adjiwanou & LeGrand, 2014; Anastasi et al., 2015; Moyer et al., 2014; Sialubanje et al., 2015; Speizer, Story, & Singh, 2014) | Sialubanje and colleagues (2015) look at women's underutilisation of Maternity Waiting Homes in Zambia, designed to increase skilled attendance at birth and reduce maternal mortality. They conclude that a variety of factors, including "socio-cultural norms", "gender and cultural norms" and "gender inequalities", prevent women from using the facilities, and argue that, "interventions need to focus on recognising and improving the low social status of women..." (2015, p. 12). |
| Family planning | (Chi, Bulage, Urdal, & Sundby, 2015) | Chi and colleagues (2015) look at women's uptake of family planning and other health services in Burundi and Northern Uganda. They cite "socio-cultural factors" such as "community perceptions", "male-partner perceptions", "rumours", "myths" and "cultural desire for increased fertility" as barriers to contraceptive uptake. They conclude that initiatives promoting family planning need to address such socio-cultural barriers, in addition to other barriers. |
| Women's employment | (Garikipati, 2008; Goetz & Gupta, 1996; Kabeer, 2001; Rahman, 1999; Ramírez & Ruben, 2015) | Goetz and Gupta (1996) study microcredit projects, in Bangladesh, meant to facilitate women's income generation, and point out that women often lose control of their loans to male relatives. The authors conclude that this is due to "gender relations", "social attitudes", "sociocultural constraints" and "gender privilege", and advise donors to be more concerned with "the quality and meaning of women's participation" (1996, p. 62) in microcredit schemes. |
| Women's public participation and leadership | (Agarwal, 2001; De La Puente, 2011; McNulty, 2015; O'Reilly, 2004; Regmi & Fawcett, 1999; Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014) | De La Puente (2011) looks at women's community participation and leadership in Darfur's internally displaced person (IDP) camps, arguing that it is hampered by "dominant social and cultural norms", "traditional gender roles", "deeply entrenched gender attitudes", "beliefs" and "traditional patriarchal structures". She urges humanitarian agencies to recognise that women's positions can change in conflict-affected contexts, and encourages them "to support this process by challenging gender roles and functions" (De La Puente, 2011, p. 376). |
| Women's groups | (Leach & Sitaram, 2002) | Leach and Sitaram (2002) look at the failure of an NGO initiative that encouraged a women's group in South India to set up its own silk-reeling enterprise. They argue that the project failed for reasons including "social and cultural conventions regarding gender roles and expectations" and "traditional gender relations". They conclude that the NGO should have given "greater importance to raising awareness about gender relations, among the men as well as the women" (2002, p. 586). |
| Women's access to justice | (Hames, 2006) | Hames (2006) looks at the challenges black South African women face gaining access to justice, notwithstanding South Africa's progressive constitution and legislation on women's rights. She argues that access to justice is hampered by, "prevailing social norms", "customary practices", "customs", "traditions", "patriarchal family values", "stereotypical perceptions", "patriarchal culture" and a "gender-biased system". She argues for "systematically restructuring" the existing laws so that "substantive equity can take place" (2006, p. 1327). |

| Issue | Studies | Exemplar study |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Early and forced marriage | (Boyden et al., 2012; Callaghan, Gambo, & Fellin, 2015; Touray, 2006) | Boyden, Pankhurst and Tafere (2012) look at why early marriage persists in Ethiopia despite advocacy campaigns and legal sanctions against it. They argue that "cultural norms", "beliefs", "local understandings", "local meanings", "traditional values" and "cultural logics" favour early marriage despite changing attitudes in some parts of society, and conclude that, "globalised policies... designed without full consideration of local perceptions and contexts are unlikely to become effective as rapidly as intended" (2012, p. 519). |
| Women and conflict mitigation | (Ramnarain, 2015) | Ramnarain (2015) assesses a women's peacebuilding project in post-conflict Nepal. Acknowledging certain positive project effects, she points out that, in a context of "gendered roles", "deep-rooted social practices", "gender values and expectations", "structural inequalities" and "traditional patriarchal ascriptions of women as nurturers of community" (2015, p. 678) the initiative "tended to ghettoize women's concerns and roles in their communities, ultimately feminizing community peace work" (2015, p. 685). |
| Women and food security | (Neogy, 2010) | Neogy (2010) shows how initiatives to improve the nutrition of pregnant and nursing women in India, such as a weekly government food-provision scheme, often fail due to "social norms", "gender and household roles", "social practices", "attitudes and beliefs", "perceptions" and "values" which suggest that women should eat last and least. She argues for "a package of strategies, including home visits, setting up pregnant mothers' groups, community discussions, and involvement of the local development committees" to address the problem (2010, p. 485). |
| Women and agriculture | (Doss, 2001; Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010) | Doss (2001) investigates why many of the recommendations from agricultural research institutions have failed to influence the practices of female African farmers. She blames uneven access to agricultural inputs, as well as "norms", "gender roles and responsibilities" highly complex "gender dynamics", "gender patterns", "the gender divisions of labour", "perceptions", "social factors" and "traditional notions of appropriate crops for men and women" – although she points out that these can shift and change. She concludes that, "Many projects and interventions that were designed to benefit women have failed... in part, because they did not recognize the complexity of women's roles and responsibilities within households and communities" (2001, p. 2087). |
| Women's property rights | (Jackson, 2003; Jacobs, 2002; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 1997; Razavi, 2007) | Razavi (2007) looks at the global reform of land tenure institutions, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, and asks why women's formal right to land has not translated into female land ownership on a larger scale. She argues that it is not ignorance of the law, but "social norms and regulations", "women's role", "customary practices", "traditional institutions", "ideologies", "custom" and the "cultural context" which prevent women from accessing land. |

2.2.2 Literature review findings

The empirical studies presented in Table 3 broadly conclude that local cultural context has been insufficiently understood by the international development community, and that this has hampered the achievement of gender and development goals; however, there is a difference in the conclusions drawn by studies that take a *mainstream* perspective on gender and development, and studies that take a *critical* perspective on gender and development.

A mainstream perspective on gender and development suggests that traditional cultures should move in a linear fashion towards modernity, and that tradition often stands in the way of development progress. Nussbaum's writings, for example, exemplify this view. She argues:

[T]hroughout the world, cultural traditions pose obstacles to women's health and flourishing. Depressingly many traditions have portrayed women as less important than men, less deserving of basic life support, or of fundamental rights that are strongly correlated with quality of life, such as the right to work and the right to political participation... Sometimes... these traditions are resisted... Sometimes, on the other hand, they have become so deeply internalized that they seem to record what is 'right' and 'natural', and women themselves frequently come to endorse their own second-class status. (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 1)

According to the mainstream perspective, traditions must be overcome for development to be successful. Of the empirical studies presented in Table 3, most adopt a mainstream perspective (e.g. Begum, 2015; Dräbel & Kueil, 2014; Fonjong, 2001; Glick, 2008; Haylock et al., 2016; Kamal, 2007; Moghadam, 1994; Read-Hamilton & Marsh, 2016; Sawade, 2014; Sialubanje et al., 2015). For example, Sawade, in discussing various gender equality and women's empowerment projects implemented by Oxfam, says:

Quality education for all, gender justice, and SRHR [sexual and reproductive health rights] can all be difficult topics to broach.... [M]any of the barriers to

achieving change are linked to norms and traditional patriarchal values of the society.... (2014, p. 129)

She concludes that, to make progress, “cultural taboos need to be addressed and not ignored” (2014, p. 139). Sialubanje and colleagues similarly conclude that “socio-cultural beliefs recognising the husband as the head of the household” (2015, p. 10) prevent Zambian women from using maternity waiting homes, and maintain that “interventions need to focus on recognising and improving the low social status of women... to ensure decision-making autonomy...” (2015, p. 12). Kamal concludes that the “rules of the conservative system” and “male-centric culture” force female journalists in Afghanistan to “accede to male-centred norms” in their broadcasting, which they are “meant to challenge” (2007, p. 409), while Dræbel and Kueil point to South Sudanese women’s faith in “homemade remedies and concoctions, traditional healers’ cures, [and] magician’s rituals”, citing them as “cultural barriers” (2014, p. 317), which delay effective treatment of malaria. They propose that “the formal health system should aspire to address... cultural barriers...” (2014, p. 320). What these studies have in common is a view of tradition as an obstacle to the realisation of gender and development goals.

A critical perspective, on the other hand, questions the assumptions on which the mainstream perspective is based (Escobar, 1995; Mohanty, 1988; Wilkins, 2015). It acknowledges the complexity of social change and interrogates the ways in which power is produced and reproduced by the international development sector (Wilkins & Mody, 2001). Escobar, says, for example:

[In] mainstream development literature... there exists a veritable under-developed subjectivity endowed with features such as powerlessness, passivity, poverty, and ignorance... not infrequently hungry, illiterate, needy, and oppressed by its own stubbornness, lack of initiative, and traditions. (1995, p. 8)

Mohanty critiques representations of women in the international development community in this same vein, arguing:

This average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and her being “third world” (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.). This, I suggest, is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions. (1988, 56)

Critical scholars such as these criticise the mainstream perspective for “essentializing women in the South as tradition-bound victims of timeless, patriarchal cultures, and reproducing the colonial discourses...” (McEwan, 2001, p. 99). The few empirical studies in Table 3 that adopt a critical perspective (e.g. Campbell & Mannell, 2016; Müller, 2006; Muzyamba et al., 2015; Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014) often argue that what might be considered “traditional” should be better understood and appreciated; indeed, gender and development goals, or the means by which the international development community seeks to achieve them, may be inappropriate and need to be reconsidered. Muzyamba and colleagues, for example, question the appropriateness of rights-based approaches to HIV prevention among Zambian women, which encourage women to directly challenge the men in their lives, pointing out that Zambian women themselves feel such approaches conflict with “traditional values such as respect for elders and ‘harmonious’ marital relationships” (2015, p. 1). The authors argue against a “one-size-fits-all conceptualization of human rights” (2015, p. 1).

Although not well represented in the empirical literature, there is also a theoretical perspective, put forward by some critical scholars, that the very idea of a traditional-modern dichotomy should be rejected. Escobar, for example, maintains, “If we continue to speak of tradition and modernity, it is because we continually fall into the trap of not saying anything new...” (1995, p. 219). He rejects the dichotomy, saying, “[T]he Third World should in no way be seen as a reservoir of ‘traditions’” (1995, p. 215). Postcolonial feminist scholars, too, see the characterisation of women as “traditional” to be highly problematic (Amos & Parmar, 1984; Mama, 2001;

Mohanty, 1988). Mama, for example, questions, “dubiously defined nativist notions of custom and creed” (2001, p. 67).

The literature is fairly unified in its assertions, however, that local cultural contexts must be understood to a far greater extent than they have hitherto been. We will now turn to the various ways in which local cultural context has been conceptualised in the gender and development literature.

2.3 Current ways of studying local cultural context and their limitations

In order to evaluate current conceptualisations of local cultural context in the gender and development literature, we must have a sense of what a thorough understanding of local cultural context would look like. Bruner has explained that understanding cultural context is fundamentally about understanding two things: people’s *ways of life* and their *meanings* (1990). He maintains, firstly that, “ways of life in their complex interaction constitute a culture” (Bruner, 1990, p. 29), and, secondly, that, “Our culturally adapted way of life depends on shared meanings...” (Bruner, 1990, p. 13), which he describes as:

the meanings that human beings [create] out of their encounters with the world... the symbolic activities that human beings [employ] in constructing and in making sense not only of the world, but of themselves. (Bruner, 1990, p. 3)

Bruner points out that people and cultures are constantly engaged in the construction of meaning, continually trying to interpret and make sense of the world and themselves. Moreover, the meanings of a culture are largely shared: “We live publicly by public meanings and by shared procedures of interpretation and negotiation” (Bruner, 1990, p. 13). A comprehensive understanding of local cultural context, therefore, requires appreciation of both people’s ways of life and their collectively shared meanings.

Within the gender and development literature, local cultural context has been examined through a variety of theoretical and operational lenses. The five most common lenses used to examine local cultural context are *practices*, *social norms*, *gender roles*, *beliefs* and *attitudes*. Within the literature, the precise meanings of these concepts are often taken for granted and, therefore, rarely defined. In discussing each of the five lenses, or concepts, I will, therefore, pay particular attention to the ways in which they are *used* and will draw primarily on social psychological definitions. There are two limitations to current concepts. First, none of them is particularly well suited to describing both ways of life and their meanings – a property which I call *comprehensiveness*, and second, none of them addresses *temporality* particularly well. In section 2.4, I introduce a concept that does both – *public narratives*.

2.3.1 Comprehensiveness

Among currently used concepts, the first three – practices, social norms and gender roles – are somewhat better theoretically suited to describing *ways of life*, while the latter two – beliefs and attitudes – are somewhat better theoretically suited to examining the *meanings* given to different ways of life; however, none of these concepts is particularly well-suited to comprehensively explaining *both* ways of life *and* their meanings. This argument is summarised in Table 4.

Practices in the gender and development literature appear to be synonymous with behaviours, which in turn can be understood as “the overt actions of... individual[s]” (Albarracín, Zanna, Johnson, & Kumkale, 2005, p. 3). Unlike in the anthropological literature, where the study of practice is deeply concerned with the *significance* of practice, and *explanations* for practice (Bourdieu & Nice, 1977; Geertz, 1973), in the gender and development literature (and, indeed, the development literature more broadly) *practice* appears to be a term primarily used to describe what people do and is often measured using Knowledge, Attitude and Practice, or KAP, surveys (Westoff, 1988). Practice can describe behaviours that the international development

community would like people to adopt – such as the use of modern contraceptives (Chi et al., 2015) – and behaviours it would like them to eliminate – such as early marriage (Boyden et al., 2012). Many of the studies in Table 3 use the concept of practice to describe aspects of local cultural context that constitute barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals (Begum, 2015; Callaghan et al., 2015; Fonjong, 2001; Hames, 2006; Haylock et al., 2016; McNulty, 2015; Moghadam, 1994; Neogy, 2010; Ramnarain, 2015; Razavi, 2007; Read-Hamilton & Marsh, 2016; Sawade, 2014). For example, Neogy (2010) highlights certain practices which can lead to malnutrition in Indian women, such as the practice of women eating less than men, and the practice of women eating leftovers after others in the family have eaten; however, while this gives us some insight into ways of life, it does not necessarily give us insight into their meanings. It does not tell us *why* women eat last and least. Understanding the meanings of such practices, and how they fit into larger cultural constellations of meaning, could be important in combatting problems like female malnutrition.

Similarly, *social norms* are a popular lens through which to study local cultural context in the gender and development literature. They refer to “customary or ideal forms of behavior to which individuals in a group try to conform” (Burke & Young, 2011, p. 311). Many of the studies in Table 3 also use this concept to describe aspects of local cultural context that impede the achievement of gender and development goals (Boyden et al., 2012; De La Puente, 2011; Doss, 2001; Hames, 2006; Müller, 2006; Neogy, 2010; Razavi, 2007; Read-Hamilton & Marsh, 2016; Sawade, 2014; Sialubanje et al., 2015; Upton, 2010). Social norms, too, are fundamentally about behaviours, and are, therefore, also relatively useful tools to describe ways of life. They tell us what people typically *do* in a given society (descriptive norms), and what behaviours are typically *sanctioned* in a given society (injunctive norms) (Reno, Cialdini, & Kallgren, 1993). In introducing a normative element, they go slightly beyond the descriptive. The social norms concept, however, does not go deeply into questions of meaning. It simply tells us that certain behaviours are sanctioned and others are not.

Understanding the social norms of a group may tell us what behaviours that group adopts or condones, but it doesn't tell us *why*. It doesn't indicate what purpose social norms serve or how they fit into the wider systems of meaning in a given culture. For example, Haylock and colleagues discuss at length how violence against women endures in different cultures because it is an accepted norm (2016). They talk about the importance of changing this norm but offer little insight into what the norm *means* to people, or why they might accept it. Given how intractable this norm has proven (Haylock et al., 2016), understanding the meaning behind the norm, and how it fits into larger systems of meaning, might yield useful information with which to combat violence against women.

Another commonly used concept to study local cultural context in the gender and development literature is the concept of *gender roles*. Again, many of the studies in Table 3 use this concept to describe features of local cultural context that impede the achievement of gender and development goals (De La Puente, 2011; Doss, 2001; Müller, 2006; Muzyamba et al., 2015; Neogy, 2010; Ramnarain, 2015; Read-Hamilton & Marsh, 2016). Gender roles are “normative expectations about behaviour that is appropriate to women and men” (Eagly, 1997, p. 1318) and they are “based on societal evaluations of behaviors as either masculine or feminine” (Basow & Rubin, 1999, p. 26). They have a descriptive aspect, in that they tell people what is typical for their sex, and a prescriptive aspect, in that they tell people what is considered admirable for their sex (Eagly, 2009). This, effectively, makes them like *bundles* of social norms. As bundles of social norms, gender roles start to provide a fuller description of ways of life in a given cultural context, and their prescriptive aspect again starts to address questions of meaning – indeed, they are probably the most comprehensive of the five terms commonly used; however, the same critique that can be applied to social norms applies here. Gender roles do not, in and of themselves, give particularly profound insight into the meanings behind different gendered ways of life. They simply tell us that certain behaviours are sanctioned and others are not, based on sex difference. Leach and Sitaram, for example, attribute the failure of a microfinance

project in India to “the extreme difficulty of surmounting social and cultural conventions regarding gender roles” (2002, p. 585), pointing specifically to men’s reluctance to accept women as owners of silk-reeling units. This does not, in and of itself, give us particularly deep insight into why the microfinance project failed, however. To understand that, we would need to understand more about what the gender roles around the ownership of silk-reeling units *meant*, and how people made sense of them, in the context of wider systems of meaning related to gender.

Having shown how *practices*, *social norms* and *gender roles* are well suited to describing ways of life, but not necessarily as well suited to explaining their meanings, I will now show how *beliefs* and *attitudes* are well suited to providing insight into the processes of meaning-making and interpretation that justify certain ways of life, but not necessarily as well suited to describing those ways of life.

Beliefs pertain directly to knowledge. Specifically, they are “estimates of the likelihood that the knowledge one has... is correct” (Wyer & Albarracin, 2005, p. 273). In other words, beliefs reflect the degree of certainty we have about the things we know, or believe, to be true. What makes beliefs slightly different from knowledge is that they can vary in strength – we are absolutely certain of some things, and we may be less certain of other things (Wyer & Albarracin, 2005). Like the other concepts hitherto discussed, the gender and development literature draws on the concept of beliefs to explain aspects of local cultural context that present barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals (Boyden et al., 2012; De La Puente, 2011; Müller, 2006; Muzyamba et al., 2015; Neogy, 2010; Read-Hamilton & Marsh, 2016; Sawade, 2014; Upton, 2010). Müller, for example, talks about how “beliefs and other cultural expectations are... likely to determine the course of girls’ future lives [in Eritrea]” (2006, p. 355), and gives the examples of “beliefs about women’s shyness and the superior capabilities of men” (2006, p. 369). Although this starts to suggest how people might *make sense* of certain ways of life that are considered acceptable

for women in the Eritrean context, it does not give much sense of the *shape* of those ways of life or what they might actually look like.

Attitudes are similarly used with regularity in the gender and development literature. Definitions of ‘attitude’ abound, but Eagly and Chaiken offer what some have argued is the most common contemporary definition (Albarracín et al., 2005); they define an attitude as, “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour” (1993, p. 1, emphasis in original). Central to this definition is the idea of *evaluation*. Objects, events and people are judged “favourable or unfavourable, likeable or unlikeable, good or bad” (Albarracín et al., 2005, p. 3). Once again, many studies cite attitudes as relevant features of local cultural context which hamper the achievement of gender and development goals (De La Puente, 2011; Goetz & Gupta, 1996; Müller, 2006; Neogy, 2010; Sawade, 2014). Goetz and Gupta, for example, highlight “social attitudes toward women’s right of ownership over resources” (1996, p. 61) as one of the biggest challenges facing micro-credit projects in Bangladesh. This starts to address questions of meaning – in that it begins to illuminate *why* women might not own resources in the Bangladeshi context – but it doesn’t actually provide a picture of the extent to which women *do* own resources. An attitude is insufficient to tell us about ways of life, because what people *do* cannot be directly inferred from their attitudes (LaPiere, 1934; Wicker, 1969).

Perhaps because of the shortcomings of each of the aforementioned terms in isolation, many of the studies included in the literature review, summarised in Table 3, use multiple terms simultaneously to describe local cultural context. They do this with varying degrees of success. Some manage to present fairly comprehensive pictures of people’s ways of life and their meanings in different cultural contexts, while others leave parts of the picture obscure. I argue, in section 2.4, that a more coherent theoretical approach to the study of local cultural context, which has comprehensiveness built-in, is the concept of *public narrative*. However, before I

turn to this argument, I will address one more shortcoming of current approaches: their failure to address temporality.

Table 4: Theoretical and operational lenses currently used to examine local cultural context in the gender and development literature

| LENS | SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFINITION | THEORETICAL STRENGTH | | EXAMPLE IN THE GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT LITERATURE |
|--------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| | | <i>Describing Ways of life</i> | <i>Explaining Meaning</i> | |
| Practices | Behaviours; “the overt actions of... individual[s]” (Albarracín et al., 2005, p. 3) | ✓ | | (Neogy, 2010) |
| Social norms | “Customary or ideal forms of behaviour to which individuals in a group try to conform” (Burke & Young, 2011, p. 311) | ✓ | (✓) | (Haylock et al., 2016) |
| Gender roles | “Normative expectations about behaviour that is appropriate to women and men” (Eagly, 1997, p. 1381) | ✓ | (✓) | (Leach & Sitaram, 2002) |
| Beliefs | “Estimates of the likelihood that the knowledge one has... is correct” (Wyer & Albarracín, 2005, p. 273) | | ✓ | (Müller, 2006) |
| Attitudes | “A psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1) | | ✓ | (Goetz & Gupta, 1996) |

2.3.2 Temporality

A second limitation of current approaches to the study of local cultural context in the gender and development literature is their lack of attention to time and change. People experience and live their lives through time; however, many of the concepts used in the gender and development literature are static. Unless examined over a period of time (which they rarely are), these concepts reflect the situation at only one time point, so a central dimension of local cultural context is obscured.

That is not to say that current studies of local cultural context in the gender and development literature do not acknowledge the possibility of change over time. In her article on women's community participation and leadership in Darfur's IDP camps, for example, De La Puente points out that, "crises [like Darfur] offer opportunities for marginalized groups within society to adopt new roles and challenge stereotypes" (2011, p. 367). Similarly, Doss, in her article on African women and their adoption of agricultural technology argues:

...gender roles and responsibilities are dynamic. In particular, they change with new economic circumstances. Thus, it is difficult to tell a priori what the effects of a particular program will be on a group of people.... (2001, p. 2076)

However, despite acknowledging that the current constructs used to describe local cultural context can change over time, few studies examine this empirically.

In ignoring temporality, there is a risk of obscuring the nuance and complexity of people's individual lives and experiences. As Seckinelgin has pointed out, "people's voices and the complexities of their lives [can] disappear from the discussions and concerns of... policy makers and experts" (Seckinelgin, 2012, p. 7). He maintains that, "This situation misses the point that... [people's] problems and experiences... are approached in the wholeness of their lives in a particular socio-cultural and political context" (2012, p. 8). This suggests there may be advantages to considering the *temporal* dimension of local cultural context, which takes the life trajectories and circumstances of individuals into account.

Given general agreement about the imperative to understand local cultural context better and to consider it more carefully in the design and implementation of policies and programmes with gender and development goals, through which theoretical and operational lens, then, should local cultural context be conceptualised and studied? This thesis argues that a concept which comprehensively describes both *ways of life* and their *meanings*, and which takes *temporality* into account, is the concept of

public narrative. I will now outline the theoretical underpinnings of a public narrative approach.

2.4 Narrative

Narratives fundamentally describe ways of life and explain their meanings. They are, arguably, the primary way in which people make sense of themselves, the social world and their place within the social world (Bruner, 1990). According to Hardy, “We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative” (Hardy, 1968 p. 5 cited in Laszlo, 2014, p. 3). People tell themselves, and others, stories about themselves in their social context, which help them to understand – and indeed, to construct – who they are and to frame their possibilities for action (Bruner, 2003). As such, a narrative approach provides a more productive starting point from which to understand local cultural context than practices, social norms, gender roles, beliefs or attitudes.

2.4.1 Definition of narrative

Narrative is defined, for the purpose of this thesis, as a temporally ordered sequence with a plot – a definition that requires at least two events, in a sequence that is in some way meaningful. As we can see from this definition, one of narrative’s defining features is *temporality*. Time – or temporal sequence – is central to most definitions of narrative (Andrews, 2007; Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013; Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004; Labov, 1972; Laszlo, 2014; McAdams, 2001; Murray, 2003; Rappaport, 2000; Ricoeur, 1984; Sarbin, 1986). Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou point out that, “narrative is almost always said to be about time – not just succession in time, but change through time” (2013, p. 406). Lazlo, for example, defines narrative as “Accounts of events, which involve some temporal and/or causal coherence... [and which require] some goal-directed action of living or personified actors taking place in time” (2014, p. 3).

Temporal sequence, moreover, gains its meaning through implied causation, linking one event to the next (Murray, 2003; Squire et al., 2013). Implied causation is what makes narratives different from annals, or chronological lists of events (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004; Somers, 1994; White, 1984), such as:

- 1972 Addis Ababa Peace Agreement signed between Sudanese government and the Anya Nya movement of the South, establishing self-governance in South Sudan.
- 1978 Oil discovered in South Sudan.
- 1983 Second civil war begins. (Bubenzer & Stern, 2012, p. xxx)

Events in such a list, which follow each other but have no explicit relationship to one another, are generally not characterised as narrative (Squire et al., 2013, p. 406). In narrative, an event is inferred to have occurred because of the events preceding it. Interestingly, however, humans so are predisposed to narrative thinking, that, as Bruner (2004) and Sarbin (1986) point out, we often see narrative in chronology. For example, looking at the list above we might infer that the discovery of oil in South Sudan in 1978 in some way contributed to the start of the second civil war. This kind of causal inference starts to turn chronology into a story. It is what gives narrative its meaning, or *plot*.

Plot is the second structural feature central to the definition of narrative (Bruner, 1986; McAdams, 2001; Murray, 2003; Sarbin, 1986; Somers, 1994). The plot is “how and in what order the reader [or listener] becomes aware of what happened” (Bruner, 1986, p. 19). The process of constructing the plot is called *emplotment*. Emplotment connects narrative events together and gives them significance, explaining “why a narrative has the story line it does” (Somers, 1994, p. 616). Somers describes plot as “the logic or syntax of narrative” (1994, p. 67). It is because narratives have plots that they are so well suited to examining the meaning behind different ways of life in local cultural contexts. Meaning is in their makeup; a story inherently explains what it means.

2.4.2 Public narratives

Narratives exist at different levels of analysis (Rappaport, 1995). *Personal narratives*, or personal stories, are “an individual's... social communication of events that are unique to that person” (Rappaport, 1995, p. 803). Examples include one’s own life story, or anecdotes from one’s own life (Rappaport, 1995). *Public narratives*, on the other hand – which are the central theoretical and operational lens for this thesis – are “those narratives attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual” (Somers, 1994, p. 619). Such narratives exist at a meta-level, and are also referred to as canonical narratives (Bruner, 1986), cultural narratives (Crossley, 2000; Squire et al., 2013) and metanarratives (Andrews, 2007; Plummer, 2007). Some scholars make distinctions between different kinds of public narratives, such as dominant cultural narratives and community narratives (Rappaport, 2000), while other scholars use terms like public narrative, social narrative and cultural narrative interchangeably (Somers, 1994). Examples include “American social mobility,” “the freeborn Englishman” and “the working-class hero” (Somers, 1994, p. 619).

Public narratives are important because they “model characteristic intentions, goals and values of a group sharing a culture” (Brockmeier, Wang and Olson, 2002 cited in Laszlo, 2014, p. 4). They also provide a repertoire of roles, with indications about which are desirable and which are undesirable:

[They] define the range of canonical characters, the settings in which they operate, the actions that are permissible and comprehensible. And thereby they provide, so to speak, a map of possible roles and of possible worlds in which action, thought and self-definition are permissible (or desirable). (Bruner, 1986, p. 66)

Additionally, they “[reiterate] the norms of the society” (Bruner, 1990, p. 52). Indeed, I argue that public narratives contain within them most of the lenses currently used to study local cultural context in the gender and development literature – including practices, social norms, gender roles, beliefs and attitudes. Public narratives

integrate these concepts, and go beyond them, adding temporality. As Rappaport explains:

Community narratives are the text and subtext of culture and context. Understanding community narratives is a way to understand culture and context and its profound effects on individual lives. (2000, p. 6)

2.4.3 Public narratives as the aggregate of many stories

How are public narratives to be identified and described? Some scholars, as one might expect, describe public narratives as stories. Hammack, for example, writes the narrative of Israel as a story which begins: “In 1948, a nation emerged from the ashes of the Holocaust. The sandy shores, fertile soil, and mountainous beauty of their original homeland once again welcomed them...” (Hammack, 2008, p. 222). Other scholars use shorthand to describe public narratives, referring to what they are about or what *meanings* they convey. For example, Phoenix identifies “it is worth standing up for your convictions,” and, “racism is illegitimate and to be opposed,” as narratives, even though these are actually narrative meanings (Phoenix, 2013, p. 1971).

Ultimately, public narratives seem to be most commonly referred to by the names of the *roles* they outline. This is not surprising, as roles are one of the many constructs narratives contain. As we have seen, Somers’ examples of public narratives include “the freeborn Englishman” and “the working-class hero” (1994, p. 619), while Bruner’s examples of canonical narratives include “heroes, Marthas, [and] tricksters” (2004, p. 694), and Rappaport’s examples of cultural narratives include “welfare mother, college student, [and] housing project resident” (2000, p. 4). As Rappaport explains, such roles often become shorthand for the stories that lie behind them.

One of the reasons why public narratives are sometimes not expressed *as stories* is the absence of authoritative texts. Unless scholars have an authoritative text, such as the Bible (see Tribble, 1984) or “The Big Book,” which is the primary text of Alcoholics

Anonymous (see Humphreys, 2000), there is usually no single, formal version of a public narrative that can be referenced.

I argue that, in many cases, a public narrative is actually the aggregate of many stories – all of the stories about a particular event that appear in the media, for example, or all of the stories that get told about a certain kind person. This is consistent with Bruner’s claim that all individual stories are actually “tokens of broader types” (1991, p. 6). A good example of this conceptualisation in action is Salzer’s study of what he calls the “societal-level narratives” of housing project residents (1998). By asking 100 people who did not live in housing projects to write a short story about a housing project resident named Ann, and by analysing the stories thematically, Salzer was able to construct a standard public narrative of a housing project resident:

Ann... always dreamed about getting out of public housing. She has lived in public housing all her life.... [The place where she lives] is poorly maintained and crime-ridden. While in high school, Ann met a nice guy and thought she was in love. She got pregnant by him and dropped out of high school. This guy left her after the child was born. Ann got pregnant again and had a second child. Ann wanted to go to college, but can’t because she lacks the funds to pay for it. Ann has a hard time finding work because of her lack of education and day care resources for her children. She is able to find work at a fast food restaurant. There is a lot of death in Ann’s life. Ann is depressed. She will never make it out.... (Salzer, 1998)

As Salzer explains, this narrative was not related by a single individual. It was his aggregation of the accounts of many individuals, and he presents it with the caveat that, “no one story can adequately represent the combination of themes present in the [individual] stories”. Thus, when one talks about public narratives, one must recognise that, except in rare cases, no single telling will fully encapsulate all of the variants that can be told. This does not mean that public narratives are not narratives – they have temporal sequence and plot – but it does mean that they are sometimes spoken about, or invoked, non-narratively, with reference to characters, themes and meanings.

2.4.4 The relationship between public and personal narratives

Treating public narratives as the aggregate of many stories posits a complex relationship between personal and public narratives, in which both are mutually constitutive. That is, public narratives may be powerful social forces that shape and influence the construction of personal narratives, but public narratives are, in turn, a cumulative manifestation of many personal narratives.

Many scholars highlight the influence of public narratives on personal narratives, showing how people construct and reconstruct their lives and life stories in ways that are line with those public narratives that are socially sanctioned (discussed further in section 2.4.5). However, acknowledging that public narratives are the aggregate of many stories means acknowledging that, likewise, “personal narratives can disrupt dominant discourses in a society, thereby destabilizing master narratives of identity” (Hammack, 2008, p. 237). As Rappaport explains, while public narratives may shape personal life stories, “This process is reciprocal, such that many individuals, in turn, create, change, and sustain the group narrative (Rappaport, 1995, p.796). He expounds:

The narrative approach spans levels of analysis. It explicitly recognizes that communities, organizations, and individual people have stories, and that there is a mutual influence process between these community, organizational, and personal stories. (Rappaport, 1995, p.796)

This means that, theoretically, change can come about when women reconstitute their personal stories, because these can reconfigure public narratives (Andrews, 2007; Hammack, 2008; Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995). As such, I do not postulate any simplistic causal link between the public and the personal dimensions of narrative. Rather, public narratives form an ever-shifting symbolic backdrop against which women construct and reconstruct their lives and life stories in light of the demands placed upon them by the contexts they move through, and also in light of their individual life circumstances, histories and aspirations.

2.4.5 Public narratives as normative

One of the reasons public narratives are important is that they *shape* people's personal narratives and aspirations (Andrews, 2007; Bruner, 2003, 2004; Crossley, 2000; Hammack, 2008; Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Murray, 2003; Phoenix, 2013; Plummer, 2007; Rappaport, 2000; Riessman, 2008; Somers, 1994). As Bruner explains, "We gain the self-told narratives that make and remake our selves from the culture in which we live" (Bruner, 2003, p. 87), while, as Hammack puts it, "The stories of a culture... become the stories of an individual as he or she constructs his or her own personal narrative" (2008, p. 233). Somers maintains that, "All of us come to be who are we are (however ephemeral, multiple, and changing) by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives rarely of our own making" (Somers, 1994, p. 606). Rappaport agrees:

Our personal life stories, idiosyncratic though they may be, are not formed whole cloth out of our own individual choices. Personal life stories are negotiated in the context of narratives told by the communities in which we live. (2000, p. 6)

Public narratives, therefore, provide the backdrop for life stories. They "provide answers to the basic questions of human identity such as... "How should I live my life?" (Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995, p. 216). This is one of the things that makes them well suited to understanding how gender and development goals – which require women to live certain kinds of lives – are received and interpreted.

Indeed, like social norms and gender roles, public narratives can usually be characterised as normative. They explain, "how life ought to be lived in [a] culture" (Phoenix, 2013, p. 1903), or, as Bruner puts it, "what constitutes the ordinary and canonical life" (1990, p. 96). They elucidate for us "good" and "bad" ways of being. Crossley, summarising Taylor (1989), explains:

One of our basic aspirations is the need to feel connected with what we see as 'good' or of crucial importance to us and our community. We have certain

fundamental values which lead us to basic questions such as ‘what kind of life is worth living?’.... A vision of ‘the good’ becomes available for people in any given culture... Stories have a tremendous force in this process insofar as they have the capacity to confer meaning and substance on people’s lives, to subtly influence their progression and orientation towards a particular ‘good’. (Crossley, 2000, p. 16)

Understanding where public narratives stand in relation to “the good” is, therefore, central to understanding their meaning. That is not to say that all public narratives in a given culture present the same vision of “good”. According to Bruner, “To be in a viable culture is to be bound in a set of connecting stories, connecting *even though the stories may not represent consensus*” (italics added) (Bruner, 1990, p. 96). Indeed, Bruner maintains, “culture... is a dialectic, replete with alternative narratives about what self is or might be” (2003, p. 87).

Rappaport provides a concrete example of alternative public narratives (2000). They are public narratives of people with mental illness in the United States. In what he calls, “the professional community narrative”, the good life is taken to be one in which a person with mental illness is able to live on his or her own. As Rappaport says, the “emphasis on a lonely independence... seems to be the most cherished of our professional ideals for the good life” (2000, p. 13). On the other hand, an alternative public narrative, advocated by the GROW organisation, cherishes communal living, maintaining that the good life for a person with mental illness is one in which he or she is, “part of a ‘caring and sharing community,’ in which each person is both giver and receiver of help” (Rappaport, 2000, p. 14). This shows how public narratives, even those about the same kinds of people, can be in tension with one another.

Such tensions are important, because stories in tension can offer competing visions of what to do. Should a mentally ill person live alone or in a group setting? Public narratives ultimately matter because they impels us to act. As Somers puts it:

Research is showing us that stories guide action... that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives. (Somers, 1994, p. 614)

Again, this is what makes public narratives suitable for understanding how gender and development goals are received and interpreted. Gender and development goals prefer women to act in particular ways, which may or may not be consistent with the public narratives constituting women's local cultural contexts.

2.4.6 Public narratives as resources

That is not to say that public narratives are only constraining. Although certain scholars choose to emphasise how public narratives guide and inhibit us (Phoenix, 2013; Somers, 1994), other scholars stress people's agency, and the ways in which they use public narratives as resources (Bruner, 2004; Crossley, 2000; Hammack, 2008; Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 2000). Mankowski and Rappaport say, for example, that, "individuals create, enact, and maintain or change their personal identity through the *appropriation...* of [public] narratives into their own story" (*italics mine*) (1995, p. 215). This is akin to recognising that local cultural context constrains us, on the one hand, and provides us with different tools and resources, on the other hand, to pursue our life goals.

Most narrative scholars recognise that both positions are true, that we both use and are shaped by public narratives (Bruner, 2003; Crossley, 2000; Markus & Nurius, 1986; McAdams, 2001; Rappaport, 2000; Somers, 1994). As McAdams puts it, "Life stories are... coauthored by the person himself or herself and the cultural context within which that person's life is embedded and given meaning" (2001, p. 101). Markus and Nurius similarly say:

An individual is free to create any variety of possible selves, yet the pool of possible selves derives from the... individual's particular sociocultural and historical context.... (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954)

In line with such thinking, this thesis takes the position that the public narratives constituting a given local cultural context both limit possibilities for action, and provide *symbolic resources* for people as they go about their daily lives.

Having reviewed the theoretical underpinnings of a public narrative approach, this thesis will now turn back to the gender and development literature to briefly examine whether, and how, the concept of narrative has appeared in the literature.

2.4.7 Public narratives in the gender and development literature

Although no one appears to have taken a public narrative approach to local cultural context in the gender and development literature thus far, the term narrative does occasionally appear in the literature. Where it appears, it appears in three ways: as a way to interrogate gender and development itself, as a methodology and as a way to examine narrative texts.

First, there is a body of critical work which looks at development *as narrative*, or looks at *gender narratives* within development (Cornwall, Harrison, & Whitehead, 2007; Escobar, 1995; Maes, Closser, Vorel, & Tesfaye, 2015; Wilkins, 2015; Woodford-Berger, 2004). For example, Cornwall and colleagues (2007) discuss “gender myths and feminist fables” guiding gender and development goals and practices – such as the “myth” that women’s presence in politics will transform politics because women are less corrupt than men, or the “myth” that involving women in environmental conservation will lead to better outcomes because women are somehow closer to nature. Such work looks at the culture of development and is critical of the narratives that underpin certain gender and development goals. This is valuable work, but it is focused on the narratives of actors in the international development space, such as bilateral and multilateral donors, philanthropic foundations and international NGOs, rather than the narratives of local cultural contexts – although, as we shall see in the empirical chapters, there is evidence that these kinds of narratives diffuse into local cultural contexts.

Second, there are studies that use narratives purely as a methodology, collecting data in story form but not drawing on public narrative as a *theory*, in the way that it has been outlined in sections 2.4.2 to 2.4.6, and often not presenting the data in story form (Boonzaier & Schalkwyk, 2011; Kabeer, 2011; McKay, 2004; Ramnarain, 2015; Upton, 2010). For example, Upton (2010) explains that she has collected stories to understand issues around fatness and fertility in relation to HIV/AIDS in Botswana, but she does not analyse the data to draw out public narratives or, indeed, present the data in story form. There is nothing inherently problematic about this – narrative is simply a description of the form in which the data was collected.

Finally, there are a handful of studies that look at different narrative texts and analyse them to extract meaningful insights about local cultural context. These studies, perhaps, come closest to studying public narratives – even though they do not use the term. However, they are few and far between and do not exist in the absence of texts. Jassal (2003), for example, looks at women's songs of the millstone in the Bhojpuri-speaking region of India, analysing the narratives in these songs to see what they reveal about gender roles and societal expectations. Similarly, Jansen and Roquas (2002) look at narratives of the Faustian bargain, or devil's pact, in Central and South America, to understand whether these narratives are about rapidly increasing gaps between rich and poor, or the inability of men to control the sexuality of women. While these studies, do, in a sense, examine public narratives in text, in many places cultural context goes far beyond what information from such sources might yield. The approach that I will use in this thesis – deriving public narratives by aggregating many different stories to capture the local cultural context – has not, to my knowledge, been used yet in the gender and development literature.

2.5 Media

2.5.1 Media theory

There is another commonly used source for identifying public narratives, and that is media. Media is often considered to be the primary source for scholars interested in studying the public narratives of a society. For example, Rappaport describes public narratives – or what he calls “dominant cultural narratives” – as “overlearned stories communicated through mass media or other large social and cultural institutions...” (2000, p. 4). However, for this thesis, the media is not taken as a *source* for the identification of public narratives. This is because such an approach would be inappropriate to the specific study context.

The three research locations in which fieldwork for this thesis was conducted had only had media access for a few years at the time of fieldwork. Moreover, each research location effectively had access to only one media source: a community radio station set up and funded by Internews, an NGO with an international development remit. It would, therefore, have been unwise to conclude that the content from community radio would *necessarily* contain all of the public narratives about women present in the local cultural context – many of which would have existed long before the radio was introduced. Rather, community radio was taken as a symbolic *site*, or meeting point, between gender and development goals and rural South Sudanese communities.

Notwithstanding the fact that public narratives, for this thesis, were not derived from media, the thesis recognises that media content contains narratives. Indeed, the media and communication literature has paid far more attention to narrative than the gender and development literature – primarily through the concept of framing. A media *frame* can be understood to be “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143). By this definition, framing is essentially the process of storytelling

journalists engage in when they report the news or construct programmes. Frames suggest to the audience how to think about different issues. Framing will be discussed in Chapter 6, which examines the media content on community radio.

Agenda setting will also be discussed in Chapter 6. The theory of agenda setting indicates that media has “the ability to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda... [so that] those issues emphasized in the news come to be regarded over time as important by members of the public” (Bryant & Oliver, 2009, pp. 1–2). In other words, while the media cannot necessarily persuade people what to think, it can persuade them what to think about, based on the volume of coverage (Cohen, 1963).

Finally, Chapter 7 will draw on theory from reception studies. Media scholars recognise that audiences are not passive recipients of media content but rather active participants in the construction of meaning (Hall, 1980; Livingstone, 1990). In their interpretation of media content, audiences have the opportunity to resist, renegotiate and reconstruct meaning. Indeed, Hall has explained that, although media content is usually encoded with a dominant, or intended meaning, audiences can take different decoding positions. They can take dominant positions, in which they take the intended meaning from the content “full and straight”; they can take negotiated positions, in which they read the intended meaning but interpret it with “a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements”, operating with “exceptions to the rule”; and they can take oppositional positions, in which they decode the content in a “*globally* contrary way” (1980, pp. 136–138).

Aspects of these theories will be used to analyse what happens at the two symbolic sites in this thesis where gender and development goals and public narratives meet: the content broadcast on NGO-funded community radio, and the community discussions engendered by the content broadcast on community radio.

2.5.2 Community radio

Because community radio constitutes one of the symbolic sites in this thesis where gender and development goals and rural South Sudanese communities meet, it is important to understand what community radio is. Community radio is typically defined as radio by the community and for the community – with “community” usually meaning a geographically bounded community but also sometimes a community of interest. Community radio stations are meant to be not-for-profit, located within the communities they serve and owned by the communities. Community members who have been trained in radio production generally produce the content, and audience participation is a key feature of the content (Myers, 2011).

In practice, international donors and NGOs are often instrumental in setting up and funding community radio stations. The relationship between funders and stations can vary. Some community stations are actually owned by NGOs, which means they fall short on one of the criteria for a community station (De Masi, 2011; Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2002). Other stations are owned by the community, but air NGO and government produced content, if it fits with their community service remit. In return, they receive financial or in kind contributions towards their operating costs (Myers, 2011). Internews, the NGO which set up and funds radio stations in the three communities where research for this thesis was conducted, owns the community stations but is in the process of setting up and transferring ownership to a local NGO called The Radio Community. African Media scholar Manyozo has been critical of the fact that NGOs “own” the sustainability of community stations (Manyozo, 2009). Nevertheless, the recent, rapid growth of community radio would not have been possible without donor and NGO support. Community radio has been growing rapidly, since the 1990s (Forde, Meadows, Ewart, & Foxwell-Norton, 2006). In Africa, where radio is still the dominant medium, preferred by two thirds of Africans (BBC, 2006), it grew by over 1000% between 2000 and 2006 (Myers, 2011).

Community radio is seen as a way to amplify the voices of the most marginalised – including women – enabling them to tackle community problems and defend their interests. However, it is also seen as a useful vehicle for external actors with development objectives (Myers, 2011). Community radio has been used to address a range of gender and development issues such as women's rights, women's health and forced marriage (Myers, 2011). It is, therefore, an ideal symbolic site to explore the meeting point between gender and development goals and the public narratives of the rural South Sudanese context.

Having outlined the key parts of the gender and development literature, narrative literature, and media literature upon which this thesis draws, I will now give an overview of certain aspects of the study methodology for this thesis.

Chapter 3: Overarching Methodology

This chapter gives a general overview of certain aspects of the study methodology for this thesis, including information about my positioning, access to the research locations, the research team, preparation and piloting, ethics, research participant perceptions, research locations, dates of fieldwork, recruitment of participants, translation and transcription, reflexivity and feedback on the research findings. The rest of the study methodology – including detailed information about data collection instruments, the profile of respondents and data analysis – has been included directly in the data chapters to which it is relevant. Strengths and limitations of the research have, equally, been included in Chapter 8. The crosscutting methodological issues are discussed here.

3.1 Positioning

Positioning oneself is an essential component of qualitative research and the first step towards reflexivity. Positioning involves being transparent about:

...personal characteristics, such as gender, race, affiliation, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, personal experiences, linguistic tradition, beliefs, biases, preferences, theoretical, political and ideological stances....
(Berger, 2015, p. 220)

I am a white, female, Canadian citizen, in my 30s, with a Canadian mother and a South African father. I have been a resident in the UK for most of the last decade, by virtue of an Irish passport obtained through my paternal grandmother. Although Canada is the country in which I have spent most of my life, I have also spent one year of my adult life in Kenya, one year in France, and one and a half years in Bangladesh. I am heterosexual and cisgender. English is my first language, although I also speak French. I self-identify as a feminist, and this thesis, like all feminist writing, is motivated by a belief in the equality of all people – regardless of gender or other characteristics.

I have been working as a researcher in the field of media and communication for development since 2004 – including for the BBC’s international NGO, BBC Media Action, and more recently as an independent consultant. I have conducted or managed research in over 20 developing countries, including 15 in sub-Saharan Africa, eight of which I have visited. When I travelled to South Sudan to conduct fieldwork for this thesis, in 2013, it was my first visit to the country.

3.2 Access

My access to the rural communities of South Sudan where I conducted fieldwork was facilitated through the NGO Internews, an American-based media development organisation whose stated mission is to “empower local media worldwide to give people the news and information they need, the ability to connect and the means to make their voices heard” (Internews, 2015). I found out, via a former BBC Media Action colleague, that Internews was planning to undertake qualitative fieldwork in 2013 in communities where a number of their community radio stations were located, in order to gather feedback about the stations. I contacted them and offered to undertake a volunteer consultancy, in which I would donate my time to help them with this research, if they would be willing to cover fieldwork costs, manage logistics and allow me the opportunity to include my own research questions. This arrangement was agreed. I had never worked for Internews before, and was not paid, although I subsequently consulted for them on a health journalism training project, which enabled me to travel back to the capitol, Juba, in 2016, to present findings from this thesis and to obtain feedback.

3.3 Research team

Internews had a research team in place, in Juba, when I arrived, consisting of one female American researcher and two male South Sudanese researchers. The American researcher and one of the South Sudanese researchers were responsible for

most logistics and collaborated with me to agree the research design. We hired a further three female South Sudanese research assistants, one male South Sudanese research assistant and two female translators, all of whom I worked with and trained at various stages of the research process. The research team is detailed in Table 5. One of the research assistants and both of the translators came from the communities where we conducted the research. The rest were living in Juba, when they were recruited. All spoke the relevant languages, in addition to English.

Table 5: Research Team

| Position | Sex | Location | Tribe | Education |
|----------------------|--------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| Research Assistant 1 | Male | Juba | Dinka | Post-secondary |
| Research Assistant 2 | Female | Juba | Dinka | Secondary |
| Research Assistant 3 | Female | Malualkon | Dinka | Secondary |
| Research Assistant 4 | Male | Juba | Nuer | Post-secondary |
| Research Assistant 5 | Female | Juba | Nuer | Post-secondary |
| Translator 1 | Female | Turalei | Dinka | Unknown |
| Translator 2 | Female | Leer | Nuer | Unknown |

3.4 Preparation and piloting

Research assistants were trained for one day on the fundamentals of qualitative research and the discussion guides. There were two discussion guides, a focus group guide (provided in Appendix 2) and an interview guide (provided in Appendix 3). I did a mock interview myself with each research assistant, in English, so that they understood the interview process. They then did a pilot interview and a pilot focus group, which were not included in the data corpus. During their interviews and focus groups, they translated questions verbally into the study languages, Dinka and Nuer. We decided not to produce written translations of the discussion guides in Dinka and Nuer, as the research assistants were more comfortable reading in English. However, they discussed translation issues together before and after piloting, noting down how they would translate certain words, and conferring with me, when they had questions. For example, one of the concluding interview questions asked respondents to state the “theme” of their life. “Theme” doesn’t

translate well into the study languages, so respondents were, in fact, asked to “name” their life. All of the pilots were recorded. After the research assistants had completed the pilots, we translated their recordings together, immediately afterwards, so that I could provide feedback to them, in order to improve their interviewing and focus group moderation skills.

The decision to have the research assistants conduct the interviews and focus groups without me was reached by piloting three different methods. In the first instance, I conducted an interview and focus group myself, with simultaneous translation provided through a translator. In the second instance, a South Sudanese member of the research team conducted an interview and a focus group, while I observed off to one side, with another member of the research team quietly providing simultaneous translation. In the third instance, members of the research team conducted an interview and a focus group, when I was not present. Data from all three pilots was translated and transcribed, and I concluded that the third method yielded the richest data. This conclusion was supported by the South Sudanese researchers themselves, who explained that my presence during interviews and focus groups was problematic; it either made participants shy, or caused them to list, in detail, their material needs, rather than answering the questions, in the hopes that I – a *khawaja* (white foreigner) and representative of an NGO – would assist them.

3.5 Ethics

Research participants were told that the purpose of the study was to find out about the stories told about women, and by women, in South Sudan, as well as to find out about how well the community radio station served the community. They were told that the study was being conducted on my behalf – a doctoral student at the London School of Economics – and on behalf of the NGO Internews, which supported their local community radio station. They were told that there would be no direct benefit to them from participating in the research but that the research was likely to help their community radio station make better programmes for people like them and for

their community. They were also told that the research would be published in a doctoral thesis and subsequent academic publications.

In advance of their participation, they were told what to expect from the interview or focus group and informed of the approximate amount of time it would take. They were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. It was further made clear that they did not have to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable answering and that everything they said would be treated with confidentiality – nothing would be published with their name, and nothing would be broadcast on the radio. They were then invited to ask any questions they wished – an invitation which was repeated again at the end of the interview or focus group. All of this was detailed in a written consent form, which was explained to them verbally, point by point, in their local language, and which they were then asked to sign. The consent form was based on the World Health Organisation informed consent template for qualitative studies (WHO, 2013a), and it adhered to the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines (British Psychological Society, 2013).

Because there was a possibility that some research participants might have had traumatic life experiences, and because they were being asked to talk about their lives, in each location I made efforts to secure the name and contact information of a local NGO that might be able to provide support. In most cases the support available was extremely limited – for example, one NGO was able to provide support only to survivors of sexual violence. Nevertheless, the information was collected and provided to research participants. Research participants were also invited to contact me, or the American researcher directly, at any time after their participation in the research, although no one did so. The study design was approved by the London School of Economics Research Ethics Committee.

3.6 Research participant perceptions

Despite being given all of the above information, research participants sometimes appeared to believe that they might derive personal benefit from participating in the research. While they appeared to have a good rapport with the research assistants, they generally viewed the research assistants as more educated than themselves – which the research assistants typically were. For example, one focus group participant remarked, “for us right now we don’t know anything. If we are told to read like the way you two [the research assistants] are doing, I don’t know whether we will be able to do it” (Group 1, Female, 16-25, L42-43). This perception led research participants, at times, to ask the research assistants to intervene on their behalf with me, and with the NGO. For example, in another focus group, a participant remarked:

Now here in South Sudan only the men are well educated, but few women are educated, and why should women be less...? It is lack of education that holds us back. So for this we would like you [the research assistant], at least, if there is any help you can bring, then you bring it. (Group 4, Female 16-25, L673-677)

Sometimes the research assistants were even asked about the activities of other NGOs in the area, as if they had access to information about all of the NGOs operating there. For example, one interviewee asked:

The question that I have is, did my name reach? [It’s] Christine.¹ [She is referring to people from an NGO who registered names for mosquito net distribution]. Tell them Christine says that what we need is to learn. Like, you [she imagines she is speaking to Emily, the khawaja] teach us English or Dinka language, so that I can write. (Christine, L473-476)

This perception about the status of the research assistants, and their connection to white foreigners who worked for NGOs, could have affected people’s construction of

¹ All names are pseudonyms.

² This finding must be interpreted with caution, because the discussion of this clip in the men’s group was extremely short. (The moderator believed the recorder was running out of batteries.) Other interpretive positions may have emerged, had the discussion been longer.

themselves in focus groups and interviews in a number of ways. It may have caused them to express a desire for things they thought NGOs were willing to provide – such as education – or it may have incentivised them to present themselves as particularly needy. These factors are considered in the data analysis.

3.7 Research locations

Fieldwork was conducted in three rural locations, in three different states, near the border with Sudan. These are shown in Figure 1. In 2013, when fieldwork was conducted, South Sudan was administratively divided into ten states. (It has since been divided into 28.) The states were subdivided into counties, payams and bomas – with several villages per boma; however, population data only exists at the payam level, from the 2008 census, so it is difficult to estimate the exact size of each study location, although I have attempted to do so.

Figure 1: Research locations

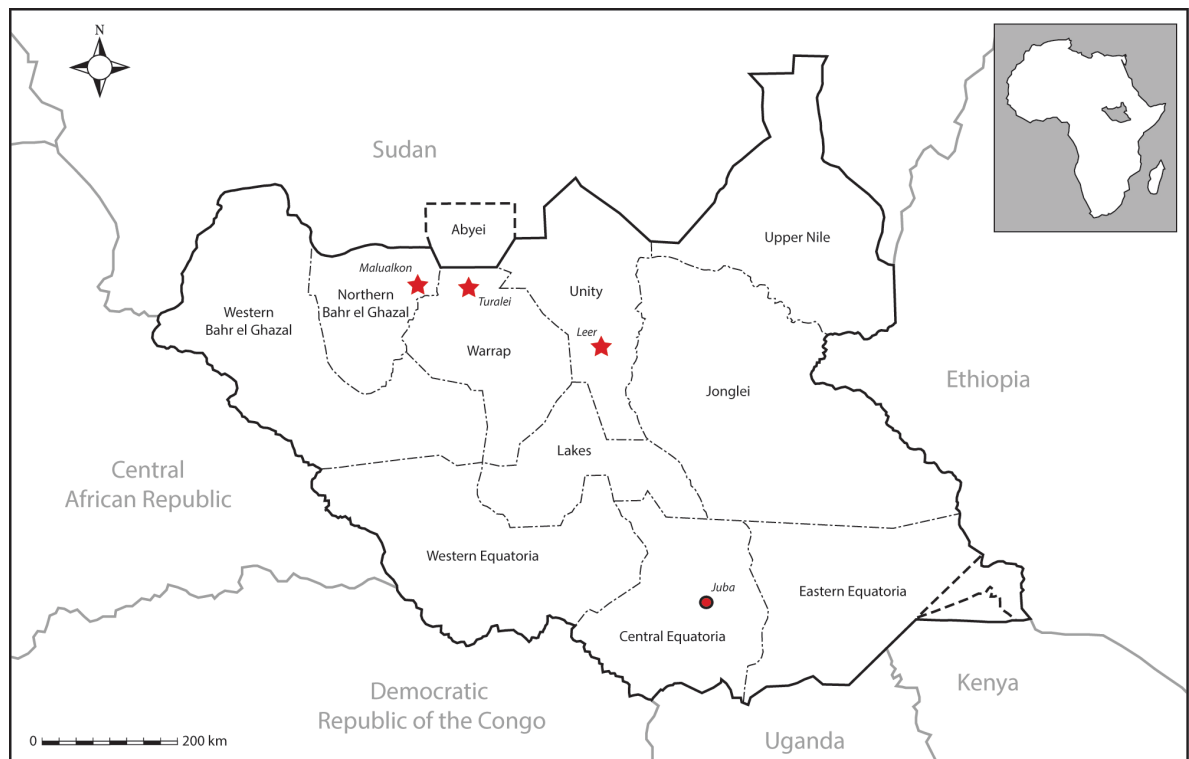


Figure courtesy of Danielle Macdonald

Each study location was home to a community radio station set up by Internews, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Internews effectively introduced mass media to these communities, because, up until that point, the only radio stations available to them were broadcasting in languages most community members did not understand – namely English and Arabic, rather than the local languages, Dinka and Nuer. Internews trained members of these rural communities, hereafter referred to as journalists, in the technical and journalistic skills required to run the radio stations, and continued to support the stations by sending journalism trainers to them at regular intervals, providing fuel and maintenance to keep the stations on air, and paying the journalists' salaries. Each station had approximately eight or nine journalists, who had to be English speakers in order to benefit from the training given by the NGO's English-speaking trainers. This meant that the journalists were, on balance, more educated than other community members. They had often learned their English during years spent in refugee camps outside the country during the civil war, where they came into contact with various international development organisations. At the time of fieldwork, however, they were living in the communities where the radio stations were located, and the majority were originally from these locations – either by birth, or through their families.

The political economy of the research sites was complex. The sites shared a number of common features, and also displayed a range of differences. All three research sites were close to the border with Sudan, putting them in close proximity to border-related conflict. In all three sites, agro-pastoralism was the norm. According to USAID:

Approximately 78% of all households [in South Sudan] earn their livelihood from farming, pastoralism or a mix of both. Farming is predominantly rainfed, and farmers cultivate their small plots with handheld tools. (USAID, 2013, p. 5)

This was certainly the case in the three research sites, although an important gendered difference was that women tended to do more farming, while men engaged more in livestock rearing.

Equally, in all three sites, power within the community was wielded and negotiated by three principle groups: traditional leaders, local government actors and NGOs. For example, all three sites had a traditional chief, who headed a town council. They also had various government officials, including payam administrators, county commissioners and South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) Secretaries, who ran SSRRC offices. (The SSRRC is an agency of the government of South Sudan.) The sites likewise had a range of NGO actors. In some cases the NGO actors had been there for a long time, and in other cases they had begun operating after the signing of the CPA.

Positions of power – be they traditional, government or NGO – tended to be occupied by men, although this varied somewhat by location. In the main, however, women's power was concentrated in and around the home, and polygamy was the norm.

The research sites also varied in terms of the type and extent of conflict they had experienced, and the pressing political issues that were salient at the moment. Such differences will be described in more detail in the site-specific descriptions that follow.

3.7.1 Malualkon

Malualkon, the first research community, is located in what was Northern Bahr el Ghazal State, Aweil East County, Baach Payam. It is home primarily to the Dinka ethnic group (Malual clan). Based on data from the 2008 census (Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation, 2010) and village assessment surveys conducted by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2013a), the

average village size in Baach Payam appears to be 485; however, as Malualkon is one of the more well-known towns in the county (South Sudan Humanitarian Project, 2015b), it may be larger. According to Internews, Malualkon is the smallest of the three study locations. It consists mostly of homesteads, containing buildings made of mud and grass, and has a small market area.

The residents of Aweil East County, in which Malualkon is located, are, like most of those in South Sudan, primarily agro-pastoralists. Thirty-six percent engage in farming, 35 percent in livestock rearing and 19 percent in fishing. The main crops include sorghum, sesame, maize, groundnut and vegetables. Flooding is a regular concern during the rainy season, for both agriculturalists and pastoralists, although the road to the much larger town of Aweil – the state capital – is passable all year round (South Sudan Humanitarian Project, 2015b).

Historically, the Dinka Malual of the area have been in periodic conflict with the nomadic Misseryia and Rizeigat of Sudan, who come into their territory annually for water and pasture. In recent years, the Dinka Malual have held annual peace conferences with both the Misseryia and Rizeigat to discuss migration routes, and to resolve conflicts over resources that often arise during the migration (South Sudan Humanitarian Project, 2015b).

In spite of tensions with the Misseryia and Rizeigat, Malualkon is known for being a relatively safe and stable town (Lost Boys Rebuilding South Sudan, 2008). This is why, although Malualkon is not the county headquarters (Radio Tamazuj, 2016), it is notable for being home to quite a few NGOs. For example, when fieldwork was conducted for this thesis both the International Rescue Committee and World Vision International had a presence there, having operated in South Sudan since 1989 (International Rescue Committee, 2016; World Vision, 2012). Action Against Hunger had a base there, from which it ran nutrition, food security, and water, sanitation and hygiene programs (Action Against Hunger, 2014), and Save the

Children, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières and the IOM were also working there (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2014), as was Mercy Corps, whose compound the research team stayed in. Malualkon's reputation as a safe and stable location for NGOs contributed to Malkualkon's selection as a site for an Internews community radio station. The radio station, *Nhomlaau FM*, opened in 2006 (De Masi, 2011).

Coordination between different community actors in Malualkon appeared to be relatively smooth. For example, the SSRRC Secretary reported:

[W]e [The SSRRC] are working as a bridge between the government, NGOs, and the community. And so, that is our work. Also when there is a problem, a disaster in South Sudan, we are the ones to coordinate the humanitarian activities between the government of South Sudan, the NGOs, and the community to assist the vulnerable people in the community.

Positions of power in the community, however, were primarily held by men. For example, the local chief was male, the Deputy Payam Administrator was male, and the SSRRC Secretary was male. Nevertheless, people in Malualkon were aware of several examples of female leaders. When asked about women in positions of power in the community, the SSRRC Secretary referenced a female colleague in a neighbouring county who was planning to stand for office:

[I]n our office here, we have one lady who is a secretary in [a neighbouring county] called [name]. She is also preparing now to become an MP in the next government, 2015.... She's now confident that in 2015 she will stand for MP. Really.

Indeed, Northern Bahr el Ghazal already had at least one female Member of Parliament at the time of fieldwork, Achol William Amo. She was a guest on *Nhomlaau FM*, as were the leaders of two women's associations in the neighbouring communities of Warawar and Majak Akon. Malualkon had female teachers, and *Nhomlaau FM*'s single female presenter, Angelina Achol Piol, was a well-respected figure in the community.



Image 1: Malualkon (Author photo)

3.7.2 Turalei

Turalei is located in what was Warrap State, Twic County, Turalei Payam. It is also home primarily to the Dinka ethnic group (Twic Mayaardit clan). Based on data from the 2008 census (Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation, 2010) and village assessment surveys conducted by the IOM (2013b), the average village size in Turalei Payam is 2033. This is consistent with Internews' accounts that Turalei is larger than Malualkon. Turalei also consists of homesteads, with buildings made of mud and grass, but has a larger market area, and a Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) barracks, as well as the radio station, *Mayardit FM*, which opened in 2009 (De Masi, 2011).

In Twic County, where Turalei is located, 32 percent of people earn their livelihoods by farming, 32 percent by cattle rearing, 29 percent by fishing and four percent by trade. The main crops are sorghum, maize, groundnuts, sesame, vegetables, millet and cassava. Many areas of Twic county are inaccessible during the rainy season, with up to 70 percent of the county under water (South Sudan Humanitarian Project, 2015d).

Like Aweil East County, Twic County sees an annual migration, in the dry season, of the nomadic Misseryia, who come seeking water and pasture. This frequently leads to cattle raiding and conflict between the Misseryia and the Dinka. The situation is compounded by an on-going dispute over the Abyei region, immediately North of Twic County, which is also home to both Misseryia and Dinka, and claimed by both Sudan and South Sudan. The Abyei region is extremely fertile and, prior to South Sudan's independence, accounted for 25% of Sudan's oil production (USAID, 2013). A referendum on its status, which was meant to take place shortly after the signing of the CPA, stalled – largely because there was no agreement over who was eligible to vote. Subsequent fighting in Abyei has often spilled into Twic County, with large numbers of refugees seeking safety in Turalei. In 2011, after one episode of violence, the population of Turalei doubled within the space of ten days (IRIN, 2011). Moreover, the town has seen a large number of returnees from Sudan since independence. These events have placed enormous strain on the town, and often disrupted local livelihoods (South Sudan Humanitarian Project, 2015d). There is heightened political sensitivity and much resentment over the Abyei stalemate in Turalei.

In part because of the on-going Abyei crisis, Twic county has the highest number of international organisations in Warrap State (South Sudan Humanitarian Project, 2015d). As the county capital, Turalei is home to many of them. At the time of fieldwork the IOM had a presence there (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2014), as did Samaritan's Purse and the international NGO

GOAL. GOAL opened an office there in 1998 to concentrate on health interventions, having worked in Sudan since 1985, and Southern Sudan since the early 1990s (UN jobs, n.d.). Comitato Collaborazione Medica, an Italian medical NGO, which had been working in South Sudan since 1983, also had a presence in Turalei (Jobs in South Sudan, 2016), as did Mercy Corps. The World Food Programme (WFP) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) likewise had operations there at various times (IRIN, 2011; WHO, 2011).

As in Malualkon, men held most positions of power in the community in Turalei. For example, at the time of fieldwork the SSRRC Secretary was male. So too was the local chief. As one radio guest put it:

We don't have any women as paramount chiefs. In the paramount chief position, we don't have women. Even in the local chief position, we don't have women. Even in the councillor position, we don't have women. [There are five councillors for each local chief.]

However, there seemed to be more women in positions of power in Turalei than in Malualkon. For example, one of the project managers at Mercy Corps was a woman, and the headmaster of an adult education centre in Turalei was female. Women's organisations were active in Turalei, and, as in Malaulkon, the radio station's sole female journalist, Christine Akuol, was well-known and respected in the community. Finally, and most notably, the governor of Warrap State, Nyandeng Malek was female – something that people in Turalei commented on regularly. Indeed, Nyandeng Malek was the first woman to be elected governor of a state in South Sudan. This appeared to have made a considerable impression on the inhabitants of Turalei.



Image 2: Turalei (Author photo)

3.7.3 Leer

Leer was the administrative headquarters of Leer County, in what was Unity State. It is home primarily to the Nuer ethnic group (Adok clan). A 2014 Internews report put the population of Leer at 15,000 (Internews, 2014). Leer was completely destroyed, in 2001, during the civil war (Grabska, 2014), and reconstructed at fairly straight angles, with wide roads. Leer had a market, an MSF hospital and a primary school and was a base for various NGOs and international aid organisations.

Thirty-five percent of people in Leer County earned their livelihoods by farming. The main crops were sorghum, maize, okra, pumpkin and cowpeas, and most farming occurred at a subsistence level. Thirty-four percent of people earned their livelihoods by raising livestock – including cattle, goats and sheep – and 29 percent by fishing. People also sold charcoal, firewood and grass to earn a living (primarily women), and

hired themselves out for casual labour (primarily men) (South Sudan Humanitarian Project, 2015c).

Leer was also an oil-producing county. Oil is vital for the South Sudanese economy, accounting for 97% of the country's revenue (USAID, 2013). Leer's main oil field began production in 2006, and by 2013 was producing up to 10,000 barrels of oil per day. Consequently, Leer County was quite heavily militarised, with an SPLA base next to the oil field, about 20 km from Leer town (South Sudan Humanitarian Project, 2015c). The oil field was operated by a subsidiary of the Malaysian giant Petronas (The Guardian, 2009). It was fenced off and had its own airstrip, electricity and internet (Grabska, 2014). The residents of Leer County, however, did not tend to feel the benefits of the oil wealth (South Sudan Humanitarian Project, 2015c), apart from a handful of people who were employed as security guards, or worked in other capacities for low wages. Indeed, there was evidence to suggest that the oil company had had a disastrous ecological impact on the surrounding area (Grabska, 2014).

Leer town had experienced a considerable amount of conflict during the civil war, primarily because of its proximity to the oil fields. It was also a stronghold of the rebel leader Riek Machar, who was born there. Due its strategic and symbolic importance, Leer town was completely destroyed several times during the war, and virtually everyone who lived there had been displaced. The reconstruction of Leer, which changed the character of the town, meant that many inhabitants hardly recognised the place when they returned (Grabska, 2014).

International organisations operating in Leer included the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Samaritan's Purse, INTERSOS (an Italian aid organisation) and World Vision International (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2014). Leer was also a base for the International Rescue Committee and Save the Children, both of which operated there during the civil war. Indeed, during the civil

war Leer was, at times, a hub of humanitarian operations (Grabska, 2014). UNICEF, Care International and WFP also ran programmes out of Leer, and famine caused by war and drought over the years had led many to rely on WFP food aid (Grabska, 2014). The aforementioned MSF hospital had been operating in Leer town for 25 years. It was the only functioning hospital in Unity State and served a population of over 270,000 p (MSF, 2014). The radio station, *Naath FM*, opened there in 2007 (Internews, 2014).

As in the previous two locations, men held most positions of power in Leer. The SSRRC Secretary was a man, the Acting County Commissioner was a man, and the chief of the town council was a man. Coordination between these various actors appeared to work well. For example, the chief of the town council explained:

*I'm the chief of this community in Leer County. I'm the leader of the sixteen chiefs in this county. If there is something happening in this county, I am one who will be asked first because I am the chief of this county...
When they brought Naath FM here... I was the one who welcomed them, together with the former commissioner.*

This suggests reasonably smooth coordination between the local chief and the local commissioner.

As in Turalei, however, women did hold some positions of power. The Leer County Chief Inspector for Basic Education was female, as was the Port Inspector from the neighbouring town of Adok. Furthermore, there was at least one female MP for the county, Nyalok James Thiong.

There were also women working for MSF as Extended Programme on Immunization (EPI) representatives and health promoters, and women working for the community-based Child Protection Network. Women further worked as nursery and primary school teachers, and Leer had a women's association. Something which had recently made headlines in Leer was the fact that, for the first time, a woman had

been ordained as a pastor in the Presbyterian Church. This was mentioned by several research participants.

Finally, as in the other two locations, *Naath FM's* two female presenters, Deborah Nyaguong and Angelina Nyayian Gatdiet, were well respected in the community.

Unfortunately, after fieldwork for this thesis was complete, the entire town of Leer was again destroyed, along with the MSF hospital, when violence broke out there in 2014. Most of the structures were burned, and the population was displaced. The radio station is no longer operating, although some of the journalists who used to work there are now working for Internews in Juba.



Image 3: Leer (Author photo)

3.8 Dates of fieldwork

Fieldwork took place from 29 April 2013 to 7 June 2013. Fieldwork dates and activities are presented in Table 6. Between eight and twelve days were spent in each research location, and two periods of fieldwork preparation took place in Juba. The first was to train the Dinka-speaking research team – as Malualkon and Turalei were home to Dinka-speakers, and the second was to train the Nuer-speaking research team – as Leer was home to Nuer-speakers.

Table 6: Fieldwork dates and activities

| Dates | Location | Activities |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 29 April 2013 – 3 May 2013 | Juba, Central Equatoria | Fieldwork preparation |
| 3 May 2013 – 11 May 2013 | Malualkon, Northern Bahr el Ghazal | Fieldwork at 1 st site |
| 11 May 2013 – 18 May 2013 | Turalei, Warrap State | Fieldwork at 2 nd site |
| 18 May 2013 – 24 May 2013 | Juba, Central Equatoria | Fieldwork preparation |
| 24 May 2013 – 4 June 2013 | Leer, Unity State | Fieldwork at 3 rd site |
| 5 June 2013 – 7 June 2013 | Juba, Central Equatoria | Wrap-up and departure |

3.9 Recruitment of participants

In each of the three research locations, five women were interviewed, for a total of fifteen women. Women were recruited by the research assistants via convenience sample. In each location, research assistants walked around the village inviting women to participate in the research, making an attempt to interview women from different parts of the village and women engaged in different activities. (For example, some women were interviewed while they were working in the marketplace, while others were approached and interviewed in their homes.) According to the research assistants, the refusal rate in most locations was zero. In Turalei, there were a couple of women who refused to be interviewed by a research assistant who was from a different location; however, when she was accompanied by

another member of the research team who was from Turalei, the refusal rate again fell to zero. A list of interviewees is presented in the next chapter, in Table 8.

Recruitment of the focus group participants was conducted in much the same manner as the interviews. Research assistants were requested to recruit people from different parts of the village, engaged in different activities, and to try and avoid recruiting friends, relatives or people who belonged to common activity groups. This was only possible to an extent, however, as people in all three research locations knew the others in their community. Research assistants were further requested to recruit people from the desired age range – although this was always approximate, as most people in the research locations did not know their age. Research assistants were asked to avoid recruiting community leaders, so that they did not dominate discussion, and to avoid always recruiting the most senior person in the household. There was one further recruitment criterion, for both interviews and focus groups – participants had to be radio listeners, in order to answer the questions about radio. Participants for the focus groups were slightly over recruited, in anticipation that some people would not show up, as proved to be the case. Between 10 and 12 participants were typically recruited for a focus group, and between 8 and 10 typically showed up. Focus groups were conducted in all manner of locations, including outside under trees, beneath open-air structures, inside mud and grass buildings, and inside concrete buildings. The focus group matrix is presented in the next chapter, in Table 7.

3.10 Translation and transcription

Translation and transcription of the data were conducted simultaneously. The process began in South Sudan, during fieldwork, and continued after I returned to London, with the assistance of two members of the South Sudanese diaspora. Based on my previous research experience in settings similar to South Sudan, I knew that it could be challenging to obtain high quality, verbatim transcripts – one reason being that typing skills were often lacking and another reason being that people frequently

had difficulty understanding the difference between a verbatim translation and a summary. The process of translation and transcription was, therefore, a joint endeavour involving two people. Either the American researcher or I would sit with one of the South Sudanese researchers and, on our computers, begin to play back short segments of the audio, looking to the researcher for a nod about when to pause. The researcher would then translate for us, verbally, what had been said, and we would type it. This method had two advantages. First, it enabled us to ask, immediately, about anything that was not clear to us. Researcher clarifications and responses were then included in the transcript, in square brackets, and these have been retained throughout the thesis. Second, it increased our confidence that the translation was verbatim, because we could roughly gauge the length of the translation relative to the length of the audio that had been played.

3.11 Reflexivity

Reflexivity has been recognised as an essential part of qualitative research (Berger, 2015). It involves a researcher's critical self-evaluation, throughout the research process, of their position and the way in which it might affect the research process and the research outcomes. To engage in reflexivity:

[R]esearchers need to increasingly focus on self-knowledge and sensitivity; better understand the role of the self in the creation of knowledge; carefully self monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on their research; and maintain the balance between the personal and the universal. (Berger, 2015, p. 220)

I have endeavoured to engage in reflexivity at all stages of the research process, including during the formulation of the research question, the conducting of fieldwork, the data analysis and the write up (Berger, 2015). I have considered the fact that my selected research question – the way in which public narratives about women facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals – is driven by my personal commitment to gender equality and my interest in the

achievement of gender and development goals, as a practitioner in the international development arena.

During fieldwork, I maintained a field journal, in which I recorded my unfiltered thoughts and reactions to the setting and the on-going research. These reactions sometimes contained value judgements that reflected my cultural background and privilege. For example, after fieldwork in the first two research locations, I wrote:

I'm on a flight from Rumbeck back to Juba, having just spent two weeks in field, first in Maluakon and then in Turalei.... One of the things that strikes me is that women here do so much work supporting and looking after their families, and yet the narrative is that women are under the 'care' of men. And even in the stories where women are supporting their families on their own, there's no sense that this is a perfectly fine state of affairs, but rather a sense that it's out of necessity, because there is no man to take responsibility for them... I think there has to be a cultural shift in the way that women headed households are viewed. (LeRoux-Rutledge, 2013)

This entry shows that my initial reactions to the data often contained strong normative judgements about the context I was studying. I tried to be cognisant of these, to acknowledge them, to discuss them with my research team, and then to place them to one side so I could better understand the subjectivities of the research participants. Indeed, many of my initial views changed over the course of the research process. For example, the narrative I reference above – which I describe in Chapter 4 as the *protected woman* narrative – I now see as a symbolic resource that women use for various purposes, including survival.

In my journal entries, I also reflected on my stance as an outsider and researcher with power and resources, which contributed to my decision not to be present during interviews and focus groups, and to secure the contact details of local NGOs for my research participants, should they need support after participating in the research.

During data analysis and write up, I similarly recorded my thoughts and reflections on the data, in a separate column of my analysis sheet. I questioned how informants' reactions to my research assistants, and to me, as a representative of the international development community, might be most apparent – as detailed in section 3.6. Throughout the analysis, I also maintained contact with, and sought feedback from, culturally knowledgeable people – namely my two London-based translators. I similarly consulted my supervisor and fellow doctoral researchers, at LSE. My supervisor was particularly helpful in highlighting how my positioning was influencing my presentation of the data. For example, she wrote on an early draft of my thesis:

I think the draft is too full of implicit value judgements... about “what works” and “does not work”... you clearly have a personal sense of what development should be, which informs the... comments all the way through... I would rather just focus on describing/analysing the different discourses, how they are taken up in the media, how audiences make sense of them, and how useful each of the discourses are in the light of women’s daily lives and realities. You can point out the ways in which discourses contradict or resonate with one another, but don’t say what works or does not work. (Campbell, 2016)

All of these people – my translators, supervisor and fellow doctoral researchers – provided critiques that helped with reflexivity. One of results was that I was able to more clearly see and separate my theoretical contributions to the gender and development literature from the practical recommendations I might offer to development practitioners; indeed, these constitute two separate sections of my discussion in Chapter 8.

3.12 Feedback on research findings

In June 2016, after data analysis was complete, I returned to South Sudan to present my findings, in Juba, to an audience of Internews employees and journalists, as well as employees and journalists from other media organisations working in South Sudan. Among the audience were Internews journalists who had been working at the community radio stations I visited in 2013. The audience comprised 20-25 people,

most of whom were South Sudanese. Details of this communicative validation exercise are presented in Chapter 8.

The remaining methodological details of this thesis, including those on data collection, instruments, and analysis, are presented in the empirical chapters that follow.

Chapter 4: Public narratives about women

4.1 Introduction

In order to understand how public narratives about women in rural South Sudan facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals, this thesis first seeks to identify what public narratives about women exist in rural South Sudan. Drawing on focus group and interview data, this chapter presents thirteen public narratives about women, which the South Sudanese themselves divide into “traditional” and “modern” narratives. Traditional narratives are those of the bride, the wife, the mother, the protected woman, the devout woman, the wicked woman, the unprotected woman and the displaced woman. Modern narratives are those of the educated woman, the empowered woman, the women’s group, the uneducated woman and the dependent woman. The presentation of these narratives lays the groundwork for the rest of the thesis.

4.2 Chapter methodology

4.2.1 Data collection

Public narratives were identified by analysing data from nine focus groups and fifteen in-depth interviews, conducted in the three rural communities described in Chapter 3. In each location, three focus groups were conducted – two with women and one with men. The focus group matrix is presented in Table 7. A total of 79 people participated in focus groups (52 women and 27 men).

In addition, fifteen in-depth interviews were conducted with women, five in each location. The interview matrix is presented in Table 8. There were 94 research participants in total.

The recruitment strategy detailed in section 3.9 resulted in a relatively younger sample of interviewees than of focus group participants – however, it must be remembered that many South Sudanese do not have an accurate sense of their age. One of the research participants – an adult woman – initially reported that she was four. Indeed, other studies conducted in South Sudan have opted not to include the ages of research participants, recognising that self-reported age is an unreliable measure (Dræbel et al., 2013). I have, nevertheless, included self-reported age.

Table 7: Focus group matrix

| No. | Group (Age) | Number of Participants | Duration | Location | Station |
|-----|---------------|------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Women (16-25) | 9 | 2:23:27 | Malualkon, Northern Bahr el Ghazal | Nhomlaau FM |
| 2 | Women (26-45) | 9 | 1:39:05 | | |
| 3 | Men (16-25) | 10 | 2:23:52 | | |
| 4 | Women (16-25) | 10 | 2:40:42 | Turalei, Warrap State | Mayardit FM |
| 5 | Women (26-45) | 6 | 2:15:06 | | |
| 6 | Men (26-45) | 9 | 1:46:46 | | |
| 7 | Women (16-25) | 8 | 2:31:12 | Leer, Unity State | Naath FM |
| 8 | Women (26-45) | 10 | 2:34:02 | | |
| 9 | Men (16-25) | 8 | 2:38:29 | | |

Table 8: Table of interviewees

| Pseudonym | Age | Education | Occupation | Marital status | Location | Tribe | Duration |
|-----------|-----|-----------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------|----------|
| Amina | 23 | Form 1 | NGO worker | Single | Malualkon | Dinka | 34:41 |
| Betty | 29 | None | None | Married | Malualkon | Dinka | 18:21 |
| Christine | 26 | None | Dish washer | Married (not living with husband) | Malualkon | Dinka | 34:17 |
| Didi | 19 | None | Trader | Single | Malualkon | Dinka | 26:09 |
| Elizabeth | 23 | Primary 7 | Teacher (and student in Primary 7) | Married | Malualkon | Dinka | 58:03 |
| Grace | 30 | None | Trader/tea maker | Married (not living with husband) | Turalei | Dinka | 20:06 |
| Helen | 34 | Primary 4 | Trader | Widowed | Turalei | Dinka | 51:19 |
| Josephine | 20 | None | None | Married | Turalei | Dinka | 17:21 |
| Lucy | 18 | None | None | Married | Turalei | Dinka | 13:21 |
| Mary | 29 | None | None | Unclear | Turalei | Dinka | 16:22 |
| Nyalok | 27 | Primary 2 | None | Married | Leer | Nuer | 52:23 |
| Pondak | 25 | None | Tea maker (in a school) | Married | Leer | Nuer | 32:59 |
| Rebecca | 23 | None | None | Married | Leer | Nuer | 35:39 |
| Sarah | 28 | Primary 5 | Messenger in an office | Widowed | Leer | Nuer | 44:16 |
| Teresa | 30 | None | None | Widowed | Leer | Nuer | 47:07 |

Adapting a narrative interviewing approach suggested by Crossley (2000), participants in focus groups were asked to imagine, and then describe, the life of a woman born in their community. They were asked to divide this hypothetical woman's life into chapters (or parts) and to talk about each one. Afterwards, they were prompted about the key events in this woman's life, the most significant people in her life, her dreams for the future, her struggles and the ways in which her life differed from that of a man. Finally, they were asked about the best possible kind of life for her and the worst possible kind of life. It was an imaginative and free-flowing discussion, in which women in the female focus groups also, at times, narrated experiences from their own lives. The focus group discussion guide can be found in Appendix 2.

In in-depth interviews, interviewees were questioned in much the same way; however, following Crossley's guidelines more precisely, they were asked about their own lives, rather than the life of a hypothetical woman in their community (2000). They were asked to divide their own lives into chapters (or parts) and then to talk about each one. Women sometimes found this exercise difficult, because it contained a book metaphor, and many of them were uneducated. When the interviewer was unable to explain the request in other terms, she moved on to the next question. Each woman was then asked about key events in her life, including her earliest remembered experience, the best experience of her life, the worst experience of her life, and so on; she was also asked about significant people. Then she was asked about her dreams and plans for the future, and the current problems she was facing. Finally, she was asked about her personal philosophy and the theme of her life. These latter two questions were also sometimes difficult for participants to answer. "Philosophy" does not translate very well into the interview languages, so participants were actually asked about their beliefs, which generally prompted a response about God. Likewise "theme" does not translate very well into the interview languages, so participants were actually asked to "name" their lives. Some were able to do this, and some were not. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 3.

4.2.2 Analysis

As the aim of this chapter is to identify the public narratives about women in rural South Sudan, and because public narratives can be considered the aggregate of many stories (as detailed in Chapter 2), all data from the focus groups and interviews was collapsed into a single data corpus for the purposes of analysis. It was anticipated that focus group data would yield public narratives about women in a more generic form, while interviews would yield specific examples of public narratives in use. In reality, however, women in the interviews often spoke about the lives of women in general, while women in the focus groups often narrated personal stories from their own lives, making the aggregation of the data even more appropriate.

Each focus group or interview transcript was first divided into “scenes”, or smaller narrative units. These were then coded thematically, and inductively, according to topic, using a thematic networks approach (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The coding frame can be found in Appendix 4. According to Riessman, in thematic analysis of narratives:

Data are interpreted in light of thematics developed by the investigator (influenced by prior and emergent theory, the concrete purpose of an investigation, the data themselves, political commitments, and other factors). (Riessman, 2008, p. 54)

To retain a focus on women, in line with the concrete purpose of the investigation, the basic codes were then clustered and named for the roles that women were assuming in the stories that were told. As explained in Chapter 2, narratives contain within them practices, social norms, roles, beliefs and attitudes, which they bring together in temporal form. Roles, in particular, often become shorthand for the stories that lie behind them (Rappaport, 2000). The public narratives were, therefore, named for the roles that women were assuming in the stories that were told, making the titles of the public narratives similar to Somers’ examples of “the

freeborn Englishman” and “the working-class hero” (Somers, 1994, p. 619). Thirteen public narratives about women were identified.

Guided theoretically by the work of both Bruner (1986) and Taylor (1989), consideration was then given as to whether these public narratives were associated with “the good life”, or “the bad life”, in order to fully understand their normative meaning. Although focus group participants had been asked explicitly about what constituted the best possible kind of life and worst possible kind of life, for a woman in their community, research participants also offered judgements about good and bad lives throughout the focus group discussions and interviews; therefore, assessment of whether the thirteen public narratives represented good or bad lives drew on insights from across the data corpus. One of the unforeseen results was that the “bad lives” women discussed were not always normatively, or morally, bad, but were sometimes circumstantially bad. This expands Taylor’s thinking somewhat (1989) (as his focus is on morality), but it is in keeping with Bruner’s work, which talks about “desirable” and “undesirable” lives (1986, p. 66). The distinction between morally and circumstantially bad will be described further in the findings section.

As data analysis unfolded, however, it became apparent that there was a second important dimension to consider for the purposes of categorisation – one that had not been anticipated. Women’s and men’s narrative accounts appeared to be underpinned by a binary of the “traditional”, or “old”, life, and the “modern”, or “new”, life. In Dinka, the term used for “old” or “traditional” life was *piir thaar* (past life), while the term used for “new”, or “modern”, life was either *piir yam* or *piir jadid* (new life) - or *piir yemen* (the life of now). Alternatively, people spoke about *chieng*, which translates as “culture”, “custom” or “tradition” describing *chieng thaar* (past culture) and *chieng yam* (new culture). In Nuer, people spoke about *chiang*, which translates as “how people live”, “situation”, “condition” and “tradition”. The term they used for “old”, or “traditional”, life was *chiang a wal* (how people lived in the

past), while the term used for “new”, or “modern”, life was *chiang emmee* (how people live now).

Thematic analysis did not set out to examine a traditional-modern dichotomy. Indeed, great caution needs to be exercised when reducing complex data down to binary dimensions, even more so because of their neo-colonial overtones. As detailed in Chapter 2, critical gender and development scholars have problematized the “traditional” label. Amos and Parmar claim, for example:

[T]heories which examine our cultural practices as “feudal residues” or label us “traditional”, also portray us as politically immature women who need to be versed and schooled in the ethos of Western feminism. They need to be continually challenged. (1984, p. 7)

I have chosen to use these terms, however, because the South Sudanese themselves use them. They came up frequently in the data and seemed to be a trope that people drew on in giving an account of their own, or women’s, lives, as illustrated by the following quotations:

Life has changed and the world also has changed.... Now the life we have in South Sudan is different from the life we had before.... There is a big difference between the life of before, and the life of now. (Group 4, Female 16-25, L51-57)

This was the life in the past and now it has changed. To compare the life in the past to nowadays – it is completely different. (Mary, L34-35)

[T]he previous life and the new life, they are not the same (Rebecca, L277-278).

If there is news, you can hear it easily on the radio, and it shows us how to change from traditional life to modern life. (Group 7, Female 16-25, L173-175)

Critically, women and men appeared to consider certain narratives traditional and others modern. Therefore, as Riessman has suggested, the traditional-modern dimension became part of the “emergent theory” of the analysis (Riessman, 2008).

The resulting grouping of narratives is depicted visually in Figure 2. In keeping with the idea that public narratives constitute a symbolic backdrop of resources upon which women can draw, the narratives have been depicted on a symbolic field with a good-bad life axis and a traditional-modern axis.

In Table 9 the thirteen public narratives are presented as short, narrative summaries. This is my interpretation of the public narratives in aggregate, and it is important to remember, as Salzer (1998) has pointed out, that no summary will encompass all of the different ways a public narrative can be told.

Figure 2: The symbolic field of public narratives about women in rural South Sudan

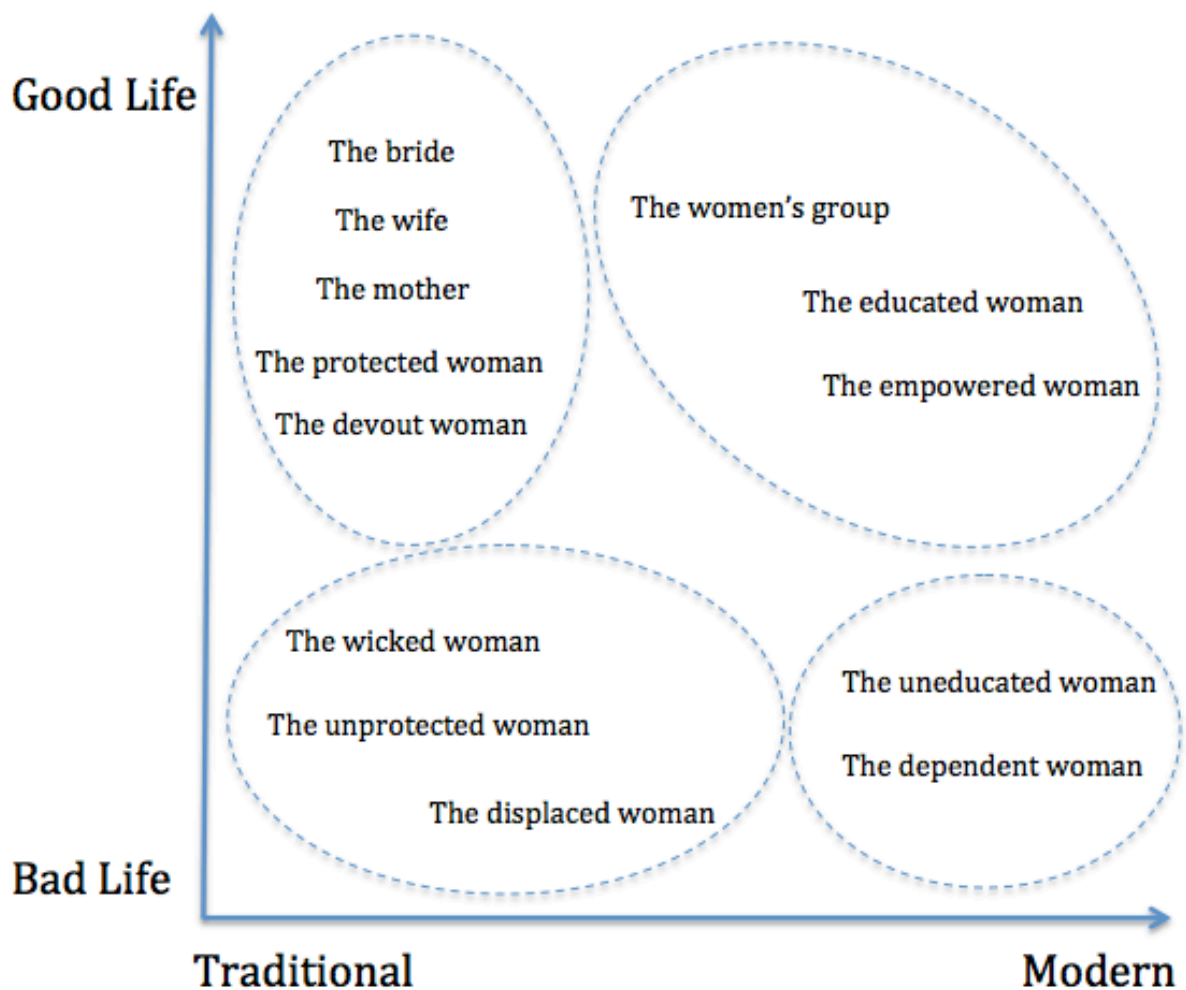


Table 9: Public narratives as summaries

The bride: A man brings cows to the family of a girl, whom he wants to marry. Her family accepts the cows, and the girl is married. She leaves her birth family and joins her husband's family.

The wife: A woman gets married, stays at home, is obedient to her husband and works extremely hard performing all of the domestic duties expected of a wife.

The mother: A married women bears children and brings them up well, undertaking all of the required care work.

The protected woman: A woman grows up protected and provided for by her father. She marries, and from then on is protected and provided for by her husband. In the absence of her father or husband, she is protected and provided for by a male relative.

The devout woman: A woman devotes herself to God. When bad things happen to her, she prays, and God answers her prayers. When good things happen to her, she thanks God.

The wicked woman: A woman is idle and does not perform her expected duties. She gossips and spends time in public places. She may drink and is potentially promiscuous.

The unprotected woman: Something negative happens which causes a woman to be without male protection. She struggles.

The displaced woman: A woman is displaced from the place where she comes from, or belongs, and she struggles to return.

The educated woman: A woman receives an education. She earns an income, acquires material security for herself and her family, helps her country to develop and earns a place of respect in society.

The empowered woman: A woman, who has gained rights under the South Sudanese constitution, learns about and claims her rights. She makes decisions for herself, considers herself equal to men and participates in public life.

The women's group: A group of women get together and solve social problems.

The uneducated woman: A women does not complete her education and is unable to help herself, her family or her country.

The dependent woman: Something negative happens to a woman, and she becomes dependent, remains at home and is unable to support herself or her family.

4.3 Findings

4.3.1 Traditional public narratives

When research participants were asked to describe the life of a woman, they often shared traditional narratives of women as brides, wives, mothers, devout women and protected women.

The bride

The centrality of marriage to a woman's life in rural South Sudan is demonstrated by the following focus group excerpt:

***R1:** The life for a woman is separated by getting married.*

***Moderator:** How?*

***R1:** Because if she is a girl, a very young girl, she is with her parents. Those who take care of her are her parents. If she gets sick, her parents will take care of her. They are buying her clothes and other things she wants.*

***Moderator:** When the girl is how old?*

***R1:** From twelve.*

***R2:** Since she was born! From when she is born until she grows up, her parents are the ones taking care of her.*

***R3:** The mother and father, they are the ones taking care of her.*

***R4:** Aye.*

***R3:** And if she gets married, the husband will be responsible for her.... So this is the division: before she got married, her parents were taking care of her. And when she gets married, the husband will take care of her.*

(Group 3, Male 16-25, L1118-1139)

As explained in Chapter 1, South Sudanese marriage involves the exchange of cows. Specifically, a man brings cows to the family of a girl whom he wants to marry. Her family accepts the cows, and the girl is married. She then leaves her birth family and joins her husband's family. This is the bride narrative. One male focus group participant puts it like this:

[Your] relatives and friends and family members can contribute to the cows they are going to pay. Everybody collects their contributions and then they do the wedding ceremony.... [You] tell your parents "I want to marry this girl",

then they will collect money to pay the dowry and you tell all your elders to help you in collecting that money. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1554-1566)

A man might decide he wants to marry a girl after spotting her at a local drama, for example, as women in one of the female focus groups explain:

R1: *[Girls] attend dramas that sometime take place [at a drama, some people dance traditional dances, while others watch], and from there sometimes a girl can get someone to marry her. Someone might admire her there, and if they admire her that person can marry her. Maybe this person can be someone responsible with a lot of cows.... If someone has cows and marries the girl, then the girl can just be at home [i.e., in her husband's home]....*

R2: *Give the recorder to R3, because R3 has grown up here in the village, so she will be able to tell us what used to happen here in the village.*

R3: *I talk again about the life of long ago.... [W]hen you're mature enough you will buy this local skirt. This local skirt, you will decorate it.... You wear it when you're going to the drama. Now you will be called a mature girl. From there, if you are lucky, then you will get married, and you will have already been taught by your mother and father how to do different kinds of housework. (Group 4, Female 16-25, L888-926)*

Girls don't necessarily have much say in the marriage process. As interviewee Elizabeth explains:

[E]veryone comes from their own home and then you come and meet., and you don't even know the other person that much. You don't know the deep side of the other person; you only know the outside.... [H]e will be telling you "I love you. We'll live a good life." But the other things that he's going to do – you don't know.... It's only "I love you" and that's it. He'll say that "I love you" or he'll ask his people to come and discuss the marriage without your knowledge.... (Elizabeth, L435-444)

However, girls do appear to have some say. As another male focus group participant explains:

There are different types of girls.... Some of them don't like to rush marriage. If you tell them that we will marry today, they will say don't be in a hurry. And others, if you tell them you are not ready now, they will go and find someone else. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1593-1598)

Bride price is a key element of marriage and means that each woman has a specific value in rural South Sudanese society. Women are often proud of their bride price and happy to share it:

I became lucky that two people wanted to look after me [marry me]. My husband brought so many cows that my parents were happy.... I was married with 60 cows and 10 bulls. (Elizabeth, L132-154)

When girls get married, they go to their husbands' houses, leaving everything behind:

Everything that you have as a girl in your family's house – you don't take it with you. If you have your own sorghum or you have some goats or a cow, if you move to your husband's house, you will leave everything you have in your family's house.... (Group 1, Female, 16-25, L1176-1179)

The wife

The second narrative is the wife narrative. Once married, a woman is expected to stay in her new home, be obedient to her husband and work extremely hard, performing all of the domestic duties expected of a wife. As one male focus group participant explains:

[W]hen she gets married, she knows how to take care of the family and how to stay good with her husband's family. Even the neighbours will know that she is staying well with her husband's family, and they will say that this man has a good wife. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1181-1184)

Another male focus group participant explains:

If the woman is married, she needs the husband who married her to take control of her.... A man needs freedom, man wants freedom to go anywhere to go and do something, while a woman is at home. (Group 6, Male 26-45, L1202-1205)

A woman's domestic responsibilities include building the house, keeping it clean, fetching water and firewood, cooking, serving food and farming. As one female focus

group participant explains, “The girl is the one who has to sweep the compound, fetch water, cook at home and do all the housework” (Group 4, Female 16-25, L124-125). Another remarks simply, “Women are the house”, meaning the successful functioning of the household depends on them (Group 4, Female 16-25, L1650). In another focus group, women similarly remark:

***R1:** If we think about [the life of] before, the women are the ones grinding food, collecting cow dung, milking cows, taking care of the children, cooking for them and also cooking for the old men. And the men can go to the far places and bring good things from there....*

***R2:** About what you are saying about women and men, every person has a particular duty. (Group 7, Female 16-25, 1780-1787)*

Unless a woman leaves the home on household business, she is expected to remain in the house:

As a woman, you are not supposed to be going out and hanging around in the market, or refusing to work in the house. You have to be at home working hard in the house. As a woman, the first thing you discover is that you have to cover yourself [wear a skirt] and you don't hang around the market. You have to stay at home. And then you grow up knowing yourself that you are a woman. You have to go and bring the water, and then stay at home and do your duties. You cook; you follow your routine as a woman. They boys, they go and hang around. They don't cook. They go and hang around in the market, they come home late, and nobody bothers about them. As a woman, you have to stay at home and do your normal things. You don't hang around. If you hang around people will start talking and say “this is not a good girl”. When you are following what the boys are doing, people say “this is not a girl, because she is doing strange things and following what the boys are doing”. If you are a girl, you stay at home and follow the path that you are supposed to as a woman. (Elizabeth, L667-680)

If a woman performs her domestic duties well, she will meet with social approval. Girls who learn domestic chores from a young age, “grow up as really good girls. They grow up and get married and they are successful” (Elizabeth, L726).

Obedience to, and respect for, one's husband is also a part of this narrative:

[I]f you really have your heart [are respectful], then when you are married and your husband tells you to go to the kitchen and cook food, if you have a heart [respect] you can go and cook for him. But if you don't respect him, you can say "no, I'm not going to the kitchen". You will stay good with him [if you respect him]. (Christine, L215-218)

The mother

The next narrative is that of the mother. In this narrative a woman bears children and brings them up well, undertaking all of the required care work. South Sudanese women are expected to become mothers. One focus group participant explains, "[A]s a woman, you are called... the mother of the family..." (Group 7, Female 16-25, L1764-1765). Another says, "The good thing that women can do in a family is produce children and do everything that the children need" (Group 7, Female 16-25, L1803-1804). Yet another participant elaborates:

[I]f your father and mother did not produce you., you could not produce children for other people [i.e., your husband's family]. [From the time] you are born [your parents] are the ones taking care of you, bringing you up, until you are mature. And they will give you [to] the person who you will produce children with and stay with until you are dead. (Group 7, Female 16-25, L1740-1744)

Women bear the day-to-day responsibility for child rearing. As one woman explains, "Women have the greatest responsibility for the children. The child is yours even though it is still in the womb" (Group 4, Female, 16-25, L500-501). One reason for this is that men, although they are meant to support children financially, are more mobile than women. As one respondent explains:

[M]en can go to the far place and bring good things to the children. So they are different in that area, because the mother is just staying in the house doing minor things, like bathing the children, giving them food and providing other basic needs to the children. That is the work of the woman. (Group 7, Female 16-25, L1766-1770)

An interviewee similarly says:

Men cannot stay in the house. They usually go for work from morning. Like now, my husband left the house in the morning and up until now [5:00 pm], he's not yet back home. I'm now in the house with the children. I'm the one who will tell them, "you go and take a shower; you go and change your clothes; you go and cook". I am the one telling them what to do. I used to tell them "you go to school". That is the role of the women. The father now is less concerned. (Nyalok, L151-157)

She further elaborates:

If there is something missing in the house, like the children run out of food, it is the mother who knows. She is the first person to know, "today, my children don't have food to eat". [The] father doesn't know. (Nyalok, L170-173)

Mothers are also responsible for training and educating their children properly:

If a child makes a mistake, it is the fault of the woman, because she is the one bringing up the children. Because from the time a child is young until the child becomes an adult, the responsibility is with the woman. (Group 7, Female 16-25, L1797-1799)

Girls, in particular, need to be trained by their mothers:

You start from [age] five or six. You know at that age that you are a girl, and a mother has to train her daughter. As a mother, when you have a daughter, you have to train her in a certain way. You treat her differently from your sons. If you let them be equal and treat them the same way, they will behave in the same way, but you know that you have to train them in a certain way. Then you train them so that they are aware of themselves, and if you leave them without this kind of training, they will grow up without knowing what is expected of them. You don't bring them up well, if you let them do whatever they want to do. If you know that you have a girl, you have to try to train them so that they are aware of themselves.... (Elizabeth, L693-701)

The protected woman

The fourth narrative is the protected woman narrative. In this narrative, a woman grows up protected and provided for by her father. She marries and, from then on, is protected and provided for by her husband – or, in the absence of a father or

husband, she is protected and provided for by a male relative. As one male focus group participant explains:

The parents produce her and take care of her until she grows up and the husband takes her. If you marry her and she gets into a problem, you [the husband] take care of that problem.... (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1248-1250)

A female focus group participant similarly declares, “Your husband is the one you will stay with until you die. He is like your father also” (Group 7, Female, 16-25, L1737-1738), while an interviewee explains:

[I]f you are a girl and you are married, and you have left your parents, your husband will be your mother and your father. Anything, whether you are having problems or not, he will stand by you as your mother and father did.... You are the wife. If you are not feeling well, your husband is the one responsible for you. (Sarah, L150-157)

Most women are quick to point out which male relative is caring for them. One says, for example, “[My husband] is the one who is responsible for all the needs in my life. He is the one who is taking care of me” (Pondak, L209-210). Another woman explains the role of a husband, thusly:

What is important in the life of women is when they are being treated fairly by their husbands. If the husband has got one South Sudanese pound and gives it to the wife, that can help the woman, because the husband isn't keeping the money from the wife. If the husband does not buy clothes for the wife, that causes a problem..., as the man didn't buy clothes for you, and you are not being taken care of. The second thing is that, if the man has not provided soap, you will not be clean. A man can help you by bringing soap and being sincere by bringing you that one pound that he has. That's how people survive – if a man brings something to eat. But one cannot survive if there is nothing to eat. (Didi, L176-186)

The devout woman

Women can also look to God for protection. The majority of South Sudanese are Christian, and the fifth narrative is the narrative of the devout woman. In this

narrative, a woman devotes herself to God. When bad things happen to her, she prays, and God answers her prayers; when good things happen, she thanks God. One interviewee relates how she found God:

I heard that God helps people. Those who go to church, when I asked them, they said “God helps people. You go and pray, and God will forgive your sins. If sins overcome you and you go to Him, he will be able to forgive you”. When I heard all of these things, I said “I have to surrender my life to God”. (Elizabeth, L333-336)

Another interviewee explains:

[I]f you believe in God and you request something from God, you pray, and you believe God will give you what you request, through prayers.... For example, if I’m sick, if I’m very, very sick, you say “God, why? Why am I suffering like this, God?” Then when God hears your voice, he will heal you and you will be fine. Even if you have delivery pain, and you say “God, help me. Help me, my Father”, God will help you. The child will come out. (Nyalok, L206-212)

A focus group respondent similarly explains:

It is only God who gives you the power to achieve.... God is the one who protects you from the night when you are sleeping until you wake up for the new day. We always thank God, because He gives us the power to do anything we are doing today. (Group 4, Female 16-25, L1720-1723)

All of the interviewees say they believe in God. Respondents also tend to believe that God determines their destinies. For example, one says, “I can believe in only one true God because it [is] God who makes decisions on how you can live...” (Lucy, L109-110).

The wicked woman

Thus far we have looked at five narratives, which, together, comprise a good life for a South Sudanese woman, in a traditional sense. A good life, in a traditional sense, is one in which a woman becomes a bride, a wife and a mother, and is protected by her male relatives and by God. A bad life, on the other hand, takes two different and distinct forms – one which is bad in a moral sense and the other which is bad in a

circumstantial sense. In a moral sense, a bad life is one in which a woman is wicked and fails to perform her expected duties. In a circumstantial sense, a bad life is one in which a woman finds herself unprotected or displaced, having fallen prey to misfortune. These two versions of “bad” are different, but the words for “bad” in Dinka (*kerage* and *aheidit*), and the word for “bad” in Nuer (*jïak*) encompass both of these meanings, just as the word “bad” does in English. Moreover, these two forms of “bad” are often related, because women who find themselves in bad circumstances may have to resort to morally questionable behaviour in order to survive.

The wicked woman narrative is one in which a woman is idle and does not perform her expected duties. She gossips, spends time in public places, possibly drinks and is potentially promiscuous. One female focus group participant sums up what it means to be a wicked woman as follows:

There was a story that Geng geng [a well-known Dinka storyteller] told, that a home that has a bad wife is like a house which is leaking. A home which is leaking can disturb people during the rainy season.... It's like a bad woman who cannot bring up her child. (Group 4, Female, 16-25, L1037-1041)

A respondent in a male focus group similarly explains:

R1: *[L]adies are not all the same. There are some who behave badly to their husbands.*

R2: *When you marry a woman who is living in the market, she [will not] come and stay with you, and you will not respect each other. Those ladies who are living in the market, you cannot get one and say that you will control her and convince her not to live in the market again and stay with you as a wife. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1184-1191)*

A female interviewee likewise remarks:

If [your daughter] is a good girl., she will be doing the normal things that a woman is supposed to be doing, and people will know that she's a good girl. But if she's a bad girl, no matter how you try with her., automatically she will run away from you, and you will not even know where she is. (Elizabeth, L708-713)

These excerpts demonstrate that, for a woman, being away from home and not performing her domestic duties is morally questionable behaviour.

One negative aspect of women spending time away from home is that they may gossip with one another. One male focus group respondent says:

Problems can just happen whenever people bring some gossip to your house.... Women will be happy if you give them what they want in their own house. But the moment they see something in their sister's house or their neighbour's house, that will be a big problem. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1371-1382)

The group continues to discuss the issue of gossip:

R1: *You cannot trust women with any confidential information. What you discuss with your brother, you cannot talk about with your wife. Whatever you tell her, she will just tell everybody. You can tell her different things, like things about work, but you cannot tell her secret things, because she will tell people. You don't tell her anything until it's certain. You don't tell her about your plans before you have finished something, because everybody will know.... If you ask a woman what she hates about men, she might say that we are too quiet. We don't talk as much as they talk.*

[Laughter]

R2: *They are talkative, and we are not, so you cannot compare us at all.*

R3: *Women's nature is to talk too much. Anything they know, they share with everyone. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1405-1425)*

Drinking alcohol is considered bad behaviour, too. One interviewee explains:

That alcohol, beer, is what's causing all the problems, and now it's coming – even our women are being influenced by that. If the husband is drinking, you go and drink your alcohol, too. But if somebody is doing a wrong [thing], you don't have to do bad things like him. (Elizabeth, L470-474)

Promiscuity is similarly bad. One male focus group participant says, for example:

The important thing for a girl is to control herself and not get pregnant before she gets married. Then she will get a good husband and continue having a good life, where the man is taking care of her. If the husband takes care of her, her

life cannot be bad. She started from controlling herself, so she got a good husband and her life is going well. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1167-1171)

A female focus group participant says of adultery:

[Adultery] will bring to you a bad reputation, to you and your child, if you begin to have a problem with your husband and you run to sleep with another man. Above all, committing adultery will not solve your problem that you are having in your family; running to sleep with another man will not solve your problem at all. It is accepted that a man is allowed to marry more than one wife, but a woman is not allowed to marry more than one husband... (Group 4, Female 16-25, L1885-1891)

Thus, the wicked woman narrative encompasses idleness, gossiping, spending time in public places, drinking and promiscuity.

The unprotected woman

Another narrative which represents a bad life for a woman is the unprotected woman narrative. In this narrative, something negative happens, such as the death of a husband, which causes a woman to be without male protection, and this results in struggle and hardship. "If you leave [your wife], not giving her anything, her life will not be good" one male focus group participant remarks (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1214). Another says, "An old woman.., if she doesn't have any man [like a husband or a son] to take responsibility for her, it will be difficult for her to take care of herself" (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1241-1243). One of the female focus group participants relates the following personal story:

Me, I lost my Dad when I was three days old.... The one who took care of us is my uncle, the brother to my Dad.... He came and took care of us until we grew up, and [then]... he also passed away. When my uncle passed away there was no one left to take care of us – only my mother, who struggled. (Group 4, Female 16-25, L1525-1533)

Another woman explains that she feels powerless to help in such circumstances:

I find some women carrying two or three babies, and they are begging in the market; they have no husbands.... So the woman who is carrying three children has no shelter, has no husband, and the children are starving.... It's really a bad thing, because she is suffering.., and I'm not a man, so I cannot help her. (Didi, L198-208)

Interestingly, it can be difficult to distinguish unprotected women from wicked women, because they are frequently in the same place – the market. This ambiguity is demonstrated in the following comment, which suggests that women in the market are either “not brought up well” or have “lost their parents”:

If you see a few women in the market, maybe they are not brought up well, or they lost their parents. An orphan that lost their parents, and there is no one to look after them, you will see them in the market. If a girl is looked after, and there are people who are responsible for her, you will never see her in the market. (Elizabeth, L759-763)

The displaced woman

Women can also experience a bad life by being displaced. The displaced woman narrative is one in which a woman is displaced from the place where she comes from, or belongs, and struggles to return. As one respondent describes it, “During the war, people were scattered, so you go and live on your own; your people will live on their own. This was a bad experience...” (Nyalok, L16-17). The experience of being physically displaced is also usually accompanied by the experience of being socially dis-embedded, which is equally undesirable. As one focus group participant puts it – “people are considered... rich when [they] have people” (Group 4, Female 16-25, L2160-2161).

Displacement stories usually take two forms: displacement outside of South Sudan or displacement into the bush. An example of displacement outside of South Sudan (or what was then Southern Sudan) is as follows:

I was born during the time of difficulties [i.e., war], and the place where I was born is called Mayan Ulam. When my father passed away, we went to

Khartoum with my mother, and when I had matured enough, I got married over there. Then my mum died, and we were left alone with a lot of difficulties that we could not manage by ourselves. From there, I came back to South Sudan with my husband, and, then, after that, my husband decided to go back to Khartoum. (Christine, L14-20)

This example demonstrates how, in displacement stories, separation from family members can be reoccurring.

Another kind of displacement involves running into the bush. As one focus group participant relates, “[T]he war of South Sudan started.... We ran with our parents to hide in the bush” (Group 4, Female 16-25, L115-117). Another respondent says, “There was fear in the past because of war, and people kept running for their lives. The war between the North and the South did not leave us alone. There were so many fears” (Mary, L36-38). This notion of “running for one’s life” is reiterated by other respondents, one of whom explains:

When I was seven years old, the war broke out here. When people ran away, I used to carry my younger sibling, and I didn’t feel tired. I just ran with my sibling, until we reached the place where the other people stopped. That was a really bad period. (Pondak, L42-45)

Running into the bush can result in sudden and unintended separation from one’s family members, as explained by another respondent:

[My elder sister] was pregnant.... When I went there to help her, people fought. The child was two months old. Then when people were fighting, we separated [accidentally]. I ran with the child. My sister ran the other way. I spent the night with the child, and I didn’t know where the mother was. Then we met the following day. That one, I still remember. It was very bad. I spent the night with a kid and there was no milk, no water; there was nothing to be given to the child until the following morning. (Rebecca, L94-101)

Indeed, perhaps the most significant aspect of displacement is the way in which it disrupts one’s ability to be with one’s “people”:

Like now, I could say I don't have my people. Even my husband's parents, I can say I don't have them, because I don't know them and they don't know me. It is like I don't have people, even my husband's parents, they never came to see me since I came from Khartoum. No one came to see me, even just to see, how is this girl? She is an orphan. And my brother is still in Khartoum. (Christine, L396-401)

Social disconnection, thus, appears to be embedded in the displaced woman narrative.

This brings us to the end of the so-called “traditional” narratives, or narratives of the “past life”, which were related by interview and focus group participants. It is important to note that just because these are considered to be narratives of the past, it does not mean they do not resonate and have meaning in the present day – it is just that their *origins* are not perceived to be from the present time. We now turn to “modern” narratives, or narratives of the “new life”.

4.3.2 Modern public narratives

Coexisting with traditional narratives about what constitutes a good and bad life for a woman are “new” or “modern” narratives about what constitutes a good and bad life for a woman. A woman living a good life, in a modern sense, is an educated woman, an empowered woman and a woman who is part of a women’s group. Each of these narratives is explained in turn.

The educated woman

The educated woman narrative is one in which a woman finishes school, earns an income, and acquires material security for herself and her family. She may also work for the development of the country, earning a place of respect in society. The following is an example of this narrative, provided by one of the interviewees:

[W]hen you are educated, someone can respect you, saying “this person knows something”.... Another thing, if you are educated and you don't have a cow or a goat, and you are educated, if you find a job advertisement you can apply for

the job. From there... you will be able to buy your own cows and goats. The job will also help you to bring up your children [because you will have an income]. If you have knowledge and there is an opportunity where they need a leader, and everyone likes you, then... if you are given the opportunity, then you are someone who can bring up the country. Then, from there, I think you can be a leader because of the knowledge you have. (Elizabeth, L96-113)

Another interviewee explains:

[Y]ou see Nyandeng Malek [the female governor of Warrap state]? – she is ruling now because she is educated. Education let her lead our people, and because of education, she has her motorcade. If she wasn't educated she wouldn't have all those cars. Education is a good thing, especially for us as women.... (Helen, L281-285)

The material security that comes with education is emphasised by a number of women. One says, “It is something I have seen – somebody who has a good life is somebody who is educated” (Pondak, L87-88). Women also emphasize the help that educated women can provide to others. For example, one focus group participant remarks, “Someone who is educated – when she comes, then she will educate others” (Group 4, Female 16-25, L496-497).

There is a clear sense that the educated woman narrative is part of the “new”, or “modern”, life:

Somebody who is educated and somebody who is not educated, they are not the same. When you are educated there are so many things that you know, and, if you are not educated, you don't know that much about the world. You are still living a low life. Now, the life these days is the life of educated people. (Mary, L155-159)

The empowered woman

Closely related to the educated woman narrative is the empowered woman narrative. In this narrative, a woman, who has gained rights under the South Sudanese constitution, learns about and claims her rights. She makes decisions for herself,

considers herself equal to men and participates in public life. This narrative is often so entwined with the educated woman narrative that separating them is largely a judgement call. In the following quote, for example, education and knowledge of rights go hand in hand:

For me, what I like in school, school is good. It educates people. It educates you how you will take care of yourself and your children, because if you are educated you will give your child his or her rights. But if you are not educated, you will not know what the rights of the child are or your own rights. (Group 4, Female 16-25, L218-221).

However, the educated woman and the empowered woman narratives were separated in the analysis, because an empowered woman does not necessarily have to be an educated woman. The key feature of an empowered woman is that she makes decisions for herself, considers herself equal to men and participates in public life. For example, one interviewee explains:

In the past life, the women could not stand among the men to talk. When they are killing the traditional bull, when there is a gathering, when there is a meeting, the women cannot stand up and talk. But now, like in government, we have women leaders. We can stand among the men and talk without fear.... Now when [we] have learned that everybody has a right to express him or herself, so now, [we] become strong, even those people who used to fear [i.e., be fearful]. Now even the women are eating together with men. This was not there before. Before, the girls and the women could not eat together with men. (Nyalok, L336-362)

Male focus group participants acknowledge this change as well. In one focus group, male participants joke:

R1: *Some women want high positions in the government. They want to work in offices; they don't want other kinds of jobs. They want 50% [instead of the 25% allocated to women in the constitution]. That's what they are asking for now.*
R2: *They are also asking about women's rights.*
R3: *They are not satisfied with the 25%.*
[Laughter]
R4: *They just want positions in the government.*

R5: *Right now, they have a new thing that they call “human rights”, and they have come out with a new thing called “women’s right”. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1319-1327)*

A male participant, in another focus group, explains, more seriously:

[W]e have heard that a woman has a right like man and that a woman is equal with man according to what has been said in our constitution and according to how we find it. It is long time ago when it used to be said that a woman should not be equal with man, but now we are saying a woman is a human being, created like man, works like man, and woman has power also to rule, as men rule the country or region. That is the first [thing]. Woman also has a brain to study in schools and to defeat men in the school. If a woman has that mind to defeat men in the school, will she not rule over people? We believe that a woman has a right to be equal with man.... We tell elder people that a woman has right to call a man to sit down and listen to her, but in the past, it is a man who can call a woman to sit down and listen to him while a man [is] seated on the chair... now, a man has to sit down and listen to a woman. Like now, Nyandeng Malek [the female governor of Warrap state] is a governor and she is ruling over people and nobody can say that, “why is she ruling people meanwhile she is a woman?” It is known that man and woman are equal and that is why she is ruling people.... (Group 6, Male 26-45, L478-506)

The women’s group

The third modern narrative is the narrative of the women’s group. In this narrative, a group of women get together and solve social problems. For example, one interviewee explains:

Right now, if we have problems as women, we sit down together and we discuss them together.... For example, if we sit down and we say that in our Payam women are in need of something., we call all the women in the Payam. We sit down and discuss the issues of the women in those areas. For example, when there was separation [the referendum on independence] we called the women and we taught them [how to vote, etc.], and, then, when we were done, all the women went back to their places, and maybe they could teach the women around them. Here, women get together whenever they have problems, and they sit down and they talk about it. And I’m thinking that in the future we... should organise programs for women. We should get ourselves a centre or a meeting place to talk about the problems.... (Grace, L338-360)

A female focus group participant similarly remarks:

For us, we volunteer ourselves because we want to develop our country..., That's why we united and built our [women's] centre – because we want to help our nation. (Group 4, Female, 16-25, L564-569)

Indeed, there is sometimes the suggestion that, because women are accustomed to hard work, they are better than men at solving social problems:

We think, we women, our work is better than the work of men. Like for example now, we are sitting here alone as women, and the rest over there under that tree are men alone [referring to a group of men on the other side of the compound], and, now, if we plan to do something as a group, our group will succeed faster than them. So for us, we are strong in doing work. (Group 4, Female, 16-25, L1049-1054)

The women's group narrative thus promotes the idea that, when women get together in groups to discuss their problems and the problems of society, they can be powerful agents for social change.

The uneducated woman

Having looked at the three narratives which constitute a good life for a South Sudanese woman, in a modern sense, we will now turn to those narratives which constitute a bad life, in a modern sense. A bad life for a woman, in a modern sense, is one in which a woman is uneducated and dependent. Again, the words used for “bad” in Dinka are *kerage* and *apeidit*, and the word used for “bad” in Nuer is *jïak* – and, again, “bad” can mean bad in a circumstantial sense or bad in a moral sense. In modern narratives, “bad” usually means bad in a circumstantial sense, because women who are uneducated and dependent are not typically portrayed as immoral; however, some versions of the dependent woman narrative do stress the laziness of dependent women. We start with an explanation of the uneducated woman narrative.

The uneducated woman narrative is one in which a woman does not complete her education and is unable to help herself, her family or her country. For example, one female focus group participant explains:

[F]or us [women] right now, we don't know anything. If we are told to read... I don't know whether we will be able to do it.... The reason why we don't know how to read, it is because we were not taken to school when we were young.... [N]ow, we don't know anything. For example, we can be given a phone, then you are told to see something in the phone or to make a call, but we are not able to know the names that are saved in the phonebook [because we can't read]. One does not know anything.... That is what is stressing us. (Group 1, Female, 16-25, L42-64)

Another focus group participant explains that, had she been uneducated, she would have been unable to help herself or her children:

If it wasn't for education, where you can be creative and make a living., I wouldn't even be here now. I would have been depressed. I would have been dead through mental problems, becoming mad, or going and getting married to somebody else [for support] and leaving my children.... (Group 5, Female 26-45, L131-135)

Uneducated women are also perceived to have nothing to contribute to society. As another interviewee explains:

What I think about is education. If you are educated, that can help the community. Someone who doesn't know how to write his or her name, those who are educated can do something for them, like opening hospitals or schools. But now I don't think I can do anything, because I know nothing. (Christine, L252-255)

She goes on to compare herself unfavourably to the female South Sudanese researcher conducting the interview:

The very important thing is an educated person.... We [who are not educated] just stay there talking about men [gossiping] and none of us knows something about knowledge.... Like you, you came with a paper and asked me to write my name. If I knew something about writing, I would have written my name. I don't know [how to write] my name, even the spelling.... Like you, before, they taught

you, and now you have come to ask us, while we know nothing. (Christine, L438-463)

Being uneducated is thus portrayed as negative in modern terms.

The dependent woman

Also negative in modern terms is to be dependent on others and unable to earn an income. In the dependent woman narrative, something bad happens to a woman, and she becomes dependent, remains at home and is unable to support herself or her family. This narrative is closely related to the uneducated woman narrative. Indeed, sometimes the narratives are indistinguishable – particularly if the bad thing that happens to a woman is something that interferes with her education:

I was married young, and now I cannot bring something good to the people. I will just need something good from them. [I.e., she will always be dependent.] And if I had been educated before, I could have a job [now] and receive a salary, and put my children through school. But I was married young, so what should I do now for the people? There's nothing. I'm just a housewife. (Group 8, Female 26-45, L404-409)

A dependent woman does not necessarily have to be uneducated, however. According to the following male focus group participant, a dependent woman may simply be unable to find a job:

The situation is bad for those women who don't have work and cannot find any work.... For example, a woman could stay at home with her husband and do the household work, but if she cannot find herself work in order to help her man, the situation will be very bad for her. That's a very bad thing, isn't it? There are some women who really want to help in their houses and really want to find work in order to help their families, but they cannot find it. Those kind of women would help their families, if only they could find a job. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1523-1529)

Not all dependent women are characterized sympathetically, however. Sometimes a moral indictment can be detected in the dependent woman narrative. Another male focus group participant says, for example:

There is another type of woman who will just stay at home and complain when they don't get things, but they don't think of doing anything to help get money, because they think it is not their duty. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1501-1503)

Thus, the dependent woman narrative can be bad in both a circumstantial and a moral sense.

Having presented the thirteen narratives that constitute a good life and bad life for a South Sudanese woman, in both a traditional and modern sense, we will now turn to the implications of these findings.

4.4 Discussion

This chapter set out to investigate what public narratives about women exist in rural South Sudan, as a starting point for exploration into how these public narratives might facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals – a question which will be explored further at two symbolic sites where gender and development goals and public narratives meet: the content broadcast on NGO-funded community radio, and the community discussions engendered by the content broadcast on community radio.

Thirteen public narratives, which construct a picture of what constitutes a good life and what constitutes a bad life for a South Sudanese woman, were identified in this chapter. The South Sudanese themselves characterise these narratives as either “traditional” or “modern”. A good life for a woman, in a traditional sense, is one in which she lives primarily in the domestic sphere as a bride, wife and mother, and is protected by her male family members and by God. A bad life is one in which she goes out in public, gossips and does not perform the duties required of her as a woman, or one in which she is unprotected or displaced. In contrast, a good life for a woman, in a modern sense, is one in which she is educated, empowered and active

in a women's group, while a bad life is one in which she is uneducated, dependent and unable to contribute to the development of the country.

As with all analyses of complex unstructured qualitative data, there is some loss of nuance and complexity in cataloguing and mapping out the data in this way. For example, one challenge of the present analysis was to identify public narratives specific and complex enough to be unmistakably rooted in, and reflective of, the rural South Sudanese research locations where the data was collected, while at the same time broad enough to be credibly considered *public* narratives – narratives which were larger than the single individual. Whenever possible, the narratives in this chapter have been described in terms that make their embeddedness in the rural South Sudanese context clear. For example, the empowered woman narrative has been described as one in which “a woman, who has gained rights under the South Sudanese constitution, learns about and claims her rights. She makes decisions for herself, considers herself equal to men and participates in public life.” This public narrative is clearly linked to a precise historical moment in South Sudan, when women in rural areas were beginning to learn about and claim their rights under the new constitution.

At the same time, the empowered woman narrative manifests in slightly different ways in the different research locations. For example, in the predominantly Dinka community of Turalei, Warrap State, it is typified by the story of Nyandeng Malek, the state governor, who was the first female governor of a state in South Sudan (as mentioned in section 3.7.2). People in Turalei refer to her when describing women who know their rights, make decisions for themselves, consider themselves equal to men and participate in public life. In contrast, in the predominantly Nuer community of Leer, Unity State, participants refer to the example of the first woman in the state to be ordained a Presbyterian pastor (as mentioned in section 3.7.3). However, the characteristics of the empowered woman are common across both locations. Thus, the data from the different research sites were pooled, because this

represented an optimal level of aggregation, losing some specificity, but still remaining grounded in the context. The resulting symbolic field, with its good-bad life axis and traditional-modern axis, allows us to begin reflecting on the larger question – how these public narratives might facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals.

In chapter 2, we saw that international gender and development goals require women to be willing to lead certain kinds of lives – namely *public* lives, as participants in educational, economic and political institutions. One thing that is apparent from the findings of this chapter is that modern and traditional narratives present different pictures of women's place in public life. Traditional narratives emphasise the importance of women remaining in the domestic sphere, while modern narratives emphasise the importance of educated and empowered women being present in public spaces. Indeed, in traditional narratives, women who go into the public sphere are either wicked, unprotected or displaced – all of which are undesirable. This may be at odds with development's efforts to, "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life" (United Nations, 2015, goal 5.5).

Another difference between traditional and modern narratives is the value attached to women's talk. In traditional narratives, women's talk is characterised, negatively, as gossip, while in modern narratives women's talk – in the context of women's groups – is regarded as a powerful force for social change. The international development community encourages, "The participation and contribution of... women's groups and networks..." in seeking to achieve gender and development goals (United Nations, 1995, art. 20), so traditional narratives may be at odds with one of the development community's standard ways of working.

Yet another difference between traditional and modern narratives is the way in which they view women's economic reliance on men. In traditional narratives, male protection – economic and otherwise – is desirable and normal, while in modern narratives, it is undesirable for a women to be wholly economically dependent on a man. Again, traditional narratives may be at odds with the international development community's vision for women, particularly its efforts to achieve “full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men...” (United Nations, 2015, goal 8.5).

In examining these tensions, it is easy to conclude that modern narratives are well aligned with gender and development goals, while traditional narratives are misaligned. In fact, we might even suspect modern narratives were introduced into rural South Sudanese society as a result of the various and complex ways in which gender and development policy intersects with people's lives – for example, through NGO-funded community radio, through NGO contact and through contact with returnees, who have grown up in refugee camps filled with international development actors. However, even at this stage, in this first empirical chapter, there are already hints that viewing modern narratives as aligned with gender and development objectives and traditional narratives as misaligned might be too simplistic – something which will become apparent in later empirical chapters.

Firstly, at least one traditional narrative does appear to resonate with gender and development goals. The narrative of the mother resonates well with gender and development goals, related to maternal and child health, which seek to “reduce the global maternal mortality” (United Nations, 2015, goal 3.2) and to “end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age” (United Nations, 2015, goal 3.2).

Secondly, the same people appear to put stock in both traditional and modern narratives, simultaneously. The following focus group excerpt demonstrates how the two sets of narratives coexist:

Moderator: *What is a good life for a woman in this community?*

R: *A good life for a woman is to be handled in a good way in her family and to be given all of her rights as said by the government, that a woman should be given her rights and she should also be given 25%.*

Moderator: *Who else? Okay, no one? Then the other question is what is a bad life for a woman in this community?*

R: *A bad life for a woman is if her husband is a drunkard and he is not taking care of the children, and no one is responsible in the family. Then, she will have to think about how to bring her children up, because she is vulnerable and doesn't have power to feed her children. (Group 7, Female 16-25, L1814-1824)*

In this excerpt, both traditional and modern narratives are invoked at the same time. First, the respondent says that a good life is when a woman is handled well by her family, suggesting she should be protected in a traditional sense. Then, in the same breath, she says that it is good when a woman is given her rights and “the 25%”, suggesting she should be empowered in a modern sense. When asked about a bad life, she says that it is when a woman’s husband does not take care of her and her children, leaving them unprotected in a traditional sense. Then she says that such a situation will require a woman to think about how to bring up her children, which could be good in both a modern and traditional sense – modern, because it hints at the possibility of seeking work outside the home, and traditional, because it conveys a determination to bring up her children well. Finally, she explains that a woman in this position is vulnerable, which could be bad in either a modern or a traditional sense – modern, because the woman finds herself dependent on a man who does not support her, and traditional, because she is effectively unprotected.

This excerpt highlights the importance of viewing both kinds of narratives, modern and traditional, as part of a repertoire of symbolic resources that women can draw on for different purposes. The next chapter will look in greater detail at what these purposes are, in order to strengthen our understanding of women’s lives, before

addressing, more closely, the central research question – how public narratives facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals. This will be addressed in the final two empirical chapters, which will look specifically at two symbolic sites where gender and development goals and rural South Sudanese communities meet: the content broadcast on NGO-funded community radio, and the community discussions engendered by such content.

Chapter 5: Women's use of public narratives

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter set out to investigate what public narratives about women exist in rural South Sudan. Thirteen public narratives were identified – some considered “traditional” by the South Sudanese, and some considered “modern”, which suggest what constitutes a good life and what constitutes a bad life for a South Sudanese woman. This chapter seeks to understand how women use public narratives as symbolic resources, for different purposes, in the course of their lives. In doing so, it seeks to build an appropriately strong foundation of understanding from which to investigate how public narratives facilitate or constrain the achievement of gender and development goals. Examining fifteen life story interviews conducted with rural South Sudanese women, the chapter reveals that women draw on public narratives, both modern and traditional, for four primary purposes. They draw on public narratives to address survival challenges, to explain family rupture, to legitimise their child-focused, educational and employment aspirations, and to explain barriers to education and employment. It further demonstrates that traditional narratives are used for all of these purposes, and modern narratives used for most of these purposes, pointing to a flexible and diverse pattern of narrative use among rural South Sudanese women.

5.2 Chapter methodology

5.2.1 Data collection

This chapter again draws on the fifteen interviews conducted with women in rural South Sudan, previously detailed in Chapter 4, but subjects them to an additional and different form of analysis, in which the *purpose* of each narrative is interrogated, in the context of the woman's entire life story. As detailed in Chapter 2, one of the

strengths of a narrative approach is that it accounts for temporality and so has the potential to reveal the nuance and complexity of people's lives through time.

5.2.2 Analysis

In order to develop deep familiarity with the fifteen life stories, I used the listening guide method of narrative analysis (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2006). I first analysed the life stories by doing multiple readings of each transcript. In the first reading, for each narrative "scene" identified in Chapter 4, I looked at the plot (what) (which had already been identified in Chapter 4), the actors (who), the setting (where, when), the goal (why) and the means (how). At the same time, I recorded my own emotional reactions to, and perspectives on, what I was reading, to ensure that I was reading reflexively. In the second reading, I read for the voice of the interviewee, constructing "I" poems out of the scenes, such as:

*I was born
I grew up
I could not even know
I was very young
I was born
I was here
I was left behind
- Amina*

This enabled me to home in on the "voice" of each interviewee, in order to more deeply understand her story. These first two readings facilitated greater familiarity with the data, while the attention paid to *goals* in the first reading enabled me to start thinking about why different stories were being told.

I then did a third, confirmatory reading for the public narratives identified in Chapter 4, to ensure I had not missed any instances of them in the original analysis.

After this, I thematically coded all of the narrative scenes again, using Attride-Stirling's method of thematic analysis (2001), but this time focusing on *purpose*

rather than topic. By this I mean I focused not on *what* each story was about but *why* it was being told, drawing heavily on the *why* column generated in the listening guide method of narrative analysis and my understanding of the life story as a whole. This resulted in the construction of a second coding frame, presented in Appendix 5.

To illustrate the difference between the coding frame constructed for the previous chapter, and the coding frame constructed for this chapter, I present the following narrative scene:

If a woman is having some problems, if she comes to the [women's] group, she will share her problem with the group.... Then [she] will do all this sewing and bed sheet making and then [she] can sell them in the market and it will help [her] family. The women who are not in the group, they suffer in so many ways. (Mary, L131-135)

According to the coding frame used in the previous chapter, this is the narrative of the women's group. Women's groups are what the narrative is *about*, and "group member" characterises the woman's role in this story. However, the *purpose* of the narrative is to suggest a way of addressing *survival challenges*. Thus, the narrative has received a second, additional code in this chapter – survival.

5.3 Findings

5.3.1 Diversity of public narratives used in women's life stories

The preliminary observation, at the end of Chapter 4, that people were putting stock in both traditional and modern narratives at the same time, is strongly born out in this chapter. Women in rural South Sudan appear to draw on a multiplicity of public narratives, simultaneously, in the course of narrating their life stories. On average, women draw on ten of the thirteen public narratives identified in Chapter 4, with the range going from seven to thirteen. Moreover, all women use a combination of both traditional and modern narratives.

Women appear to draw on public narratives for four key purposes. First, they draw on public narratives to deal with survival challenges – including food, water, shelter and other material needs. Second, they draw on public narratives to explain episodes of family rupture – including death, separation and conflict with family members. Third, they draw on public narratives to explain, legitimise and achieve their aspirations. These include child-focused aspirations – such as the education and success of their children, as well as educational and employment aspirations for themselves. Finally, they draw on public narratives to explain barriers to their educational and employment aspirations. Table 10 shows precisely which narratives are used for which of these purposes. Two things are notable about Table 10. First, traditional narratives are used for *all* purposes; they are used to address survival challenges, to explain family rupture, to explain, legitimise and achieve women's aspirations, and to explain barriers to those aspirations. Second, modern narratives are used for *almost* all purposes. They are used to address survival challenges, to explain, legitimise and achieve aspirations, and to explain barriers to aspirations. This points to a diverse and varied pattern of narrative use.

The remainder of this chapter explains the findings summarized in Table 10, in detail. For each of the thirteen public narratives, I briefly summarise how extensively the narrative was used across the interviews and then go through each of the purposes for which it was used – highlighting where it was most extensively used, with illustrative quotations. My own familiarity with the individual life stories informs my understanding of the reasons why the different public narratives were used at different times; however, because it may be challenging for readers to follow the threads of the life stories through the chapter, in the discussion section I return to the life stories of two specific women, Grace and Elizabeth, to show the multifaceted and nuanced nature of each individual woman's narrative use.

Table 10: Women's use of public narratives, by purpose

| | Survival | Family rupture | Child-focused aspirations | Educational aspirations | Employment aspirations | Educational barriers | Employment barriers |
|---------------|----------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| TRADITIONAL | | | | | | | |
| Bride | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |
| Wife | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Mother | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Protected | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Devout | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Wicked | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Unprotected | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| Displaced | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| MODERN | | | | | | | |
| Educated | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Empowered | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Women's group | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Uneducated | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Dependent | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |

5.3.2 Use of traditional public narratives

The bride

The first traditional narrative, that of the bride, is used in eight of the fifteen life stories. As detailed in Chapter 4, this is the narrative in which a man brings cows to the family of a girl whom he wants to marry; her family accepts the cows, and the girl is married. She then leaves her birth family and joins her husband's family. In

women's life stories, this narrative is presented as a strategy for survival, an explanation for family rupture and a way of legitimising educational aspirations.

The most prominent use of the bride narrative is as a means of survival. During the war, many South Sudanese women experienced terrible survival struggles. Rebecca, for example, says, "Before, when I was young, I was suffering.... It was a terrible life. I can call it a terrible life" (L74-75). She elaborates:

I experienced a bad life, because during the time of hunger, there was no food. And the sickness; you can die easily because you don't have access to health care. You die a bad death. Even if that sickness [doesn't] kill if it is treated, there is no access to treatment, so you will die. So I am still remembering those things. Even when I am old, I will still remember. It was bad. (Rebecca, L85-90)

For Rebecca, becoming a bride enabled her to save her family and herself. She explains:

[W]hen I became mature and we were in a bad situation, I decided to get married, because the life was too squeezed and so desperate. I decided to get married so that my father would get cows. (Rebecca, L112-114)

Not only did the cows help her family to survive, they ensured her survival as well. As she explains, "When I married, my life changed. My husband is a good guy, so I became comfortable in my house. My life is good up to now " (L40-42).

Another way the bride narrative is used in the course of women's life stories is to explain episodes of family rupture. For example, Teresa explains how her reluctance to marry led to a conflict with her uncle:

When I reached this size [she gestures with her hand] my father went to Khartoum. We remained in the village with my mother, and then my mother passed away. I was then responsible for my younger siblings. I was really having problems, because I had to bring up my younger brothers and sisters [as the oldest]. When I became a big girl I stayed with my uncle, my father's brother. There were so many men who wanted to marry me. When those men asked to marry me, I refused them, because I wanted to bring up my younger siblings,

because I didn't want to leave them while they were still young and could not support themselves. I quarrelled with my uncle. We were in crisis, because he was forcing me to marry. Then at last I accepted a man. He married me. (Teresa, L24-33)

Such episodes of family rupture are often related in the context of the bride narrative, usually because of conflict over bride price.

Finally, the bride narrative is used to legitimise women's educational aspirations. Most of the women interviewed expressed a strong desire for education. Elizabeth, for example, explains the great lengths she went to, in order to obtain education as a child:

[A]t the time I was growing.., [m]y parents were not allowing me to go to school. I was forbidden to go to school, but I escaped all the time [and went to school], till I completed my primary one. I was taken to the island so that I couldn't keep going to school. From there I escaped and came back home. I had to cross a river and I almost drowned. Some [in my family] were saying that I have to go to school, and some were saying "she doesn't have to go to school". (Elizabeth, L38-43)

Elizabeth ultimately persuaded her parents to send her to school, and she presents the fact that she commanded a high bride price when she married as vindication of her pursuit of education. She explains:

If I had not reached Primary 7, then the cows which I was married with might have not been brought to my parents. Because I know, so far, if you are educated, then you can bring many cows and so many good things to your parents. (Elizabeth, L141-145)

The bride narrative is, therefore, a way for Elizabeth to demonstrate that her parents' objections to her education were unfounded.

The wife

The wife narrative – in which a woman gets married, stays at home, is obedient to her husband, and works extremely hard performing all of her domestic duties – is

used in all fifteen of the women's life stories. It is presented as a strategy for survival, an explanation for family rupture, a way of achieving child-focused and educational aspirations, and a way of explaining barriers to education.

Again, the most common way in which the narrative is used is as a survival strategy. This can be illustrated by returning to Rebecca's story. As previously stated, Rebecca solved her own survival challenges and her family's survival challenges by getting married. "Before, I was like a dead body. And now, I am alive..," she says, "I was about to die from war, and... hunger" (L129-131). In return for her husband's protection, Rebecca explains that she plans to be a good wife. "My philosophy is that I am in my [husband's] house, and I am going to build it in a good way..," she says (L233-234). She thus suggests that, by following the path laid out for her by the wife narrative, she intends to cement the protection conferred to her through marriage.

The wife narrative is also used to explain family rupture. Amina, for example, uses the wife narrative to explain the disappearance of her mother from her life, at the age of one.

[M]y father got sick. He was really suffering from a very bad disease, which I could not even know cause I was very young, as you understand. After all, they [my parents] decided to travel to Khartoum, together.... (Amina, L33-35)

Amina was "left behind" (L51) with her sister, who was no more than six. She remarks, "She [my mother] left me [when] I was one year," (L63), and marvels, "Imagine, we were left, two of us" (L73). Although she was reunited with her mother three years later, when her father died, the only way that Amina can explain the separation from her mother is by using the wife narrative. Amina recounts that her mother left to be of service to her father, as he struggled to find treatment, thereby fulfilling her duties as a good wife.

The wife narrative is further used to support child-focused aspirations – the most common one being the education of children. Nearly all of the women interviewed articulated a strong desire for their children to be educated, including Nyalok. Nyalok draws on the wife narrative to explain how she achieved this aspiration, bearing the full weight of domestic chores to enable her daughter to study:

[W]hen my daughter sat for the exam, I was the one doing all of the housework, because I didn't want her to do anything. I wanted her to concentrate on reading so she could get a good mark. I used to go fetch water from far, go to the market, make food. When I heard over the radio that my daughter passed the exam, I was so excited because my effort was not for nothing. I didn't waste the time she could have been working for me. (Nyalok, L297-302)

By being such a hardworking wife that she did not require the assistance of her daughter, Nyalok was able to free up her daughter's time, so that her daughter could excel in education.

The wife narrative is also used to realise women's own educational aspirations. Elizabeth, for example, describes how, by being a good wife, she has been able to continue her education after marriage. "I haven't got a problem, because my husband is giving me a chance to go to school", she says (Elizabeth, L304-305). Helen, on the other hand, presents the wife narrative as a reason why her educational aspirations have been somewhat curtailed. She explains:

Now that I'm married, the situation is different from before. I have my household responsibilities. I spent a lot of time at home, and, then, when my house was better, I went back to school.... (Helen, L147-149)

The mother

The mother narrative – in which a woman bears children and brings them up well, undertaking all of the required care work – also comes up in all fifteen women's life stories. Once again, it is presented as a strategy for survival, an explanation for family rupture, a way of supporting child-focused and educational aspirations, and a

way of explaining barriers to education. It is further used to explain employment aspirations.

The mother narrative is presented as a means of survival, in the sense that many women, after raising their children properly and doing everything they can for their children, expect their children to support them. For example, Grace comments:

The way that I think I'm living right now is not the best life, and I'm not feeling so comfortable, but the way that I want to improve my life is... my children have to continue with their education. If my children continue their education, we will live in a better place, and I'm sure they will support me. The children that I will leave in this world, I will make sure that I leave them in a better place. (Grace, L285-290)

Indeed, some women's older children are helping them already. Teresa, the woman who was forced by her uncle to marry, is now a widow, and says:

I can overcome [my] problems if I'm with my kids, because I have my four children. If I plan to do something, then I call them and say "come and let's do the work", and we work together. Now, I'm starting to overcome the problems. Like my firstborn, now, if I'm going to dig in the farm, I go with him. We dig in the farm and clean it together. (Teresa, L355-359)

The mother narrative is also used as a way to explain family rupture. For example, Amina, having endured a separation from her mother at the age of one, has to explain a second separation from her mother at the age of seven, when her mother sends her away to a refugee camp, in Kenya, to attend school:

My mom could not even believe that I was going alone. She wanted to go with me, but she was supposed to remain behind for the sake of others, those who follow me [the younger children]. So she had to remain behind and leave me [to] go to school. (Amina, L171-174)

As Amina explains it, it was her mother's duty to the younger children that necessitated the second separation, which lasted for eleven years.

The mother narrative is additionally used to legitimise child-focused aspirations. Nyalok, who worked so hard in the house to enable her daughter to study, says:

Like education, now. If I just tell my children to remain in the house with me.., what have I done for my child? His or her life will not be good because of me. I was the one who abandoned him or her. (Nyalok, L137-140)

Nyalok thus presents the education of her children as part of her responsibility as a mother, incorporating it into the mother narrative and giving it legitimacy.

The mother narrative is further used to legitimise women's own educational aspirations. For example, Elizabeth – the woman who was so determined to get an education that she ran away to school – explains that, when she was young:

I only wanted to go to school and learn.... I wanted to know how to read, so that when I take my child to hospital I will be able to read what is written on the medicine, to know what the medicine is for and to know whether the medicine is harmful for my child or safe. (Elizabeth, L87-92)

Elizabeth implies that education will make her a better mother, more able to look after her children. Equally, however, the mother narrative can be used to explain why educational aspirations are unattainable. Grace, for example, says,

Even right now I want to go to school, but I have children and I have to work for my children, because if we don't find a good way of living at home, then they will start to adopt bad ways. So, I work in order to get them good food, soap to wash their clothes, beds to sleep on, and to take them to hospital when they get sick – because, if all of us went to school right now, then my children would be in the street and I would have done nothing for them. (Grace, L301-307)

In Grace's story, in order to be a good mother, she must forego education.

Finally, the mother narrative is offered to legitimise employment aspirations. Just over half of the women express employment aspirations, and the reason given is usually their children. Teresa, for example, says, "[I]n future life my dream is for me

to work hard and get enough resources so that I will be independent and confident of the survival of my children..." (Teresa, L286-287).

The protected woman

The protected woman narrative is the third narrative to be used in all fifteen women's life stories. In this narrative, a woman grows up protected and provided for by her father. She marries and, from then on, is protected and provided for by her husband, or, in the absence of her father or husband, she is protected and provided for by a male relative. This narrative is, unsurprisingly, presented as a means of survival but also as a way of supporting child-focused and educational aspirations, and as a way of explaining barriers to education.

In every single woman's story, save one, the protected woman narrative is presented as a means of survival. This is foreseeable, because the narrative is essentially about survival. Grace, for example, explains:

My father [was] the one who was [initially] responsible for me, because he is the one who brought me into the world. He was the one responsible for me, until I got married, and the one who took responsibility for me after that was [my husband]. (Grace, L244-246)

Grace goes on to explain how her husband's protection literally saved her life, because she had complications, during her first pregnancy, and he flew her to Nairobi for medical treatment. "They did an operation in Nairobi", she says, "I would have just died here in the town" (Grace, L270-272).

The protected woman narrative is also, however, used as a way to support child-focused aspirations. Josephine, for example, reasons that her husband's responsibility to protect her and her children includes a responsibility to educate them:

If the woman asks [her husband] about child education, he will say... the child has eaten. He thinks that if the child has eaten, there is nothing lacking, but there is another objective [needed for] properly bringing up your child in a good way [i.e., education]. (Josephine, L70-73)

Josephine, thus, uses the protected woman narrative to enlist her husband's support for her children's education.

The protected woman narrative is further used to advance women's own educational aspirations. As we have seen, Elizabeth's husband allows her to go to school; indeed, his protection supports and facilitates this:

[W]hen I was young I was thinking bad things – that I had to kill myself because my parents wouldn't let me go to school – but now there have been so many changes, because I don't think the same way anymore.... My husband has taken me back to school. (Elizabeth, L166-171)

Elizabeth urges women to seek the same kind of assistance from the men who are protecting them:

I'm encouraging those women... to be following men and asking them to show them some things they don't know [i.e., to educate them, because men are more educated than women]. Those are the things we are begging men to help us with. If our fathers are now listening to us, or will get to hear our voices, then I'm begging you please, if you have a daughter who is something like five years old, or three years old, then take her to school. (Elizabeth, L203-209)

As with the wife narrative, however, the protected woman narrative can also be a barrier to education. As Grace explains:

My father didn't take me to school.... Even when I got to my relatives' house, my father just kept taking me back home to stay with him. He didn't want me to go away, because he lost a lot of children. He wanted me to stay with him. My father didn't want us to be far apart. (Grace, L297-301)

The devout woman

The devout woman narrative is the last of the narratives to come up in all fifteen women's life stories. In this narrative a woman devotes herself to God. When bad things happen to her, she prays, and God answers her prayers, and, when good things happen to her, she thanks God. This narrative is used as a way to address survival challenges, including those brought about by family rupture. It is also regarded as a way to achieve child-focused, educational and employment aspirations.

All of the women interviewed mentioned being devout, and many of them credited God with saving their lives. Pondak, for example, says, "During the war God protected me" (L126). Rebecca similarly says, "God saved me from that terrible life, and now I am in a new life. I can give thanks to God" (L82-83). Grace explains:

I believe in Jesus. Every night if I pray to him, asking for anything, he will give me anything, and he will give me success in my life. Even right now, when I'm sitting with you, yesterday night, I was suffering from a very bad flu, and I prayed a lot, and right now I'm here, and I'm talking to you. I'm feeling well....
(Grace, L318-322)

Being devout is, thus, viewed as a strategy for survival. Some women's survival challenges have been specifically brought about by family rupture, and they, too, look to God for assistance. For example, Sarah, a widow who recently lost her husband, says, "I believe in God, with my children, as we are now surviving because of God" (L248). Similarly, Amina says, "The time when my mom went to Khartoum looking for treatment [for my father].., God was there. He protected us until my mom came back" (L72-74).

Believing in God is also a way to achieve child-focused aspirations. For example, Betty says, "I'm now praying to my God that my husband will be able to take [my children] to school to educate them for me" (Betty, L102-103).

Additionally, it is a way to achieve women's own educational aspirations. Lucy says, "I pray to God, daily, to give me courage so I can complete my studies.... I need God to help me finish my education..." (Lucy, L159-161), while Elizabeth says, "I believe in God. If I didn't go to church, I wouldn't have been able to go to school" (Elizabeth, L325-326).

Finally, being devout is a way to support employment aspirations. Christine, for example, says, "[N]ow I'm working. I just pray to God to help me in this small job of mine" (L430-431).

The wicked woman

The wicked woman narrative comes up in twelve of the women's life stories. In this narrative, a woman is idle and does not perform her expected duties. She gossips, spends time in public places, possibly drinks and is potentially promiscuous. This narrative is presented as a source of family rupture and as a barrier to both education and employment.

Helen narrates a story that demonstrates how women's wickedness can be a source of family rupture:

Right now, I'm looking after my brother-in-law's children, who lost their mother because of alcohol. My brother in law was killed during the war.... [His wife] would often go to the market and buy mou [local beer] and drink it. If my husband talked to her [about her drinking], she would fight with everybody. She would even go to his office and fight with people there. She came back to me, at home, and we fought, so I called the police. Then after she died, she left her children.... (Helen, L442-452)

The wicked woman narrative is also presented as a barrier to education. Elizabeth, for example, explains how her parents refused to send her to school for fear she would be "spoiled":

My dad was like "If we allow her to go to school, then she may be spoiled. She will not concentrate on studies but will fall into prostitution [start having sex],

and the cows which I gave to your family [the mother's family] will not be got back. Can you remember the cows I've married you with? If you allow her to go to school, do you think she will bring back the cows?" and my mother said, "She doesn't have to go to school, because she will not bring back the cows". (Elizabeth, L53-58)

The wicked woman narrative is further used to explain barriers to employment. In a long account, Teresa relates the story of a woman she knew, who was killed for working in the marketplace:

There was something that happened to a woman. I knew that woman. That woman, her husband went back to school.... [T]he government released him with his salary [i.e., allowed him to take an educational leave, with pay]. He went to school [in Juba] and told the office to give the money every month to his wife. The husband instructed his younger brother to receive the money from the office and bring it to his wife. When his brother received the money, he gave just a small amount to the wife, not the whole salary. That money was not even enough for soap or for food and milk for the children, so their lives became hard. Then she decided to go and sell tea in the market. Here in our community if you are a woman who works in the market many people will... think that what you are doing is a bad thing.... When the lady started to sell the tea, then the brother-in-law told her "You, you have a private husband" [i.e., you are cheating on your husband].... She said, "My brother-in-law, I don't have another man. I'm happy with my husband. He left me because he went back to school for the benefit of our future life". The brother-in-law said., "You have another husband, because I see you laughing with these men who come and drink your tea, and you come home late. You must tell me". The woman said, "No, my brother-in-law I don't have another husband. I'm here in the market because I work for my kids, which my husband left with me, because the salary of my husband cannot feed us. If you are a business person you cannot be in a bad mood with your customers...." He said, "Ok, if you don't want to tell me about your private husband, I will lock you in your room", and he locked her in the room. He beat her for four hours. The way he beat her, he tied her legs to one bed and her head to another bed. Her body was between the beds. Then when he beat her, he kept saying, "Tell me about your private husband". The woman said "I don't have one". He said, "If you are not going to tell me about your private husband, I will kill you...." Then he tied her down again on her stomach and stepped on the back of her neck, here. Then the woman died.... It is a very bad story – to kill a human being for something which is not true.... And what forced her to go to the market? It was because she had nothing to ensure [her family's] survival. That's why she decided to go and work and make money, for their survival. When the neighbours came, they asked him, "Why did you kill your brother's

wife?” He said, “...because she spoiled his name by making tea in the market....” (Teresa, 540-584)

This story demonstrates that the wicked woman narrative can act as a barrier to employment.

The unprotected woman

The unprotected woman narrative is used in ten of the women’s life stories. In this narrative, something happens which causes a woman to be without male protection, and she struggles. The narrative is presented as a way to address survival challenges – particularly those brought about by family rupture, and as a way of supporting child-focused aspirations.

In the face of survival challenges brought about by family rupture, the unprotected woman narrative appears to be a particularly good way of eliciting support. For example, Christine constructs herself as unprotected after her husband rejects her, in order to obtain support from her uncle:

[M]y husband said, “...I’m going to take all my children and I don’t need [you] my wife”. So I stayed like that, and my husband didn’t need me. So from there, I moved to a place called Hargan then continued to Muglad. Then I explained to [my] uncle there what had happened with me..., After I explained it to my uncle, my uncle told me to stay with him and never meet the man [my husband] again. (Christine, L317-323)

Christine’s story demonstrates that it can be useful for a woman to present herself as unprotected, in order to elicit support.

Grace similarly constructs herself as unprotected after her husband dies. Her husband was killed in a plane crash, three weeks after saving her life by flying her to Nairobi for medical treatment during her pregnancy. “My situation was very bad” (L271), she says. “He gave me the best life. Now that life is broken” (L209-210). She goes on:

I was thinking about... my life and the good things he did for me. Now he is gone and I cannot solve any of my problems unless I am working. I will be working until other people who know me, maybe they will help me.... (Grace, L227-230)

Although she is working, and, indeed, remarried to a man, who lives in Juba, Grace nevertheless constructs herself as unprotected, in case someone will help her.

The unprotected woman narrative is also used as a way of eliciting support for child-focused aspirations. For example, Teresa, who is widowed, says:

[My brother] is important, because, for example, if I lost my husband [which she has done], my brother could take over the responsibility for my family.... Also, he can educate my children. (Teresa, L276-280)

By presenting herself as unprotected, Teresa suggests she can obtain support from her brother, in order to realise her educational aspirations for her children.

The displaced woman

Finally, twelve of the women interviewed used the displaced woman narrative in the course of their life stories. The displaced woman narrative – in which a woman is displaced from the place where she comes from and struggles to return – is primarily presented as a survival strategy, even though, as we saw in Chapter 4, it is a source of family rupture. It is also presented as a way of achieving child-focused and educational aspirations, and as a barrier to educational aspirations.

An episode narrated by Betty demonstrates how the displaced woman narrative functions as a means of survival:

[In] the time of war we really suffered a lot.... We were running away from them, and, from there, the Arabs came and separated us from our mothers and fathers. My mum ran away, holding my younger sister's hand, the one who follows me [in the birth order]. The Arabs were trying to shoot us.... (Betty, L50-69)

The displaced woman narrative can also be used, however, to achieve child-focused aspirations. As we have seen, Amina's mother sent her away to Kenya, so that she could be educated in a refugee camp. At first, Amina did not share her mother's educational aspirations for her:

Kakuma is a place [in Kenya] where refugees are kept. So I was there. We went to school. By that time, I was young, I could not even manage to settle up in the class. So we liked lying outside, drinking porridge. We could even skip every now and then. (Amina, 91-93)

After some time, however, her mother's educational aspirations become her own aspirations:

[W]e moved to Nairobi. At that time, at least, I was grown, and I could understand that the school is good for me.... So I decided to settle at school, try to learn, and I was improving.... I call it a happy moment. (Amina, L102-112)

Displacement thus enabled Amina to receive an education. Indeed, she is the most educated of all of the women interviewed.

Displacement did not facilitate the educational aspirations of all women, however. As Sarah explains:

What I experienced during the war, they used to burn the buildings and then kill people. They used to shoot people.... When I was [a] younger age, the militia came. They took us by force, and we had to carry their bullets. Then they detained us for five days. After five days they released us, and we came back home.... What I used to think, when I was young, it was to go to school. Because there was a war, I could not manage to do that. I was in a bad generation. I didn't get what I was aiming for. I would really like – it was something that used to come into my mind from when I was young up until now – to go to school and be educated., but, unfortunately, I didn't make it. (Sarah, L94-113)

5.3.3 Use of modern public narratives

The educated woman

Having looked at the use of traditional narratives in women's life stories, we will now turn to the use of the modern narratives. The educated woman narrative – in which a woman receives an education, earns an income, acquires material security for herself and her family, helps her country to develop, and earns a place of respect in society – is used in thirteen of the women's life stories. It is presented as a means of survival and as a way of supporting child-focused, educational and employment aspirations.

That the educated woman narrative is presented as a means of survival is foreseeable, since the idea of material security is built into the narrative. An excerpt from Helen's story demonstrates how the narrative can be told with an emphasis on survival:

The pen [i.e., education] is a good thing, and it's good when you learn how to read and how to write and how to use your pen in your life. Those who can write, like employees and people working in the government, they are living a good life because of their pens.... In other kinds of jobs, you can just wait for a long time without achieving anything. Like, if you have a farm, you have some plants, you might just wait for the rain in order to have any kind of production.... But, if you are working with your pen, you can spend 12 months a year eating what you get from your pen. (Helen, L321-332)

The educated woman narrative can also be applied to children – like Nyalok's daughter – and thus used as a way of supporting child-focused aspirations:

I am the one pushing [my children] to go to school.... Why...? If the time comes for them to be responsible, they will manage. They will be able to work on their own. She or he can work for her or himself without any support from other people. (Nyalok, L129-137)

The educated woman narrative is, moreover, the rationale many women draw on in explaining why they want education for themselves. Christine, for example, says:

Me, I would like to learn more if I could be given [the] opportunity to be put into a learning group.... [T]he country is ours. There's no way we can run away from it.... And, if I meet people who know nothing, then I can also teach them to have knowledge just like me. (Christine, L64-72)

Elizabeth similarly says:

What I want to do right now, I want to continue going to school. If I continue my education, then I will be educated, and I will be somebody that can help.... [S]omeone who is progressing, someone who is coming up, there are so many things you can do, and so many ways you can help your country.... I want to do things, so people will remember I have done something good. Even if I died, something would be left as a legacy for people to remember, something good. (Elizabeth, L273-283)

Finally, the educated woman narrative is presented as a way of realizing employment aspirations – again, foreseeable, as the idea of education leading to employment is built into the narrative. For example, Elizabeth – who is now a teacher of younger children, even as she strives to complete her own education – explains, “I’m happy that I’m a teacher, and I believe it is because I was educated. If I wasn’t educated, then I would not be a teacher right now” (Elizabeth, L147-149).

The empowered woman

The empowered woman narrative, like the educated woman narrative, comes up in thirteen women’s life stories. In this narrative, a woman, who has gained rights under the South Sudanese constitution, learns about and claims these rights. She makes decisions for herself, considers herself equal to men and participates in public life. Like the educated woman narrative, this narrative is presented as a means of survival and as a way of supporting child-focused, educational and employment aspirations.

In order to survive, women often claim the right to work using the empowered woman narrative – stressing that men and women should be equal, and promoting

women's presence in public life. For example, Helen complains: "[W]omen in South Sudan are left behind. Do you see the result of that, now? In South Sudan, women are really behind" (L657-658). She goes on to explain how she decided to build a shop in the marketplace:

I am paying my children's school fees, and I built my shop. I hope to get money back from the shop. I built the shop in order to improve my situation at home, in order to have a stable house in the future. By building a shop, I can support anybody in the house. Even my children.... (Helen, L730-734)

Grace, similarly, built a shop in the marketplace. After her first husband was killed in the plane crash, she started selling tea. As she explains:

[R]ight now, I'm working. I can have anything that I want – for example, clothes or food, or if my children are sick [I can take them to hospital] – for example, right now, my husband is far [in Juba] – and they will not need to borrow pens from other students in the class. I buy my own things, and if I didn't have money, if I didn't have my business right now, my life would be different. (Grace, L178-182)

She relates plans to grow her business, saying, "I'm planning to build a better place in order to cook and sell food" (L172-173), and she further reflects:

Generally, in life, if you focus on something you believe in, your life will be good, and, if you don't concentrate on something, your life will be bad. Like, right now, I'm running my own business. I do everything in my power to develop it. (L158-160)

The empowered woman narrative is further used as a way of supporting child-focused aspirations. For example, Mary argues that, while she herself wasn't allowed to go to school, nowadays it is her children's right to go to school:

I grew up in this place, and how my life started when I was a child is different from life nowadays. In my life., not everyone was allowed to go to school. And, now, everyone has a right to go to school, and nobody is staying at home. Like, now, my children, they go to school. No child stays at home. (Mary, L24-28)

Nyalok similarly says:

Twenty-five percent, it is ours. And we put it in practice. We are using it. Because the future generation that is growing up now, like the girls whose names were called out yesterday [on the radio, for having passed their exams], it is because of 25%. If it weren't for the 25%, girls would not be educated. Because now there are young girls, [and] if they are going to go on well with education, they will come out and own 25%. (Nyalok, L308-312)

Finally, the empowered woman narrative is used as a way of supporting women's own educational aspirations. Nyalok, for example, says:

Yes, now, women themselves, they have power.... Before, in the church policy, there was no woman ordained as a pastor. And, this year, it happened. There is a woman who was ordained as a pastor, this year, together with men.... Now, we are here as women. We have confirmed, for ourselves, that what men do, women can do. As now I'm talking, I'm planning to go for adult education. I will learn so that I will do what men can do. Women, they have work and we have seen their work. (Nyalok, L323-331)

Elizabeth similarly argues for women's education on the grounds that women's empowerment will be the beneficial outcome:

[I]f we are allowed to go to school., then you will have this kind of equality, where the men will be there, and then they will love to see a woman next to the man in any position. Or, maybe, tomorrow, the girl will be ahead, and the man next to her in the position [i.e., a public position, in an organization or in government]. This is what I would love to see. If women are educated, you will see that kind of reversal.... (Elizabeth, L567-573)

The women's group

The narrative of the women's group – in which a group of women get together and solve social problems – comes up in eight women's life stories. Just like the previous two narratives, this narrative is used as a strategy for survival, a way of supporting child-focused aspirations, a way of supporting educational aspirations and a way of supporting employment aspirations.

Several women explain that those who are facing survival challenges can join a women's group. Mary, for example, says:

If a woman is having some problems, if she comes to the group, she will share her problem with the group.... Then [she] will do all this sewing and bed sheet making and then [she] can sell them in the market and it will help [her] family. The women who are not in the group, they suffer in so many ways. (Mary, L131-135)

The women's group narrative is also used as a way of supporting child-focused aspirations. Elizabeth, for example, explains:

Women discuss things that are facing them, like what we are discussing now. Like if you have a problem that is facing you, we discuss it. Like what I mentioned earlier – the problems that we are facing – we want our children to progress and do well in their lives. These are the kinds of things that women discuss. (Elizabeth, L556-559)

Finally, the women's group narrative is used as a way of supporting educational and employment aspirations. Helen, for example, is part of a women's group that has started a project to bring water closer to the community. She explains that, with this water, the group plans to start collective farming:

The [water] project is going well. Nothing will stop it.... People can plant some beans or vegetables easily, because they have water. It is also good for people who have farms and animals. For those who have their small gardens, if their plants grow, maybe the organizations [NGOs] can buy it from them and sell it somewhere. This is our idea here.... We are not going to divide [the produce from the farm].... We are not doing that., because we want the farm to become bigger than when we started out. As I said before, we are going to look for an organization to buy everything.... (Helen, L531-549)

She goes on to explain how this might enable them to build a school for women:

I think that, if we get good money from the project, we should build our own school for women.... We want to build a school for women that is close to our place. Right now., [s]ome of us go to [a school far from where they live].... (Helen, L562-569)

The women's group narrative is thus also instrumental in supporting women's educational aspirations.

The uneducated woman

Women also find the uneducated woman narrative – in which a woman does not complete her education and so is unable to help herself, her family or her country – to be a useful narrative. This narrative is used in thirteen women's life stories, and it is used as a means of survival, a way of supporting child-focused aspirations, a way of supporting educational aspirations and a way of explaining barriers to employment.

As a strategy for survival, the uneducated woman narrative is used to elicit support from NGOs. Didi, for example, explains:

If you are not educated you can call the organizations [NGOs], talk to them, and they might help you. Organizations are supposed to help people, because there's nothing people can do. For me, now, I don't have any ability to do anything. I have never gone to school. I don't even know A, B, C. (Didi, L267-270)

Christine, similarly, presents herself as uneducated to elicit support from the NGO for which the interviewer works. She says:

Like now, I'm just here. I have nothing to do. I don't have a job. I'm not educated. I don't have anything good.... Like you people now, you are working with khawajaat [white foreigners]. The khawajaat you are working with, you can tell them to help me so that they can push me ahead. (Christine, L263-267)

Indeed, Christine does have a job, albeit not a job requiring a high level of education; she washes plates at a restaurant in the marketplace. The interview is being conducted at her place of work. However, her construction of herself as uneducated and unemployed seems designed to elicit NGO support.

The uneducated woman narrative is further used to legitimise child-focused aspirations. Nyalok, for example, cites her own lack of education as a reason for wanting to educate her children:

My own experience, I was not educated. If I was an educated woman, I could manage to maintain my life with my family, to do the best which is needed for survival. So, what I can tell my child to do [i.e., get an education], it is for the future life.... (Nyalok, L140-142)

The uneducated woman narrative is also used to legitimise women's own educational aspirations. For example, Josephine says:

Challenges that are facing women are very many. For us women., there are some who are illiterate and some with little education. In this case women are still behind.... [N]ow, if our country is independent, we [would] like to be supported, so at least we can know something.... We need to be shown about hygiene, because there are some women who do not still know about hygiene – for instance, the women in the rural villages, who do not yet know about baby care.... [W]hat made us like that is because we are still behind in education. (Josephine, L81-91)

Elizabeth, similarly, explains:

What I think I want to do is continue my education, because I didn't finish school to the point where I got a certificate. If I continue, I will be able to learn more and do good things. If I stopped going to school, then I would not be able to help, even to improve the lives of my children.... (Elizabeth, L288-291)

Finally, the uneducated woman narrative is presented as a barrier to employment – an idea that is, in some sense, built into the narrative. Sarah, for example, explains:

I am uneducated; I didn't go to school. If I was an educated women, I could take courage, because I would be able to support myself on my own, but I'm not educated.... Now I ask myself, "How can I survive and support myself when I'm not educated?" (Sarah, L18-21)

Christine, likewise, says:

Now, it's a big problem, because there are no jobs. If you are not educated there will be nothing good in your life. Like, for example, for me, I am not educated, and I am working with another woman in this restaurant washing plates. This job, for me, is not good. It's just washing plates in the restaurant. If I were educated, this would not be my job. (Christine, L227-231)

The dependent woman

Finally, the dependent woman narrative – in which something negative happens to a woman, and she becomes dependent, stays at home and is unable to support herself or her family – is used in five women's life stories. It is used as a means of survival, a way of supporting child-focused aspirations and a way of supporting educational and employment aspirations

Betty, for example, constructs herself as a dependent woman in order to elicit government support. Betty was shot in the leg during the war, while she was running from her village for safety, and explains:

[T]here's nothing I can manage to do because I'm lame. If I go to the organization [NGO] to work with the foreigners, they will not agree because I'm lame. They will say, "She cannot do anything. As you can see, she is lame". If I say I have to cultivate, I cannot manage; if I want to work at the market, I cannot manage. There's nothing I find easy to do. I believe I can only survive in the hands of my husband. (Betty, L109-114)

Betty uses this presentation of herself as an appeal to the government for help. She says:

[W]e are really hoping that the government of South Sudan will help us to at least provide [something]..; at least give you a little bit to add to what you earn.... [S]ome people die, because they sometimes may not get enough food to eat.... (Betty, L21-25)

She also appeals to the government for help with her child-focused aspirations, saying:

I would like the government to help me educate at least two children.... I don't know how to find the government people. If I could find them, I would tell them to help me to educate my children. I think, if my children are educated, that would bring change into my life. My husband doesn't have a brother; he is the only one. The money he earns isn't enough for the needs of the family. (Betty, L129-138)

Finally, the dependent woman narrative is used to support women's educational and employment aspirations. Sarah, for example, says:

My dream – if God allows me to go to school, I can be independent. If you are dependent on another person, it is not good. What is important is to be independent and support yourself and the children. Like the problem of sickness – I would not have to wait for support from someone else to come and take my child to hospital. If I had the capacity, I could just take my child myself. (Sarah, L212-216)

Having detailed the primary ways in which both modern and traditional narratives are used in the course of women's life stories, we will now consider the implications of these findings.

5.4 Discussion

This chapter set out to investigate how rural South Sudanese women use public narratives for different purposes, in the course of their lives, in order to lay the foundation for an investigation of how public narratives facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals.

The findings confirm, clearly, what was suggested at the end of Chapter 4, that people are comfortable using both traditional and modern narratives, simultaneously, and that they draw on these narratives in a fluid and flexible way, for a variety of purposes, throughout the course of their lives. In particular, they draw on narratives to deal with survival challenges, to explain episodes of family rupture, to explain, legitimise and achieve child-focused, educational and employment aspirations, and to explain barriers to education and employment.

Traditional narratives are used for all of these purposes, while modern narratives are used for almost all of these purposes.

To demonstrate the interplay of narratives within individual women's life stories, we will now consider the life stories of two women, Grace and Elizabeth. Grace is the woman who credits her husband with saving her life during her first pregnancy, and who started a tea business after he was killed in a plane crash. As we have seen throughout the chapter, in the interests of survival, she uses the modern narrative of the empowered woman, but also the traditional narratives of the mother, the devout woman, the protected woman and the unprotected woman. Drawing on the narrative of the empowered woman, she says she is currently doing "everything in [her] power to develop" her business (L160), and declares, "right now I'm working. I can have anything that I want" (L178-179). At the same time, drawing on the mother narrative, she claims, "I'm sure [my children] will support me [when they are older]" (L288). Drawing on the devout woman narrative, she says that she prays to God, "[e]very night" for help (L318), while drawing on the protected woman narrative, she reflects positively on the protection she received from her first husband, saying, "He gave me the best life. Now that life is broken" (L209-210), and she currently presents herself as unprotected, even though she is remarried and working, so that "other people who know [her], maybe they will help [her]" (L229-230). Grace thus deploys a range of narratives, both traditional and modern, to address survival challenges. This is typical for most of the women interviewed.

Let us now consider Elizabeth. Elizabeth also uses a wide range of narratives, as we have seen throughout the chapter. She is the woman who fought incredibly hard for education as a child, to the extent that she ran away from her parents to go to school. She was ultimately married, for a large number of cows, and is currently working as a primary school teacher. She wants to continue her education to the point where she gets a secondary school certificate. Elizabeth draws on the modern narratives of the educated and empowered woman but also on the traditional

narratives of the bride, wife, mother, protected woman and devout woman, in justifying and seeking to achieve her educational aspirations. She says that she wants education so she can be an educated woman – “somebody that can help [the country]” (Elizabeth, L274), and she invokes the empowered woman narrative in describing her determination to receive education as a child, saying, “If [women] are allowed to go to school... then you will have... equality” (Elizabeth, L567-569), but she also says she wants education in order to be a good mother and “read what is written on [her child’s] medicine...” (Elizabeth, L90). Moreover, she proudly declares that, as a result of her education, she, “brought so many cows that [her] parents were happy” (Elizabeth, L133), and she views the fact that she is a protected woman, a devout woman and a good wife, whose husband has “taken [her] back to school” (Elizabeth, L171), as supporting her educational aspirations. Like Grace, she deploys a wide range of narratives, both traditional and modern – this time to explain, legitimise and pursue her educational aspirations.

What emerges from this chapter is a picture of public narratives as flexible resources, which can be used for a variety of purposes. This is born out, empirically, in the following two data chapters, which look explicitly at the meeting of gender and development goals and South Sudanese communities at two symbolic sites: the content of NGO-funded community radio and the community discussions engendered by such content. The findings from this chapter, however, like the findings from the last chapter, provide some preliminary insights in relation to the overarching research question of the thesis – how public narratives facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals.

First – although this chapter does not specifically examine symbolic sites where gender and development goals and rural South Sudanese communities meet, as Chapters 6 and 7 do – it is worth noting that most of the aspirations women mention as they narrate their life stories seem to be well aligned with gender and development goals. Child-focused aspirations, for example, seem to align well with

gender and development goals concerning child health and girl-child education. Educational aspirations seem to align well with the goal of women's education, and employment aspirations seem to align well with efforts to ensure productive work for women.

If we consider the point, made by narrative scholars, that public narratives *shape* people's personal narratives and aspirations (Andrews, 2007; Bruner, 2003, 2004; Crossley, 2000; Hammack, 2008; Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Murray, 2003; Phoenix, 2013; Plummer, 2007; Rappaport, 2000; Riessman, 2008; Somers, 1994), it may be that the three aspirations women express are derived from three specific public narratives – child-focused aspirations from the mother narrative, educational aspirations from the educated woman narrative, and employment aspirations from the empowered woman narrative.

However, the results from this chapter also point strongly to the idea of public narratives as flexible symbolic resources that can be mobilized in diverse ways (Bruner, 2004; Crossley, 2000; Hammack, 2008; Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 2000). For example, eleven of the thirteen public narratives – both modern and traditional – are used to justify and support women's educational aspirations. We also see that certain narratives may facilitate one woman's aspirations, while acting as a barrier to another's. For example, the wife narrative facilitates Elizabeth's educational aspirations but hampers Helen's. The mother and protected woman narratives support Elizabeth's educational aspirations but curtail Grace's. The displaced woman narrative enables Amina to go to school but prevents Sarah from doing so. Thus, the findings suggest that public narratives – both modern and traditional – might support gender and development goals but also act as barriers to the achievement of those goals.

This insight will be unpacked and developed in the final two empirical chapters, which look at symbolic sites that represent meeting points between gender and

development goals and South Sudanese communities. Unlike in this chapter, rural South Sudanese community members explicitly grapple with gender and development goals in the two subsequent chapters, and construct responses to these goals. We begin by looking at the content of NGO-funded community radio, examining how both presenters and contributors use public narratives within programmes on gender issues.

Chapter 6: Media's use of public narratives

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter set out to investigate how women use public narratives as symbolic resources in the course of their lives, to lay the foundation for understanding how public narratives might facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals. Drawing on interviews with fifteen women in rural South Sudan, the analysis suggested that public narratives – both traditional and modern – were flexible resources that could be invoked for a variety of purposes, including addressing survival challenges, explaining episodes of family rupture, explaining, legitimising and achieving child-focused, educational and employment aspirations, and explaining barriers to education and employment.

In this chapter, we turn more specifically to the ways in which public narratives are used in community radio programmes on gender issues, in order to investigate how public narratives about women facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals. As I have argued in Chapters 1 and 2, NGO-funded community radio is an ideal site to study the meeting point of gender and development goals and local communities, as it is influenced by NGO thinking but is made by community members.

As I also explained in Chapter 2, media effects research has shown that the media perform an agenda setting function (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). This chapter, therefore, begins by looking at how much coverage related to women there is, on South Sudanese community radio, and what topics are covered. The findings confirm that gender issues are high on the agenda, representing one out of every five pieces of content, and that the issues being covered relate to many standard gender and development goals. Indeed, the top seven topics correspond to gender and development goals, outlined in Chapter 2, or fit well with said goals.

Media also perform what, in the media and communications literature, is called a framing function (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). Because of a frame's ability to suggest how to think about an issue, the chapter also looks at the ways in which journalists on community radio in South Sudan frame women's issues and whether they use public narratives to do so. The findings show that journalists nearly always frame content in ways that *support* gender and development goals, often using modern public narratives as frames.

Finally, the chapter investigates how public narratives are being used throughout the content by presenters and by their guests and contributors, who are also community members. Here, a different finding emerges. While modern narratives are invoked throughout the programmes to advocate for gender and development goals, traditional narratives are invoked, in equal measure, if not more, to advocate for gender and development goals. Community radio, thus, uses public narratives in programming on gender issues in a fluid and complex way, drawing on both traditional and modern narratives to make the case for gender and development goals.

6.2 Chapter methodology

The core analysis for this chapter draws on two primary data sources: a content log, containing programmes from the past five months and news items from the past 20 months, and full transcripts of 14 programmes. I describe both data sources and how they were analysed, in further detail, below.

6.2.1 Data source 1: Content log

Data collection

To explore the agenda setting function of the community radio stations, a content log was downloaded from each station, with some metadata and a brief description

of every programme made by the station's journalists, that aired in the previous five months, and every news item made by the station's journalists, that aired in the previous 20 months. This log was kept by the station journalists and monitored for completeness by an NGO staff member, in Juba, who was part of the research, monitoring and evaluation team. The primary purpose of the log was to have a record of all programmes and news items aired, for donor reporting purposes.

The difference between programmes and news items is that programmes are typically 20-50 minutes long and air in a weekly timeslot, whereas news items are typically 1-5 minutes long and air on the daily news bulletin. The descriptions of the content ranged from extremely short – e.g. “On International Women’s Day” – to somewhat more detailed – e.g. “The program was on the formation of women associations from grass root level like bomas, Payam and Counties such that these associations down there will help in gather information on some things affecting women”.

Programmes were pre-tagged with a primary theme by the journalist, who entered them into the content log. One of the possible primary themes was “gender issues”, and all programmes so tagged were counted, for the purposes of this analysis, as programmes pertaining to women.

News items were not pre-tagged with a primary theme, so a different method had to be devised for identifying news stories related to women. The entire content log was therefore searched using the following key words: “gender”, “woman”, “women”, “girl”, “female”, “mother”, “daughter”, “sister”, “wife”, “wives”, “she”, “her”. Any news item containing one or more of these key words was counted as a news item pertaining to women.

In order to ensure consistency, programmes which had not been tagged with the primary theme “gender issues”, but which contained one or more of the relevant key

words, were also included. This yielded 336 pieces of content that had to do with women (170 programmes and 166 news items), out of a total of 3465 pieces of content in the content log (967 programmes and 2498 news items).

Analysis

After titles pertaining to women had been identified, they were inductively thematically coded according to main topic. In most cases, the main topic was clear – e.g. “On education of girl child”. In some cases the main topic was unclear – e.g. “Importance of Women International”, or there was only one piece of content on the topic in the content log – e.g. “Women and youth get training on constitution”. In these cases, the content was coded “other”. In some cases, there were two or more potentially suitable codes, in which case, an educated guess was made as to which topic was the main topic. The analysis provides a sense of what agenda the media is setting in relation to women, which provides context for the rest of the findings in the chapter.

In the interests of contextualisation, a few other pieces of analysis were also run, using data from the content log. Specifically, the news items were searched for stories related to men, using comparable key words – “man”, “men”, “boy”, “male”, “father”, “son”, “brother”, “husband”, “he”, “his”, “him”, and the gender of those who spoke on programmes was examined. Results from this analysis are presented in the findings section.

6.2.2 Data source 2: Full transcripts of content

Data collection

To explore the framing function of the media, and to look at the media’s use of public narratives, a subset of programmes and news items was analysed in-depth. These programmes and news items comprised a convenience sample, obtained by asking journalists at each radio station to provide all content they had related to women. They provided 47 items, ranging in length from 49 minutes to 36 seconds,

and representing fifteen-and-a-half hours of radio content. A third of this content was chosen at random, translated, transcribed and analysed. A summary of what was provided, and what was translated, transcribed and analysed, is presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Media content provided and media content analysed

| LOCATION | CONTENT PROVIDED | | CONTENT ANALYSED | |
|------------------------|------------------|----------|------------------|---------|
| | # of items | 0:00:00 | # of items | 0:00:00 |
| Maluakon (Nhomlaau FM) | 12 | 4:31:12 | 6 | 2:14:29 |
| Turalei (Mayardit FM) | 9 | 3:59:27 | 3 | 1:26:19 |
| Leer (Naath FM) | 26 | 7:05:24 | 5 | 1:22:26 |
| TOTAL | 47 | 15:36:03 | 14 | 5:03:14 |

In total, of the 14 pieces of content analysed in-depth, eight were pre-recorded programmes made by community journalists, one was a pre-recorded programme made by an international NGO, one was a live call-in programme made by community journalists, one was a news item made by community journalists, and three were interview clips, which had presumably been inserted into news items.

The seven pre-recorded programmes made by community journalists ranged in length from 19 to 31 minutes and followed a similar format. First, the presenter opened with an introduction, stated the topic and introduced a guest. Then the guest talked at length, with few questions or interruptions from the presenter. Sometimes, there was a break for music, and, sometimes, a second guest was introduced, who similarly talked at length with few questions or interruptions from the presenter. In the end, the presenter made some concluding remarks, and the programme was over.

The pre-recorded programme made by an international NGO was 30 minutes long and had a magazine format. First, there was a special report by a journalist, followed by a moderated debate between two guests, followed by vox pops with ordinary people. This programme was the only programme in the sample made in English, likely because it was made by an international NGO and had to be made in a *lingua*

franca in order to be disseminated to various community radio stations throughout South Sudan.

The format of the single call-in programme, which was 49 minutes in length, was slightly different. The presenter introduced the topic of the day, told people how to contact the station to express their views on the topic, and then waited for calls. While waiting, the presenter spoke a bit about the topic, encouraged people to call in, and played music, station promotions and public service announcements (PSAs). When calls came in, the presenter let each caller speak, for a couple of minutes, and then summarized the caller's position, sometimes asking a question or two. This went on until the end of the programme.

The format of the single news item included in the sample, which was three minutes long, was as follows: the announcer stated the facts of the story, played three interview clips, that were relevant to the story, and then summarized the story.

The three interview clips included in the sample, which ranged from 36 seconds to one minute and 40 seconds, did not contain the voice of a presenter or announcer. They were sound bites of people talking, and they had presumably been inserted into news items. These items were all in English but may have been voiced over, when included in news items.

Analysis

Once all of the content had been translated and transcribed, I again used the listening guide method of narrative analysis (Gilligan et al., 2006), which consisted of multiple readings. In the first reading, I again looked at plot (what), actors (who), setting (where, when), goal (why) the means (how), and recorded my own emotional reactions to, and perspectives on, what I was reading, to ensure that I was reading reflexively. This first reading enabled me to identify the frame – or narrative – of each piece of content.

In the next reading, I read for voices, constructing “I” poems for each of the speakers that appeared in each piece of content. This enabled me to see differences in the voices of the presenters and their contributors.

Finally, I read for public narratives, looking for both references to, and examples of, the public narratives identified in Chapter 4. This enabled me to identify when and how different public narratives were being woven into the content and why.

6.3 Findings

6.3.1 Agenda setting

Looking at the volume of coverage related to women on South Sudanese community radio, it seems that people are being encouraged to think about women and their role in South Sudanese society. Eighteen per cent of programmes on community radio – nearly one in five – are about women, or issues connected to women, and although most news items are not readily linked to either gender, seven per cent appear to be related to women (based on a search of key words), while only four per cent appear to be related to men (based on a search of comparable key words.) This is shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Media content related to women and men

| | PROGRAMMES | | | NEWS ITEMS | | | | |
|----------|------------------|-----|-------|------------------|----|----------------|----|-------|
| Station | Related to women | | Total | Related to women | | Related to men | | Total |
| | # | % | # | # | % | # | % | # |
| Nhomlaau | 37 | 14% | 257 | 71 | 8% | 45 | 5% | 914 |
| Mayardit | 60 | 19% | 313 | 56 | 6% | 22 | 2% | 976 |
| Naath | 73 | 18% | 397 | 39 | 6% | 27 | 4% | 608 |
| ALL | 170 | 18% | 967 | 166 | 7% | 94 | 4% | 2498 |

Table 13: Gender balance on programmes

| | PROGRAMMES OVERALL | | PROGRAMMES RELATED TO WOMEN | |
|------------|--------------------|----------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | % Male | % Female | % Male | % Female |
| Presenters | 75% | 25% | 59% | 41% |
| Guests | 86% | 14% | 46% | 54% |
| Callers | 77% | 23% | 72% | 28% |

Table 13 shows that, for programmes related to women, roughly half of the presenters and guests are female, but, for programmes overall, only 25% of the presenters and 14% of the guests are female. This suggests that programmes related to women may be an important vehicle for women's expression. Call-in programmes, however, see only about a quarter of calls coming from women, even when the topic of the programme is related to women. This suggests that the voices of women with some stature in the communities – i.e., radio presenters and those invited to speak on the radio for a particular reason – may be more prominent than the voices of ordinary women.

Looking at the list of topics being discussed in relation to women, it seems that standard gender and development issues are high on the agenda. Table 14 shows that the top seven topics correspond to gender and development goals, outlined in Chapter 2, or fit well with said goals.

The top seven topics, which constitute over half of the coverage (54%), deal with issues of girls' and women's education, violence against women, health – including maternal and child health, women's employment, women's political participation and leadership, women's groups and women's access to justice. More issues related to gender and development goals emerge further down, such as early and forced marriage, women and conflict mitigation, women's rights, women and agriculture, women's property rights, women and food security, and gender equality and women's empowerment generally. Together, the items that appear to be related to gender and development goals (highlighted in grey in the table) represent more than two thirds (69%) of the content.

Table 14: Topics related to women on South Sudanese community radio

| MAIN TOPIC | EXAMPLE | ALL CONTENT | | PROGRAMMES | | NEWS ITEMS | |
|--|--|-------------|-----|------------|-----|------------|-----|
| | | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| 1. Girls' and women's education | <i>Education director urges parents to send girl children to school (News item)</i> | 54 | 16% | 20 | 12% | 34 | 20% |
| 2. Violence against women | <i>A major campaign to promote women rights has been launched in Warrap state with focus on stopping domestic violence (News item)</i> | 40 | 12% | 10 | 6% | 30 | 18% |
| 3. Health (including maternal and child health) | <i>CCM Hospital in Turalei is trying to raise awareness about the number of pregnant mothers suffering from anaemia during their deliveries (News item)</i> | 30 | 9% | 10 | 6% | 20 | 12% |
| 4. Women's employment | <i>Women in Leer county begin micro-finance activities (News item)</i> | 18 | 5% | 6 | 4% | 12 | 7% |
| 5. Women's political participation and leadership | <i>More women need to be involved in the government, says a member of the Warrap State Legislative Assembly (News item)</i> | 15 | 4% | 4 | 2% | 11 | 7% |
| 6. Women's groups | <i>On women groups (Programme)</i> | 14 | 4% | 7 | 4% | 7 | 4% |
| 7. Women's access to justice | <i>More women than men are locked up at Aweil prison (News item)</i> | 12 | 4% | 5 | 3% | 7 | 4% |
| 8. Women's domestic duties and role in the family | <i>Domestic duties of the women (Programme)</i> | 10 | 3% | 9 | 5% | 1 | 1% |
| 9. Raising children | <i>Last time when child make a mistake at home, mother will refuse to give him food or he might be given food without milk - Is it a good punishment that can be adopted? (Programme)</i> | 9 | 3% | 9 | 5% | 0 | 0% |
| 10. Women-focused events (including International Women's Day) | <i>Are local Women aware about International Women's Day? (Programme)</i> | 9 | 3% | 6 | 4% | 3 | 2% |
| 11. Polygamy | <i>Polygamy and Monogamy - what it the importance of polygamy and monogamy In our society? (Programme)</i> | 8 | 2% | 8 | 5% | 0 | 0% |
| 12. Women's clothing and appearance | <i>Should girls wear trousers? (Programme)</i> | 8 | 2% | 6 | 4% | 2 | 1% |
| 13. Dowry and marriage negotiation | <i>Internal Fight over the marriage dowry. Many people are fighting women girls has been pregnant or illegal marriage instead of creating good relation. What is that mean in our society? (Programme)</i> | 7 | 2% | 7 | 4% | 0 | 0% |
| 14. Drugs and alcohol | <i>Effect of Alcohol in family life. What are the effects of alcohol in family life? (Programme)</i> | 7 | 2% | 5 | 3% | 2 | 1% |
| 15. Early and forced marriage | <i>Early marriage (Programme)</i> | 7 | 2% | 4 | 2% | 3 | 2% |
| 16. Gossiping | <i>Is it possible to stop gossiping? Caller comments (Programme)</i> | 7 | 2% | 7 | 4% | 0 | 0% |
| 17. Women and conflict mitigation | <i>Women can make good instrumental to conflict mitigation (Programme)</i> | 7 | 2% | 4 | 2% | 3 | 2% |

| MAIN TOPIC | EXAMPLE | ALL CONTENT | | PROGRAMMES | | NEWS ITEMS | |
|---|--|-------------|------|------------|------|------------|------|
| | | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| 18. Child protection and children's rights | <i>Children's rights should be protected by local authorities and NGOs (Programme)</i> | 6 | 2% | 6 | 4% | 0 | 0% |
| 19. Street children | <i>What will minimize the high rate of street children in the society? (Programme)</i> | 6 | 2% | 4 | 2% | 2 | 1% |
| 20. Women's rights (general) | <i>More needs to be done to improve women's rights in Northern Bahr El Ghazal, participants at a human rights workshop have found (News item)</i> | 6 | 2% | 3 | 2% | 3 | 2% |
| 21. Female returnees | <i>Almost 400 returnees from Khartoum were received by the ministry of gender and child welfare in Unity State yesterday (News item)</i> | 5 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 5 | 3% |
| 22. Women's role in traditional society | <i>On Women's role in traditional society (Programme)</i> | 5 | 1% | 5 | 3% | 0 | 0% |
| 23. Women and agriculture | <i>Over sixty members of a women's group from Peth area in Aweil East County are set to start a vegetable farming project (News item)</i> | 4 | 1% | 1 | 1% | 3 | 2% |
| 24. Women's property rights | <i>Property rights law and property inheritance of women (Programme)</i> | 4 | 1% | 3 | 2% | 1 | 1% |
| 25. Women and food security | <i>Aweil West women's representative calls on Commissioner to fix unfair food distribution (News item)</i> | 3 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 2% |
| 26. Gender equality and women's empowerment (general) | <i>Women in Aweil demand gender equality (News item)</i> | 2 | 1% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| 27. Extent of women's work | <i>Is it true that women work more than men? (Programme)</i> | 2 | 1% | 2 | 1% | 0 | 0% |
| 28. Traditional beliefs | <i>Traditional Magician – do people still believe in magic? Some young girls claimed possession of magic spirit, what do people think about them? Could they suffer from unknown infections? (Programme)</i> | 2 | 1% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| 29. Women and religion | <i>The first female pastor in Western Upper Nile has been ordained by the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (News item)</i> | 2 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 1% |
| 30. Women and sport | <i>Women and sports (Programme)</i> | 2 | 1% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| 31. Other/unknown | <i>Importance of Girls (Programme)</i> | 25 | 7% | 16 | 9% | 9 | 5% |
| TOTAL | | 336 | 100% | 170 | 100% | 166 | 100% |

Also in the list are topics which could be said to resonate with traditional public narratives about women – topics such as women's domestic duties and role in the family (the wife narrative), raising children (the mother narrative), dowry and marriage negotiation (the bride narrative), gossiping (the wicked woman narrative) and women and religion (the devout woman narrative). The extent to which these

programmes, too, are engaging with issues related to gender and development goals is unclear. For example, a programme on traditional beliefs could be talking about traditional beliefs and women's health, but that could only be determined by an assessment of the content. What is strongly suggested from the analysis of topics, however, is that standard gender and development issues are high on the agenda.

6.3.2 Framing

Although the previous analysis gives a sense of what topics community radio is covering in relation to women, it does not indicate how topics are being framed. This was determined by narratively analysing a subset of content, presented in Table 15. All of the titles have been retained as they were originally provided.

Table 15: List of content narratively analysed

| # | TITLE | MAIN TOPIC | TYPE OF CONTENT | STATION | AIR DATES |
|----|---|--|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | <i>Girl Education</i> | Girls' and women's education | Programme (Pre-recorded) | Nhomlaau FM | 30-Nov-12 |
| 2 | <i>Girl Empowerment Through Education</i> | | Programme (Pre-recorded) | Mayardit FM | 3-Dec-12 21-Jan-13 |
| 3 | <i>Women and safety birth program</i> | Health and hygiene (including maternal and child health) | Programme (Pre-recorded) | Mayardit FM | 1-May-13 8-May-13 |
| 4 | <i>Women Immunization</i> | | Programme (Pre-recorded) | Nhomlaau FM | 27-Feb-13 |
| 5 | <i>The work of women groups</i> | Women's groups | Programme (Pre-recorded) | Nhomlaau FM | 23-Nov-12 30-Nov-12 19-Dec-12 |
| 6 | <i>International Women's Day – Ban Ki Moon</i> | Women-focused events (including International Women's Day) | Interview clip | Naath FM | Likely 8-Mar-13 |
| 7 | <i>Women's day interview – MP Mary Kiden, Pt.1</i> | | Interview clip | Naath FM | Likely 8-Mar-13 |
| 8 | <i>Women's day interview – MP Mary Kiden, Pt.2</i> | | Interview clip | Naath FM | Likely 8-Mar-13 |
| 9 | <i>Polygamy</i> | Polygamy | Programme (Pre-recorded) | Nhomlaau FM | 5-Nov-12 27-Nov-12 |
| 10 | <i>Role of women in child upbringing</i> | Raising children | Programme (Pre-recorded) | Mayardit FM | 2-Jan-13 |
| 11 | <i>Land Act News</i> | Women's property rights | News item | Nhomlaau FM | 29-Mar-13 |
| 12 | <i>Women's Inheritance Rights</i> | | Programme (Externally made) | Naath FM | Unknown |
| 13 | <i>On conflict mitigation</i> | Women and conflict mitigation | Programme (Pre-recorded) | Nhomlaau FM | Unknown |
| 14 | <i>Why women have low participation in Military</i> | Other | Programme (Live call-in) | Naath FM | 17-May-13 |

Of the content narratively analysed, there were two programmes on girls' and women's education, two programmes on health – including maternal and child health, one programme on women's groups, three interview clips from International Women's Day, one programme on polygamy, one programme on raising children, one programme and one news item on women's property rights, one programme on women and conflict mitigation and one live call-in programme about women's participation in the military.

The narrative analysis of this content examined both the frames used by presenters, as well as the public narratives used by community members who appeared on the programmes as guests and contributors. Below, I first present an analysis of the frames used by presenters. A summary of these frames – with illustrative quotations – is presented in Table 16. The analysis suggests that, in programmes on topics related to gender and development goals, presenters are generally trying to frame content in ways that *support* gender and development goals. For example, programmes on girls' education are supporting girls' education, programmes on women's property rights are upholding women's right to own property, and programmes on maternal and child health are encouraging women to deliver in hospitals.

In addition, programmes not obviously on topics related to gender and development goals – i.e., *Polygamy* (programme 9), *Role of women in child upbringing* (programme 10) and *Why women have low participation in Military* (programme 14) – are *also* supporting gender and development goals. *Polygamy* (programme 9), for example, is actually supporting family planning; *Role of women in child upbringing* (programme 10) is actually supporting women's rights – specifically, their custody rights; and *Why women have low participation in Military* (programme 14) is actually promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, women's public participation and women's leadership.

Table 16: Frames

| # | TITLE | FRAME | EVIDENCE |
|---|--|--|---|
| 1 | Girl Education (Programme) | Girls are currently being prevented from completing their education due to early marriage, but, if this changes, educated girls will help to develop South Sudan. | <p><i>Our programme today is about girls' education and what the problems are affecting their continuing education in the schools. A lot of people say for South Sudan to develop, we need help from our women to join hands in the nation building and to eliminate issues affecting their education. This can be achieved by allowing girls to go to school and providing support [for them] to continue education. (L56-61) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>Early marriage is the main obstacle to girls' education in South Sudan. (L35) - Presenter</i></p> |
| 2 | Girl Empowerment Through Education (Programme) | Parents prevent girls from completing their education, because parents view girls as a source of wealth and marry them early. Government should intervene to keep girls in schools, so that South Sudan can develop. | <p><i>People think that the woman is just something that can bring quick wealth to the family [through bride price], and this is affecting women's education. Another thing is early marriage. This is affecting girls' education in the country.... (L121-124) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>[T]here are people that keep the woman as a source of resource or a source of wealth. What do you think that the government can do to bring these girls into schools and education, so that the country can develop...? (L152-154) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>The government can say ok, let's bring the girls to education.... (L187-188) - Presenter</i></p> |
| 3 | Women and safety birth program (Programme) | When a woman gets pregnant, she should visit the hospital for medicine and injections, and, when the baby comes, she should deliver in hospital. That way she will have a safe delivery. | <p><i>Today we are going to discuss... how women can give birth in a safe way. What ways can she struggle to get to the hospital? (L14-16) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>[I]f you want to deliver safely, then you can go to the nearest clinic. (L314-315) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>[W]hat we were talking about is how the women can visit the hospital [for injections] until she gives birth. (L375-377) - Presenter</i></p> |
| 4 | Women Immunization (Programme) | Women in South Sudan are backward and don't understand the importance of immunization. This programme will teach them how immunization can save their lives. | <p><i>In this programme, we will be talking to an EPI [Extended Programme on Immunization] representative to tell us how they immunize women. In South Sudan women are backward in so many things. They don't understand so many things. Mou Gau will talk to us about how women are being immunized. (L13-16) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>We thank you all for listening to the program... encouraging people to go to hospital. The pregnant women should go to hospital for the safety of their lives. (L340-342) - Presenter</i></p> |

| # | TITLE | FRAME | EVIDENCE |
|----|--|--|---|
| 5 | The work of women groups (Programme) | Women's groups and associations are being created throughout South Sudan, and they are solving social problems and helping the country. | <p><i>If you go around South Sudan, you'll see all these different women's groups. What kind of activities or things are they doing? From Santo Women's Group we have Aluel Athaian.... (L14-17) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>What kind of advice would you give to these women... that, by grouping themselves and forming an organisation, they can help our country? (L48-50) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>There are many things that you have done – for example, the child you were looking after, and the wounded.... How many buildings have you built...? (L88-91) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>You have listened to radio FM 88, and you have learned a lot from Elizabeth Aluel Athaian and Manut Yol Lual, about what can be achieved by united groups. (L163-165) - Presenter</i></p> |
| 6 | International Women's Day – Ban Ki Moon (Interview clip) | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| 7 | Women's day interview – MP Mary Kiden, Pt.1 (Interview clip) | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| 8 | Women's day interview – MP Mary Kiden, Pt.2 (Interview clip) | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| 9 | Polygamy (Programme) | The people of South Sudan used to practice polygamy and early marriage, and it resulted in the birth of many children who could fight in the war. Then the war ended, and now polygamy and early marriage cause problems, because people have more children than they can support. | <p><i>Today we are going to discuss young people being married and polygamy. Many people in South Sudan, sometime back, they used the system of getting married to many women...[and they] said that getting married to many women is good, because it helps you to have many children, and these many children can help us fight for the country. In the world of today, so many people say that getting married to many women causes so many problems. (L12-19) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>They say that boys and the girls should be allowed to have time, so that they get married when they are mature.... And it is also said that polygamy nowadays has brought a lot of problems. This time is a time when children need school and medical care and good shelters, and it is said that if you do not have wealth, you will not be able to manage all this. (L117-124) - Presenter</i></p> |
| 10 | Role of women in child upbringing (Programme) | Children are brought up well, thanks to the strength of women, and this means women deserve to have custody of their children and equal rights. | <p><i>[I]n the family, there must be a strong women who will hold that family [together]. Then people will know that the child was brought up well by that.... woman. (L153-155) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>Do you think that a woman can bring up a child and look after the child, and that the law can give her the right to be the legal guardian? (L208-209) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>You have talked about women's rights.... Is it rights within the family, or do you, want the government to acknowledge women's rights by giving them 25%? (L230-233) - Presenter</i></p> |

| # | TITLE | FRAME | EVIDENCE |
|----|---|--|---|
| 11 | Land Act News (News item) | People have learned at a workshop that, according to written law, women have the right to own land. Workshop participants will now spread this information by word of mouth. | <p><i>The Land Act of South Sudan says that a woman is allowed to own land. This is what has been discussed for three days, [during a workshop] coordinated by the organization NRC [Norwegian Refugee Council] and the South Sudan Land Commission. People who attended the workshop discussed that a woman has the right to own land. (L13-17) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>The participants who attended the workshop will go and teach other people about the right of a woman to own land. (L47-48) - Presenter</i></p> |
| 12 | Women's Inheritance Rights (Programme) | Traditionally, women could not inherit property, leaving widows extremely vulnerable. Now, however, this is being challenged, because the new constitution of South Sudan says women have the right to inherit property. | <p><i>It's for every woman terrible to lose her husband. In South Sudan a loss like that is, for many women, catastrophic, because they will not be able to inherit the deceased husband's property. (L39-41) - Reporter</i></p> <p><i>This has been subject to heated debate, since the transitional national constitution states that women have the right to own property. (L131-132) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>[T]he constitution says they have the right to inherit and to own the properties that is left behind by their deceased husbands. That in itself, I think it's close enough to say that they should manage it. (L307-310) - Presenter</i></p> |
| 13 | On conflict mitigation (Programme) | Women are inherently fair and peace loving. They have a role to play in mitigating conflict within and among the communities of South Sudan, which will help South Sudan to develop. | <p><i>Today's programme is about women's role in conflict mitigation. A lot of people think women love peace; they don't like to see people dying. Now we are going to talk to the Peace and Reconciliation Commissioner.... (L15-18) - Presenter</i></p> <p><i>What is your message to women? What role do you think they can play in bringing peace and harmony among the communities of South Sudan? Because if we have peace, we will achieve more and develop our country. (L125-128) - Presenter</i></p> |
| 14 | Why women have low participation in Military (Programme) | Women enjoy the benefits of independence alongside men even though they did not fight in the war. However, women are just as capable of fighting as men; they do so in other countries. The reason they did not fight in the war is because the government did not recruit them. Therefore, they deserve equality and leadership positions in the new country. | <p><i>Our topic of the day - we are asking why the men are the ones who fight, and the women are not, and when we got independence, why the women and the men are enjoying it and participating together? (L178-180)</i></p> <p><i>In other countries women also contribute together with men to fight. The women hold a gun... for fighting. (L237-239)</i></p> <p><i>[I]n your opinion, do you see if the government had this thought that if they know there are some women who are strong enough, who can help, can the government recruit them to the army? Do you think if the government recruits some women, they can go and fight for the country with a man? (322-325)</i></p> <p><i>Ok, on this point, do you think, according to your contribution, are you saying that girls cannot do what men can do? Or what do you say? Because the way you just mentioned, maybe it is a way the government can involve them to participate. (L388-391)</i></p> |

Framing of programmes was determined by looking closely at the presenters' words. Although presenters were trained to maintain journalistic impartiality, their preferred frames (i.e., the stories they were trying to tell) were usually suggested by their introductions and conclusions, the questions they asked and the way they summarized their guests' contributions.

Introductions and conclusions were typically where the frame was most evident. For example, in *Girl Education* (programme 1) the presenter gives the following introduction:

Our programme today is about girls' education and what the problems are affecting their continuing education in the schools. A lot of people say for South Sudan to develop, we need help from our women to join hands in the nation building and to eliminate issues affecting their education. This can be achieved by allowing girls to go to school and providing support [for them] to continue education. (L56-61)

In this introduction, the presenter identifies the factors preventing girls from continuing their education as "problems". The presenter then talks about how "a lot of people say" that educated women are needed to build the nation. Although the presenter does not express this view as her own, by choosing to include it in her introduction, she invites listeners to think about girls' education as something positive for the country. Thus, her narrative appears to align strongly with the gender and development goal on girls' and women's education.

Using questioning to suggest the frame can be seen in *The work of women groups* (programme 5). Initially, the presenter introduces the topic of women's groups in a neutral way; however, shortly thereafter, she asks her guest, a women's group representative, the following leading question: "What kind of advice would you give to these women... that, by grouping themselves and forming an organisation, they can help our country?" (L48-50) This question invites both the guest and listeners to see women's groups as beneficial to the nation, suggesting that her narrative aligns

with the international development community's predilection for supporting women's groups, to achieve gender and development goals.

Finally, using summarising to suggest the frame can be seen in *Why women have low participation in Military* (programme 14). Here, the presenter manages to construct a narrative of gender equality by summarising, in this case incorrectly, the views of one of her callers. The caller clearly states, "according to my opinion, women cannot go for fighting" (L182-183), but at the end of his call, the presenter asks, "Ok, in that case, according to your contribution, you're saying the women can fight? She cannot be forbidden from fighting?" (L213-214) When the caller fails to correct her, she summarizes his call thusly:

[The caller] said, if a women wants to go to war, she can go. It is because, if she has confidence in herself, and commitment, she can fight. Even though she is going to be killed, it is a sacrifice for her to go. Even though she is going to die, people will remember her, what she did during her generation in South Sudan. (L242-246)

She thus constructs a completely different narrative from that which the caller intended. Whether this is conscious, or a genuine mistake, it reveals that the story she wants to tell is one of gender equality, which aligns with gender and development goals to promote gender equality and empower women.

This pattern, of framing programmes and news items in ways that align with gender and development goals, was apparent in all 14 pieces of content that were narratively analysed. It, thus, appears that the media may be trying to advocate for and promote the achievement of international gender and development goals in South Sudan.

6.3.3 Use of modern public narratives

Looking at the frames presented in Table 16, it is evident the some of them recall the modern public narratives outlined in Chapter 4. For example, *Girl Education* (programme 1) and *Girl Empowerment Through Education* (programme 2) appear to

be variants on the narrative of the educated woman – particularly as they emphasise women’s contribution to development. Similarly, *Land Act News* (programme 11) and *Women’s Inheritance Rights* (programme 12) appear to be variants on the narrative of the empowered woman, as they focus on women gaining and learning about their rights; while *The work of women groups* (programme 5) appears to be a variant on the narrative of the women’s group, with its emphasis on what women can do collectively to solve social problems.

However, the analysis also revealed that public narratives appeared in the contributions of community members, who were guests and contributors on programmes. Their contributions are arguably even more important than the frames presenters construct, because presenters only speak for a fraction of the time. Guests and contributors, on the other hand, have far more airtime, and their opinions often go unchallenged. Examining their words, we see that they, too, use modern narratives to promote and advance development goals – starting with girls’ and women’s education.

The educated woman

The narrative of the educated woman – in which a woman receives an education, earns an income, acquires material security, helps her country to develop and earns a place of respect in society – is used primarily to promote education for girls’ and women but also to support other gender and development goals, such as women’s employment.

In Girl Empowerment Through Education (programme 2), a male primary school teacher uses the narrative to argue in favour of girls’ education:

[I]f you go to Eastern Equatoria or Western Equatoria or Torit or Yambio and see the number of educated girls in the government offices, this is where you will know that the girls have really a very important role in our society....

Education is very important for girls, women and for everyone. Education is the thing that will develop our country, and without education, the country will never go ahead. (L286-300)

Likewise, in *Polygamy* (programme 9), a female Member of Parliament says, “For women of Aweil East, we have so many things ahead of us. The country is ours to develop. It is a must for us to encourage ourselves and educate ourselves...” (L284-286).

A public service announcement, played during *Why women have low participation in Military* (programme 14), similarly announces:

This is a message for the parents to allow the girl children to go to school, because the girl will do something good for her people.... In a different country, the girls who are educated, they brought good things to the country. Let us allow our girls to go to school, like a boy. If you educate a girl you can raise up the country. (L116-120)

The educated woman narrative is also used in a personal way in *The work of women groups* (programme 5), when a representative of Santo Women’s Group uses her own story to encourage girls to seek education. First she says:

I myself, now, I’m a teacher. They trained me, and I myself am a nursery school teacher. My name is Elizabeth, and I’m a teacher in year 2 or 3, and I’m getting my salary from that teaching. (Elizabeth, L33-36)

Then she explains:

[T]his coming Thursday, women are going to be sent out. I will go and call [girls] to come to school.... Some of them will say they don’t know anything about school. I will say to them, “It was the same thing when I started school, but now I know my ‘a, b, c, d,’ and how to write my name”. (Elizabeth, L198-202)

These are all examples of how the educated woman narrative is used to promote girls’ and women’s education. It is also used, however, to promote gender and

development goals such as women's employment. In *On conflict mitigation* (programme 13), the Peace and Reconciliation Commissioner for the local area says, "I would appreciate it if our government provided job opportunities to our educated women, so they could contribute to the development of our country" (L115-117).

The empowered woman

The empowered woman narrative is similarly invoked to support development goals. In this narrative, a woman gains rights under the South Sudanese constitution, learns about and claims these rights, makes decisions for herself, considers herself equal to men and participates in public life. The narrative is invoked for a variety of reasons: to promote girls' and women's education, to promote women's groups, to advocate for women's property rights and to encourage women's participation in conflict mitigation processes.

In *Girl Empowerment Through Education* (programme 2), a male primary school teacher uses the empowered woman narrative to promote girls' education. He does this by presenting empowerment as one of the beneficial outcomes of educating girls:

For example, when a girl is educated they will have those leadership skills, and, if they have those leadership skills, they will be good leaders. And we need to show them what we call self-confidence, so that they have confidence in whatever they are doing, and then they will do something good for the society that they are living in. And that confidence that she has will give her the power to participate in the society in which she is living... to participate in terms of talking [in public]. (L29-35)

He further explains:

How education helps girls, they know their rights. And if they know their rights, they will [be] claiming for their rights. They have to claim their rights, and they must get their rights. They will definitely claim their rights from men.... (L66-69)

The empowered woman narrative is also used to advocate for the formation of women's groups. In *The work of women groups* (programme 5), a representative of Santo Women's Group claims women's collective organising as a right:

I have visited many places, churches, circles and centres, and my message to them, especially teachers, was: "You don't control [block] women; give them their rights. For example, women you have at the centre here, let them be organised.... (L174-176)

In *Women's Day Interview – MP Mary Kiden, Pt. 2* (programme 8), Mary Kiden, a member of parliament and the former Minister of Gender, also advocates for women's collective organising, but, this time, by presenting women's right to 25% representation in parliament as one of its beneficial outcomes:

[W]e reach[ed] this level, today, which was recognized by our leader Dr. John Garang di Mabior, because we were organised. If we were not organised., we were not going to be noticed, and we were not going to have the 25%. (L31-34)

The narrative of the empowered woman is also used to legitimise women's ownership of land in *Land Act News* (programme 11). A female workshop participant explains:

I think it is important that women should own land. There are women who have land, either in the market or in the residential areas, starting with me. I have plots, and this thing called women's rights has been accepted by the government and other elders. Our government has made it clear to people who don't know that a woman has the right to own land. (L20-26)

Similarly, in *Women's Inheritance Rights* (programme 12), a widow, who has succeeded in inheriting her husband's property, uses the empowered woman narrative to encourage others to do likewise:

Actually, the message I'll appeal to all the widows outside there: don't sit back and fold your arms, just because you've lost everything – no. All hope is not lost.... You really must know your rights. Don't allow [yourself] to be manipulated. Don't allow [yourself] to be oppressed.... (L103-107)

Finally, in *On conflict mitigation* (programme 13) the Peace and Reconciliation Commissioner for the local area uses the narrative to encourage women to participate in public conflict mitigation processes. He says, “If you see men discussing public matters, go and participate with your honest opinions and tell the truth... wherever you go, preach peace and reconciliation” (43-51). He further says:

I want you girls to do your best, to empower yourselves and to be like women in other parts of South Sudan, or around the world. I also want women to be part of the peace and reconciliation team in the community. When conflict arises, you must join your hands together to bring peace and reconciliation. (L76-79)

The women’s group

The narrative of the women’s group – in which a group of women get together and solve social problems – is used primarily to promote women’s collective organising, often as a means to realise gender and development goals, such as achieving food security, eliminating early marriage and securing women’s right to inherit.

In *The work of women groups* (programme 5), for example, the representative of Santo Women’s Group promotes women’s groups by explaining how her group has been instrumental in building a school, buying furniture for the school, training teachers, setting up farming, baking and sewing activities for children, looking after the poor, taking in children in need, and visiting, cooking for and praying for the sick and wounded. She says, for example:

If we found somebody who was poor, we took care of them. If there was a little child who was poor whose mother was killed, we took care of him, providing him with food and drink.... When people were shot, we used to make porridge from our own houses.... (L66-74)

The women’s group narrative is also offered as a means to achieve specific gender and development objectives like achieving food security, eliminating early marriage and securing women’s right to inherit. For example, in *Women’s Day Interview – MP*

Mary Kiden, Pt. 2 (programme 8), Mary Kiden, MP and former Minister of Gender, offers women's groups as a way to increase food security. She says:

Let us organise. You don't have to be in a group of 100. You can start organising yourself economically, because our thing now is to stop hunger. And if we are to stop hunger in the rural area, I don't have to go to my farm alone and start digging; let us organise ourselves, even if we are three. We go, today, and we dig in the farm of one of my sisters. (L36-40)

Equally, in *Polygamy* (programme 9), another female MP argues that women's collective organising can help end early marriage. When asked how early marriage can be discouraged, she says:

First, there must be a group of women to sit and design a program so that they come into the studio, as I am in the studio today. Because if we keep on discussing this, the children will also get to hear what we are discussing and understand it. (L79-88)

Finally, woman's collective organising is presented as a way to safeguard women's right to inherit. In *Women's Inheritance Rights* (programme 12), yet another female MP confronts a local male chief, who does not believe that she and the other women in the National Assembly can secure women's right to inherit. He says, "I'm sure... your struggle will not materialize, because you for one cannot do it, even if you are several in the Assembly" (L556-557). She replies, "We are many. Whole South. And we are majority by the way" (L559).

The uneducated woman

Unlike the previous three modern narratives, the narrative of the uneducated woman – in which a woman does not complete her education, and is unable to help herself, her family or her country – is not extensively used. When it is used, it is primarily used to argue in favour of education for girls and women but also to argue for women's equality in general.

In *Girl Education* (programme 1), the state-level Director General for Education uses the narrative to promote girls' education, by demonstrating that uneducated women cannot be recruited to work for the benefit of the country:

Many girls are not educated in our community. Some of our partners in the education sector were trying to recruit girls who finished secondary school. Unfortunately we have very few. The majority did not reach secondary school level.... (L36-39)

Equally, in *Girl Empowerment Through Education* (programme 2), a male primary school teacher points out that uneducated girls won't know their rights or advocate for gender equality:

[I]f they're not educated they won't even know their rights. She will consider that she has got married, and she is the responsibility of her husband, which is enough for her. (L69-71)

Moreover, they will not be able to assume leadership positions, like the female state governor Nyandeng Malek:

Like we have our state governor who is Nyandeng Malek. She is a woman. And because she is educated, that is why she is governing us. And if she was coming from the cattle camps [where she would be looking after the cattle keepers instead of going to school], this wouldn't have happened. (L203-206)

In *Role of women in child upbringing* (programme 10) the chairperson of a local women's organisation similarly uses the uneducated woman narrative to argue for women's education. She points out that an uneducated woman will not be able to monitor her child's educational progress:

[F]or a women who is not educated, maybe your child did not go to school – maybe he was playing somewhere – and you did not know what he was doing. That child might be out of school somewhere. That child will not be successful... I'm urging women to pursue education.... (L76-83)

The uneducated woman narrative is also used, in *Why women have low participation in Military?* (programme 14), to argue that men and women are inherently equal. The SPLM commissioner for the state explains that the reason women did not fight in the war is not because they were unable to do so, but because they were not educated to do so:

It is because they were not well trained in how to fight. If we have the military college who can train them on how to fight, we will be having a group of women who will be pilots, who can fight through the air, and the troops on land. Especially we Nuer, we didn't train our girls on how to fight. We trained them so that they can be a housewife to give birth to the children, cook in the house, take care of the family. We didn't train them so that they go for fighting. (L379-385)

The dependent woman

The dependent woman narrative is also not used extensively; however, it is used a few times. In this narrative something negative happens to a woman, and she becomes dependent, stays at home and is unable to support herself. The narrative is used both to encourage women to go to healthcare facilities, when they are pregnant, and to encourage women to form women's groups.

In *Women and safety birth program* (programme 3), a female midwife invokes the narrative to encourage women to go to the hospital when they are ill during pregnancy. She presents as grave the consequence of staying at home, dependent on one's husband:

For the women, we tell them if you are not feeling well in your body, you have to rush to the clinic. Even if you're busy, stop what you're doing and come to the clinic. Some women say that 'my husband will not allow me to always come to the clinic, because I'm doing other things at home'. Then we will say, "When you die, it will be you alone, but not him". (L272-277)

In *The work of women groups* (programme 5), a representative of Santo Women's Group similarly scolds women who sit at home, depending on the government, when they should be forming women's groups. She says:

You are complaining, you women, that the government is not really taking care of you. How will the government take care of you, if you are staying at home? If you really want help, you've got to get out of the house, form an organisation like we did. (L37-40)

Later, she reiterates:

Now women are complaining that the government should help us, but the government cannot help you, while you are sitting at home. The government wants to see your efforts and to know that you are working for your country and community. Then they can join hands with you and support you. All this cannot happen, while you are sitting under the tree in your house. (L97-102)

Thus far, we have examined how the five modern public narratives outlined in Chapter 4 are used by guests and contributors on the radio to promote and advance gender and development goals. We will turn our attention, now, to traditional narratives and the ways in which they are used on community radio.

6.3.4 Use of traditional public narratives

It is perhaps not particularly surprising that modern narratives, with their emphasis on development and progress, are used to argue in favour of gender and development goals. What is more interesting is the way in which traditional narratives are used. The traditional narratives outlined in Chapter 4 appear on community radio just as much, if not more, than the modern ones. Presenters do not tend to use them, but they often appear in the body of content spoken by guests and contributors.

Once in a while, they are used to oppose gender and development goals. For example, a local chief, in *Women's Inheritance Rights* (programme 12), uses the

protected woman narrative to argue that women do not have the right to inherit. He says to the female MP, with whom he is debating:

No, the husband should have brothers, and definitely his elderly brother, or the brother next to him, will be the one caring for the woman. But the properties of the woman – her properties she... owned with the late husband, with her late husband – wouldn't belong to her. (L145-148)

His point is that traditional inheritance laws, which leave everything to a man's male relatives, are fine, because widows are protected.

However, examples like this, where a contributor uses a traditional narrative to argue against a gender and development goal, are surprisingly rare. What happens slightly more often is that a traditional narrative is challenged to promote a gender and development goal. The female MP in *Women's Inheritance Rights* (programme 12), for example, challenges the bride narrative to advocate for women's right to inherit property. She says:

{I}f the husband died, now you become a property of that family.... The dowry is now bringing, for us as women, a problem. And we say it now, we want to reduce the dowry.... We don't want to be sold. (L318-321)

Challenges such as this are also not common either, however. By far the most common way in which guests and contributors use traditional narratives is to promote and advance gender and development goals.

The bride

Although we have just seen a challenge to the bride narrative, throughout the 14 programmes, the bride narrative is primarily used to support gender and development goals. In this narrative, a man brings cows to the family of a girl whom he wants to marry. Her family accepts the cows, and the girl is married. She leaves her birth family and joins her husband's family. The narrative is used to promote

education for girls and women, to improve maternal and child health, to support family planning and to support women's right to inherit.

In *Girl Empowerment Through Education* (programme 2), for example, the guest, a male primary school teacher, strongly encourages parents to support girls' education, because, he argues, educated girls can command higher dowry:

When the girl is educated..., it's an investment. And this investment in girls' education helps us in so many ways. When the girl is educated, it will reduce the level of poverty, and how?... Let's say your daughter gets married for thirty cows, and then an educated one gets married for 150 cows. That means... that poverty that was in that family – she reduced that. That's why we say one of the effective ways of reducing poverty is through girl education. (L41-47)

This echoes Elizabeth's argument in favour of her education, in Chapter 5. The male primary school teacher promotes this view throughout the programme, trying to persuade parents to delay cashing in on their investments, until their daughters are educated, because the rewards will be greater:

[Y]ou have two or three girls in school, you know that you have saved your money in the bank You've secured your wealth, because immediately they will be getting married to educated people. (Elizabeth, L269-274)

Equally, in *Women and safety birth program* (programme 3), the bride narrative is used to elicit support from husbands for antenatal care. Husbands are encouraged by a midwife to command their wives to visit the hospital, on the grounds that they have paid dowry for them:

And for the men who have wives, you have paid the dowry for your wife, so you have the power also to tell your wife to go to the clinic. Go to the hospital, because the dying of a woman will affect you husbands, because if she dies leaving the child, then it will be a serious problem for you. She will also die without giving birth to enough children. So I would advise men to keep supervising women to force them to go to a clinic. (L222-227)

Likewise, the bride narrative is used to promote family planning in *Polygamy* (programme 9). A female MP uses the narrative to argue that men must not recklessly father many children:

Some [men] marry randomly. They get five or six cows, thinking that is enough. They go and say, "these six cows of mine are enough". They give them to the parents of the girl. At the same time, they keep sleeping around and impregnating other girls, and, when the girls deliver, the father is not known. I think that young men don't know what they're doing. Getting married to many women doesn't bring anything to you. You will bring so many people into the world.... (L40-45)

Here, the MP implies that, by not paying a high enough dowry or by not paying any dowry at all, a man can sleep with many more women, and father many more children, than he would be able to if he paid an appropriately high dowry. Dowry is, therefore, presented as an institution that encourages family planning and smaller family sizes.

The bride narrative is further used to argue for women's right to inherit and to keep custody of their children, in the event of their husbands' deaths. In *Women's Inheritance Rights* (programme 12), a man in a vox pop explains:

A woman actually [has] the right to inherit the property of [her] husband, so, in case, when the dowry for that women has all [been] paid, she cannot be able to move somewhere, and that [will] also... motivate her not to go away from that particular home. (L590-593)

What the man is implying is that a woman should be able to inherit fixed assets like houses, because then she stays with her late husband's family, which is appropriate, because the family paid dowry for her.

In the same programme, a female MP argues that a woman should be able to keep her children when her husband dies, because it is unjust that, when her children are taken from her, she is not involved in dowry negotiations when they marry:

If your husband died, it is the right of the brother-in-law now to come and take care of the house, even to take care of your children. If the girl want[s] to get married, it is not you now to sit and say, “I want this to be paid”. Or if your son want[s] to get married, he will go to his uncle, not the mother. So we are saying no – that one is old, traditional and bad. (L211-216)

The wife

In the previous examples, we saw how the bride narrative was used to support a number of different gender and development goals, including education for girls and women, maternal and child health, family planning and acceptance of women’s right to inherit. The wife narrative – in which a woman gets married, is obedient to her husband, and works extremely hard, performing all of the domestic duties expected of her – is equally invoked in service of gender and development goals, including the promotion of girls’ and women’s education, the prevention of early marriage and the participation of women in public conflict mitigation processes.

In *Girl Empowerment Through Education* (programme 2), for example, the same male primary school teacher, who argued that educated girls command higher dowry, argues that they make better wives:

She will clean the house. She will make sure that there is good hygiene around the house. She will tidy up the place. She will never accept to be in a very dirty, messy environment. (L58-60)

Similarly, in *Polygamy* (programme 9), the female MP who argued that dowry encourages family planning, argues that early marriage should be avoided, because young girls make poor wives. The MP explains that, “The woman is the home. If the woman is not strong at home, the home will not be a home” (L287-289). She contends that when people marry young, “they cannot manage” (L69), and further elaborates by explaining what can happen when an old man marries a young girl:

Old men get married to young girls who are not of their age.... He will get old, and the girl will still be very young and active, and she will be left alone. The young girl will go and look for people of her age, and the old man will be left alone, and he will die badly. (L169-174)

The young girl, she argues, will make a bad wife. For this reason, early marriage should be avoided.

The wife narrative is also invoked to encourage women's participation in public conflict mitigation processes. In *On conflict mitigation* (programme 13), the Peace and Reconciliation Commissioner for the local area argues in favour of women's participation in public conflict mitigation processes, not only because "women are perceived to be wise, honest and fair" (L46), but also, because, "If you see a nicely designed house you will automatically know there must be a strong women behind it" (L48-49). Women's strength, he argues – as demonstrated by the way in which they fulfil their duties as wives – is one of the things that makes them worthy of public participation.

The mother

Along with the bride and wife narratives, the mother narrative is used to argue in favour of development objectives. This narrative – in which a woman bears children and brings them up well, undertaking all of the required care work – is particularly prevalent and is used to promote everything from the education of girls and women, to improved healthcare for women and children, to prevention of early marriage, to acceptance of women's right to inherit, to recognition of women's rights in general.

In *Girl Empowerment Through Education* (programme 2), the aforementioned male primary school teacher takes up yet a third traditional narrative, arguing that educated girls not only make better brides and wives, they also make better mothers. He argues, firstly, that an educated girl will be better able to care for the health of her children:

In terms of girls' education, she will know a lot of things about the society, like healthcare. She will take care of her family and children.... Healthcare is very important for the educated girl. (L61-63)

Secondly, she will be able to save for her children's future and pay her children's school fees:

[I]f there is an educated woman..., definitely she will have some kind of savings for herself and her children for their future.... She can even pay her children's school fees.... (L84-92)

Thirdly, she will be able to keep track of her children's educational progress:

The educated woman also will know the standard of a child, whether a child is doing well in school and working hard – she will know that. And if she knows that the child is not really working hard, definitely she will report that to the husband that “this boy is going to school but he's not studying”.... If it's a man, he will definitely be busy with his work and he will not even know what is going on in the family. But an educated girl, she is taking care of the children. (L94-103)

The mother narrative is further used to promote better healthcare for women and children. In *Women and safety birth program* (programme 3), a female midwife endorses antenatal care for pregnant women, arguing, “If the woman dies..., she will not continue giving birth, so that is affecting the community” (L176-180).

Similarly, in *Women Immunization* (programme 4), a male representative of the local immunization programme tries to persuade women to bring their children for immunization, and follow-up immunizations, by implying that failure to do so threatens their status as mothers:

On behalf of children, it is very important, because if we don't follow up with the treatment of children, then we may have a lack of children. Without children, then you cannot call yourself a mother. (L237-240)

He also tries to encourage women to immunize themselves, for the sake of their unborn children:

[Y]ou also need to come to the hospital to get injections.... We are not treating only the child you have delivered, but we are treating the children that you will deliver in the future. (L147-152)

Yet another way in which the mother narrative is used is to discourage early marriage - in *Polygamy* (programme 9) the same female MP who argued that young girls make bad wives, argues that they make bad mothers:

[Girls] get married between the ages of 14 and 16, and that is not right, because they are still children, and they again give birth to children. Then they end up not knowing how to take good care of themselves and the children they are raising. (L72-75)

The narrative is further used to legitimise women's right to inherit. In *Women's Inheritance Rights* (programme 12), a man in a vox pop explains:

Women, they have rights, if their husband died, to keep all the assets which their husband has.... Because, if you will say that those things must be taken [by] the husband's brothers or fathers, they will not take care about the children. (L72-575)

Indeed, the mother narrative is used is to justify women's rights, in general. In *On conflict mitigation* (programme 13), the male Peace and Reconciliation Commissioner for the local area explains that women deserve rights, because they are mothers:

During the liberation struggle, women... looked after the families.... I think they deserve 50%, like men, because women are very strong characters; they give birth to children; they look after their families. (L90-108)

A similar argument is put forth by a chairperson of a women's organisation in *Role of women in child upbringing* (programme 10). She says:

You [women] will be taking good care of the children and bringing them up properly, so that they will carry their father's good name and people will say, "These are the children of so-and-so".... The woman has a very important role to play in the family, and that's why I want our government to acknowledge our rights.... We need equal sharing.... If the man is in the top position, the woman should be next, and vice versa... – we were given 25% before, and we would love to have another 5% to make it 30%. (L218-243)

The protected woman

Like the mother narrative, the protected woman narrative is used to argue in favour of a range of development objectives. In this narrative, a woman grows up protected and provided for by her father. She marries, and, from then on, is protected and provided for by her husband, and, in the absence of her father or husband, she is protected and provided for by a male relative. Although the protected woman narrative has to do with male protection – if protection is taken, as per the narrative, to be something that women need, then anything that protects them is good. This is the logic used on community radio to promote a number of different development goals, from girls' education, to women's health, to women's inheritance rights. The narrative is also used to discourage early marriage.

In *Girl Education* (programme 1), the state-level Director General for Education tries to enlist the support of parents for girls' education by explaining that girls need the support and protection of their families. He explains that, "Those who [achieve] high grades definitely come from well-off families and have been supported by their families to concentrate on their studies" (L97-98). He says, in contrast:

When parents are poor, they will not be able to support their girls' educational needs, so girls have to drop out of school and get married at a very early age to fulfil their needs. (L29-31)

Protection is thus presented as an essential component of girls' success in school. In another attempt to sway parents, the Director General talks about measures being taken to protect girls while they are in school, including severely punishing teachers

who become sexually involved with students, constructing girls-only schools and recruiting more female teachers.

The narrative of the protected woman is also invoked to encourage women to visit healthcare facilities. Health workers stress that seeking antenatal care and delivering in a hospital offer protection to women. For example, in *Women and safety birth program* (programme 3), the first midwife who speaks emphasizes the safety that can be offered to pregnant woman when they seek antenatal care. She makes comments such as, "... if you follow the course [of medicine], then you will give birth safely" (L48-49), and, "If the child is in the incorrect position, then...I will send you to... the biggest hospital.... And when you go there, you and your child will be safe" (L51-55). The second midwife similarly talks about how women and children will be taken care of, if they give birth in hospital:

[W]hen you give birth in hospital, there are so many to... take care of the baby. Because, when the child is born, they will clean the child and also take good care of the woman who has given birth.... (L257-260)

Likewise, in *Women Immunization* (programme 4), a male representative of the local immunization programme emphasizes the protection that immunization can afford pregnant women. He says, "Pregnant mothers are asked to be immunized, so that they are protected and nothing will happen to them" (L66-67). He even likens immunization to male protection, saying:

[Immunization] is protection, and if you are protected there is nothing that can happen to you –... when you are immunized the medicine goes powerfully into the body, like a soldier. And, if it enters the body, it will protect you and your baby. (L53-58)

In *Women's Inheritance Rights* (programme 12), laws that enable widows to inherit are also framed as a form of protection for women. A widow being interviewed says, "The law is there to protect the women and the children and the orphan outside

there – because the law should really come in and help the unprivileged” (L107-109), while a female MP says:

As I put it, we are now fighting, us, really to have very strong laws to protect the women. Because, we are seeing ourselves, if something happens – your husband died – you are remaining with problem with your in-law. If there is not any law in the country to protect women, we’ll be really – I don’t know – just, vulnerable in the society. But if the laws are there, they will protect us. (L530-534)

Finally, the protected woman narrative is used to discourage early marriage. In *Polygamy* (programme 9), a female MP encourages men not to get married young, because for those who marry young, “the responsibility overpowers [them]” (L127), and they will fail to protect their wives and children:

[I]f you are matured enough, and then get married to two or three wives, then you will know how to manage them, but if you have five wives and you still have a young mind, you will not be able to manage them.... [B]ut this is not a moment when you can reduce the stress [by getting divorced], because the wives will have children, and the children are now in need of being looked after. (L131-137)

She concludes, “A boy should grow up until he is mature enough to take care of himself and others, and a girl should be grown up enough to be married” (L69-71).

The devout woman

The devout woman narrative is also used in service of development objectives. In this narrative, a woman devotes herself to God. When bad things happen to her, she prays, and God answers her prayers; and, when good things happen to her, she thanks God. This narrative seems to be invoked to lend legitimacy to different groups of people working towards development objectives, including healthcare workers, women’s groups and women trying to inherit property.

For example, in *Women and safety birth program* (programme 3), a midwife who is trying to encourage women to deliver in hospital stresses that the healthcare workers there put their faith in God:

When we look at the results from the year, we've had almost 100 women deliver in the clinic, because we accept each and every woman who comes to deliver in the clinic. We are here to help the community, and we also put our faith in God. If we are facing problems, then we join our hands and we pray to God. (L309-312)

Similarly, in *The work of women groups* (programme 5), a representative from Santo Women's Group, who is trying to encourage others to form women's groups, carefully presents the members of her group as devout. She explains, "We were just normal women in the house, and then we decided to go to church, and we formed our group... (L24-25). She further emphasises that the group had the support of the priest:

We started going to the church to support the church. We cleaned the church, and then we cleaned the outside of the church. If we found somebody who was poor, we took care of them., and the priest supported us.... He was helping us., supporting us in prayer. (L64-69)

Finally, in *Women's Inheritance Rights* (programme 12), a widow, who has successfully fought to inherit her husband's property, uses the devout woman narrative to encourage other women to do the same:

[D]on't sit back and fold your arms just because you've lost everything – no. All hope is not lost. Believe in God and go to the right offices, the right organizations. You'll be helped out.... (L103-106)

The wicked woman narrative

In addition to the five traditional narratives about what constitutes a "good" life for women, the wicked woman narrative is invoked, quite extensively, to support development goals. In this narrative, a woman is idle and does not perform her

expected duties. She gossips, spends time in public places, possibly drinks and is potentially promiscuous. The wicked woman narrative tends to be used to highlight female behaviours that impede progress towards development goals – such as dropping out of school or failing to take children for immunization – presumably in an effort to discourage women from those behaviours.

For example, in *Girl Education* (programme 1), the wicked woman narrative is used to explain why girls leave school, apparently in an effort to dissuade them from doing so. The state-level Director General for Education says:

[A] problem for girls' education is that girls experience extreme poverty within their families. Parents are poor and there is not enough food to eat in the household. These types of girls can be easily distracted. They lose interest in education to follow in the footsteps of girls who are already on the street making money.... These groups, I can't say they are clever girls, because through education they can have a better future, rather than quick fix money on the street. (L43-50)

By describing girls who drop out of school as, "easily distracted" (L45), not "clever" (L48), and the type who "lose interest in education" (L45), the Director General for Education paints them as wicked – even while recognising their poverty. Moreover, his description of them “on the street making money” (L46-47), which he refers to as “quick fix money on the street” (L49-50), sounds like prostitution – although they could be engaging in a number of different market activities. By alluding to the wicked woman narrative, the Director General, who is an advocate of girls' education, presumably intends to discourage girls from dropping out.

A woman in a vox pop similarly uses the wicked woman narrative to explain girls' poor performance in school, presumably in an effort to keep them on track scholastically:

We have given too much freedom to our girls. They leave in the morning; we don't ask where they are going.... When children come [home] from school, they drop their books and leave.... We can't follow their movements. They take their

mobile phones to school, switch off the mobiles in the classroom, and, when they are finished school, they call their friends. This kind of behaviour discourages them from studies. (L137-145)

Her description of girls who have “too much freedom” (L137), whose movements cannot be followed, and who “drop their books and leave” (L141), when they come home from school instead of helping with housework, is strongly evocative of the wicked woman narrative. Like the Director General, she presumably intends to encourage girls to concentrate on their studies.

The wicked woman narrative is similarly invoked to discourage women from taking actions perceived to be detrimental to their health and the health of their children. For example, in *Women Immunization* (programme 4), a male representative of the local immunization programme implies that mothers, who do not take their children for immunization, with the correct immunisation cards, are liable to be hypocritical, dishonest, lazy women, who choose to work in the market.

Their hypocrisy is illustrated in the following scenario:

Sometimes you can find people encouraging others to take their children to hospital, but they themselves haven't taken their children to hospital. What does it show when you encourage others, when you have not taken your child to the hospital? In the future, we will have to look at some people to see who has gone for treatment and who has not gone. (L288-292)

Another scenario highlights their propensity to lie:

When you bring a different card – like you go home, and, instead of bringing the card of the child you have taken to the hospital, you bring the card of a different child – then you will be lying not to us but to yourself. (L156-159)

Their laziness is emphasized, when he commands women: “What we need most is prevention, and so for you who bring children to hospitals, don't be lazy” (L333-334). It is also emphasised in the following anecdote:

When the sun is very hot, some may bring their children, and when their child is injected once, she may say “the sun is very hot, so I’m not taking my child back to the hospital”, but... there is no way you can hide yourself from sun.... It doesn’t mean you need to wait for the rainy season.... (L261-267)

Finally, he highlights that women who do not bring their children back to the hospital may do so because they prioritise working in the market:

Some women are working in the market, and when the time comes that they’re supposed to return back to the hospital, they will say, “If I go to hospital, then come back, what will I have to eat?” For me I believe we should not wait until the time of sickness to go to hospital. If you are told to go back, you have to make sure you go back. (L292-296)

By suggesting that women who do not comply with his requirements are hypocritical, dishonest and lazy, and prefer to work in the market, he endeavours to encourage women to immunize their children.

A similar strategy is adopted in *Women and safety birth program* (programme 3), when a female midwife characterises women who do not breastfeed as quarrelsome, dishonest and weak:

[T]hey leave the children and give this powdered milk to the young baby.... If you advise the mothers to breastfeed their children many times in a day, then they will quarrel with you. So when you meet someone with her child, and you ask “whose child is this?”, then she will say “it’s not mine; it’s my brother’s child”, because the child had lost weight. It is her child, but the reason why she’s denying it is because the child is malnourished, and this was due to her weakness. (L360-369)

She also uses the wicked woman narrative to encourage women to come to the clinic for antenatal care when pregnant, because if they do not, and they happen to get malaria, people will assume they have been wicked. Specifically, people will assume they are suffering from *ruuak* – an illness believed to befall pregnant women as a

result of concealing a taboo sexual relationship, such as pre-marital sex or adultery.

A midwife explains:

[People] will keep pressing you to tell them the man who committed adultery with you, and if you don't say, you will die, and then they will say you have committed adultery, that's why you died with the child. (L159-162)

She strongly encourages women to come to the clinic to avoid this fate, otherwise, "You will die, leaving people saying 'she has been killed by *ruaak*'" (L86-88).

In *Polygamy* (programme 9), the wicked woman narrative is further used by a female MP to encourage family planning. She says, "Giving birth to many children does not help us; they'll just be in the market, and they will end up as criminals" (L58-59). She elaborates:

You will bring so many people into the world, and the children you will bring into the world will be promiscuous, also. But for a country like South Sudan, for those children who are born and are loitering around the market, they will also grow and then do the same thing. They will again give birth to children, who will follow what they are doing, and the country will be full of criminals. (L44-50)

Moreover, in *On conflict mitigation* (programme 13), the Peace and Reconciliation Commissioner for the local area uses the wicked woman narrative to explain how women can play a role in mitigating conflict. He says:

The main cause of the problems in our community is adultery. Women should warn young girls about its consequences. A husband might kill the person who slept with his wife, and this can create a serious conflict in the community and might lead to a cycle of revenge. Another cause of problems is when a girl is impregnated by an irresponsible man [i.e., a man who won't marry her]. This is considered by the girl's relatives as an insult to the family. Or, sometimes, a man might decide to run away with a girl, without her father's consent. This may lead to a problem between the girl's father and her husband. Women should play a big role in encouraging schoolgirls to focus only on their studies.... (L130-142)

He goes on:

[G]irls are the main cause of our death, and, to bring an end to this, women should advise young girls to avoid involvement in immoral relationships, condemn bad behaviours and tell them to behave appropriately – according to our traditions – and to follow the rules of the society. (L148-151)

By invoking the wicked woman narrative, he argues that women have an important role to play in conflict mitigation – they must refrain from the wicked behaviours which cause conflict.

In addition to discouraging certain behaviours perceived to be detrimental to development objectives, the wicked women narrative is invoked a few times to argue that men and women are inherently equal. In *Girl Education* (programme 1), the state-level Director General for Education attempts to argue that girls and boys are intellectually equal by blaming girls' lazy attitudes, rather than their intellect, for their poor performance on exams:

Girls are not like boys in pursuing education. Girls who come from poor families have more to worry about, and in the end they give up on education. They think, "Why should I continue to suffer, when somebody is working hard to finish his education, and in the end I can get married to him?" ... I think this is the main reason why most girls fail their exams. I believe girls and boys have different attitudes towards education, but it doesn't mean that girls are not intelligent. (L98-106)

Similarly, the SPLM secretary of Leer state, in *Why women have low participation in Military* (programme 14), attempts to argue that men and women are in principle equally capable of fighting:

In '87, the women in Bilpam, they have their own troop alone. They have their guns, so they were well equipped by the government – they had their guns, they had everything – but they did not have the... commitment to fight. They departed, without doing anything. They withdrew themselves from the fight. They departed; they became nothing. Even now, I don't know where that troop, Katiba Banat [girl troop], is up to now. (L359-368)

Here, he argues that it was not because men and women were not equal that women did not fight. The problem was that the women who were equipped to fight were idle, uncommitted and disappeared.

The unprotected woman

The unprotected woman narrative is also used to argue for development objectives. In this narrative, something happens which causes a woman to be without male protection, and she struggles. Again, although the unprotected woman narrative has to do with male protection – if protection is taken, as per the narrative, to be something that women need, then any lack of protection is bad. This is the logic used in the media to argue for antenatal care and facility delivery and immunisation. It is also used to argue against early marriage and to argue for women's inheritance rights.

In *Women and safety birth program* (programme 3), for example, the first midwife to speak on the programme uses the unprotected woman narrative to encourage women to seek antenatal care and delivery in a facility. She says, “When a woman is pregnant she needs a lot of care, and, if she doesn't get enough care, then she is neglected” (L22-24), and emphasises, “For the birth, we keep repeating this every day: it's dangerous to give birth outside [the hospital]” (L306-307).

Likewise, in *Women Immunization* (programme 4), a male representative of the local immunization programme stresses that women without immunisation are unprotected:

If you are immunized once and you do not come back again to the hospital, the immunization will not work properly, and that's why I keep on repeating this several times – that if you are injected and you do not come back, you will not be protected. (L27-30)

In *Polygamy* (programme 9), a female MP uses the narrative to discourage early marriage, arguing that men who marry young girls will die leaving those girls unprotected:

If you give your young son the responsibility for the household when you die..., your son will get married to the woman that he loves most. Then he will concentrate on his family and stop thinking about yours. So, the woman you married for yourself will not have anyone to take care of her. (L30-235)

Finally, in *Women's Inheritance Rights* (programme 14), a widow tells the story of how she was unprotected after the death of her husband, supporting women's right to inherit:

I lost my husband recently, and, after his death, the relatives took everything we had. They took away cattle, goats, other household property and even our piece of land. I was stripped naked, and they ordered me to leave the house, without taking anything, and not to look back. Before they stripped me naked, I was beaten thoroughly. (L44-48)

The displaced woman

The displaced woman narrative – in which a woman is displaced from the place where she comes from and struggles to return – is the least frequently used of all the narratives, but in *On conflict mitigation* (programme 13), it is used to demand rights for women. Specifically, the chairperson of the Warawar Women's Association argues that women's rights must be respected, because, during the war, women made a huge contribution, cooking and helping the army, even though it involved displacement:

I still remember the army ordered us to carry army ammunitions on our heads for miles. Sometimes we continued the journey with the soldiers for seven days, cooking and providing services without your parents knowing where you were sleeping.... We used to carry heavy ammunition and food from our places to Marial Atar [an army camp]. We would be asked to remain in the camp for seven days, until they had a replacement. We suffered a lot during the liberation struggle, and no one seemed to recognise our hard work. Now they are saying

we have been given 25% power sharing for women, but, if we count the things we use to do – some used to carry ammunition, some spent days in the army camp, cooking, fetching water and many more things – we thought we were doing it all to liberate our country. Unfortunately [now that] we [have] got our independence, women are not being given their rights. We are still suffering. (L223-242)

Here, she advocates for women's rights, on the grounds that women earned them for enduring displacement in order to help the army.

6.4 Discussion

This chapter set out to investigate the ways in which public narratives are used in community radio programmes on gender issues, conceptualising NGO-funded community radio as a meeting point between gender and development goals and South Sudanese communities. As a symbolic site where gender and development goals and the public narratives of rural South Sudanese communities meet, it constitutes an ideal place to examine how public narratives about women facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals.

The chapter began by looking at the volume of coverage about women on NGO-funded community radio, revealing that quite a lot of content – nearly one in five programmes – were about women or issues connected to women. The topics covered touched on many gender and development issues, such as girls' and women's education, violence against women, health – including maternal and child health, women's employment, women's political participation and leadership, women's groups and women's access to justice. All together, items related to gender and development goals represented at least two thirds (69%) of the content.

The chapter then looked at how issues were framed, focusing on 14 programmes, and examining the words of the presenters. The analysis revealed that, in their introductions, conclusions, questions and summaries, presenters were generally framing topics in ways that supported gender and development goals. For example,

programmes supported girls' education, encouraged women to visit healthcare facilities during pregnancy and advocated for women's right to own property. Even programmes not obviously on topics related to gender and development goals were ultimately shown to engage with, and support, such goals.

A number of the programme frames appeared to be variants on modern public narratives, and modern public narratives – such as the educated woman, the empowered woman and the women's group – with their emphasis on progress and development, were invoked throughout the programmes to advocate for gender and development goals. However, traditional narratives – such as the bride, the wife, the mother, the protected woman and the wicked woman – were invoked in equal measure, if not more, to advocate for gender and development goals. Indeed, all of the programmes analysed used both traditional and modern narratives to advocate for gender and development goals. Most programmes contained at least 10 of the 13 public narratives.

In the programmes, traditional and modern narratives often sat next to each other in seemingly contradictory ways. For example, in *Women and safety birth program* (programme 3), one midwife used the bride narrative to argue that husbands have the authority to command their wives to go the hospital, while another midwife used the dependent woman narrative to encourage women to go to hospital, irrespective of what their husbands said, warning, "When you die, it will be you alone, but not him" (L272-277).

In many cases, the same individuals moved seamlessly between traditional and modern narratives. The male primary school teacher, who argued, in *Girl Empowerment Through Education* (programme 2), that girls' education was beneficial because educated girls commanded higher bride price, likewise argued that girls' education was beneficial because it gave girls "leadership skills" (L30), "self-confidence" (L31) and "the power to participate in...society" (L33-34). The Peace

and Reconciliation Commissioner, who argued, in *On conflict mitigation* (programme 13), that women had a role to play in conflict mitigation because it was their immoral behaviour which caused conflict in the first place, likewise encouraged women to play a role in conflict mitigation by “empowering” themselves (L76) – urging them to “go and participate” (L44) in public conflict mitigation processes.

Some guests even used the same narratives in contradictory ways. The female MP, who, in *Women’s Inheritance Rights* (programme 12), decried the injustice of widows not keeping their children on the grounds that they could then not be involved in their children’s bride price negotiations, likewise challenged the institution of bride price, declaring, “we don’t want to be sold” (L321).

One of the reasons guests may move between narratives, or use the same narratives in different ways, is because they have different audiences in mind. It is usually not possible to ascertain with complete certainty which audience a speaker has in mind at certain points, when they are talking on the radio, but it appears the bride and wife narratives are used slightly more often to appeal to girls’ husbands and families, while the wicked woman narrative is used slightly more often to appeal to women themselves. These are not hard and fast rules, however, and there are many exceptions.

The ways in which guests and contributors on NGO-funded community radio use traditional and modern narratives in a seamless and integrated way to argue for gender and development objectives – ignoring any apparent contradictions – support and expand on the insight from Chapter 5 that women use both traditional and modern narratives to explain, legitimise and realise aspirations aligned with gender and development goals.

In this chapter, we see that guests and contributors on community radio actually reimagine and reconstitute certain gender and development goals in ways that

resonate with traditional public narratives – giving gender and development goals new, additional meanings in the process. Girls' education, for example, becomes not only a way of facilitating women's employment, empowerment, equality and leadership, but also a way of reducing family poverty via an increase in bride price. Women's ownership of property becomes not only a right to which women are entitled under the South Sudanese constitution but also a way to make women better mothers, able to provide land for their children when their children grow up. Freedom from early marriage becomes not only a woman's right but also a way to ensure that South Sudanese women become good wives and that old men are not abandoned.

Reflecting on the central question of this thesis, then, it appears that public narratives almost always facilitate, and virtually never constrain, the achievement of gender and development goals; all public narratives, both modern and traditional, can be, and are, used to facilitate such goals.

We now turn to the second symbolic site in this thesis where gender and development goals and rural South Sudanese communities meet – community discussion. Chapter 7 examines how community members interpret NGO-funded community radio content, promoting gender and development goals, and which public narratives they use to do so.

Chapter 7: Community interpretation of media

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter set out to investigate the ways in which public narratives are used in community radio programmes on gender issues, a symbolic site that represents a meeting point between gender and development goals and rural South Sudanese communities. The analysis showed that, in community-radio programmes on gender issues, both modern and traditional narratives are used to advocate for gender and development goals. Specifically, although presenters tend to advocate for gender and development goals using mostly modern narratives, guests and contributors use both traditional and modern narratives, in a seamless and integrated way, to argue for gender and development objectives – often ignoring any apparent contradictions and reimagining gender and development goals in ways that resonate with the local context.

This chapter seeks to understand how community members use public narratives in interpreting community radio content that promotes gender and development goals. Here, community discussion on gender issues, generated by community radio, is taken to be the second symbolic site where gender and development goals and rural South Sudanese communities meet – enabling us to reflect further on how public narratives about women facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals.

This chapter uses three case studies – i.e., three pieces of radio content – to explore the research question. In each research location, one piece of community radio content, which had recently aired, was played during focus groups. Each piece of radio content advocated for a particular gender and development goal, and the discussions provoked during focus groups, by the content, formed the basis for each case study. Adapting slightly, for clarity, Hall's terminology of decoding positions

(1980) discussed in Chapter 2, this chapter shows that some focus group participants *agree* with the gender and development goals the radio content promotes, some *disagree* and some adopt *negotiated* positions. It then details how, in each of the three case studies, the same pattern of narrative use emerges: those who *agree* with the gender and development goal at the centre of the content (or those who adopt *negotiated* positions) draw on both modern and traditional narratives to support their positions of agreement, reflecting the same broad pattern of narrative use we saw in the previous chapter. Conversely, those who *disagree* with the gender and development goal at the centre of the content draw on only traditional narratives to support their oppositional position. The implications of these findings are considered in the discussion.

7.2 Chapter methodology

7.2.1 Data collection

This chapter again draws on the nine focus groups conducted with women and men in rural South Sudan, previously detailed in Chapter 4, but analyses a different part of the focus group discussions, in which media content was played and discussed.

In each location, journalists from the community radio station were asked to provide the most recent piece of content they had, related to women, which had aired on the station. The three pieces of content they provided were *Land Act News* in Maluaklon, *Women and safety birth program* in Turalei, and *Why women have low participation in Military* in Leer. These programmes were among those analysed in Chapter 6. A brief description is as follows:

1. *Land Act News*: A news story about how, according to the new South Sudanese constitution, women have the right to own land.

2. *Women and safety birth program*: A women's programme on health, in which a local midwife tries to debunk the traditional belief in *ruaak* – which dictates that if you become sick while pregnant, it is because you have not confessed to one or more taboo sexual relationships. (The midwife explains that *ruaak* is actually malaria.)
3. *Why women have low participation in Military*: A call-in programme about whether or not women can fight, during wartime, and whether they deserve to enjoy the benefits of South Sudanese independence when they did not fight in the civil war.

Clips were selected from the two longer programmes, *Women and safety birth program* and *Why women have low participation in Military*, because the programmes were too long to be played in their entirety during focus groups. *Land Act News* was only three minutes long, so was played in full. Full transcripts of all three clips can be found in Appendix 6.

7.2.2 Analysis

The first stage of the analysis involved going through and coding all of the focus group contributions according to whether the participant agreed, disagreed or took a negotiated position on the central premise of the content. The discussion moved fairly fluidly among positions, as demonstrated by the following excerpt, in which a group of women discuss the premise, put forward in *Land Act News*, that women have the right to own land:

Moderator: *That's good, you all agree that women should have the right to own land registered in their own names, but we are talking about young ladies or young women who are still in their houses with their own families, but they have the money. For example, I'm still living in my house with my family, and if I have the money, what do you think I should do? Am I allowed to buy land, or should I just stay with my family?*

Several Respondents: *[Unmarried] girls don't have to buy land.*

R1: *She doesn't have to buy land, and, even if she buys land, she will get married and go away, and her brother will have her land.*

Moderator: *That means she can buy it and when she goes she can leave it with her brother, or shouldn't she buy it at all?*

Several Respondents: *Why do you as a girl need to buy a house?*

R1: *Girls don't need to buy a house. You are getting married soon, and you will move to somebody's house. If you bought your own house, it would be your brother's house sooner or later. The moment you leave, your brother could take the house and bring his wife, and live in it as his own house.*

R2: *There should be no land for single ladies.*

R3: *If there is a educated lady, and she has finished her schooling and she has a good job, and she has enough money to buy a house, then she can just buy it, even if she is still living with her family, because a plot of land is not something that you look for when you are in a husband's house. It's the right of ladies and women and everybody. Whoever has enough money to buy a plot should just buy a plot, because in the future if you get married and you have a plot of land from before, if the situation turns into a very bad situation in the husband's house, you can still use your plot of land to sell it to someone who has money, to help your children, or you can move into that house with your children [i.e., leave your husband]. You cannot let your children suffer when you have the plot of land. You can build a house on it and sell it to someone, or you can build shops and rent it to people and benefit from the rental money. The land could help you if the husband cannot take responsibility anymore.*

R4: *In that way, people will be running out of plots. There could be a husband with five children, and he is looking for plots, and also another husband with five children – some of them will be males and they will be looking for plots. And some ladies will have plots, and they will not live on them; they will live with their husbands but still keep their plots. (Group 1, Female 16-25, L1115-1159)*

At the beginning of this excerpt, it appears the group agrees with the central premise. The moderator is summarizing what she thinks she has heard – that women have the right to own land registered in their names. However, she probes to see if this really applies in all situations. At this point, the group starts to take a negotiated position – they previously considered only married and divorced women but did not consider this third category of unmarried women. However, just when it seems they have adopted the negotiated position that married and divorced women can own land, but not unmarried women, a participant takes them back to agreement, trying to include the category of unmarried women again. The final respondent then interjects in disagreement, implying that it does not matter what

the marital status of a woman is, she should not take plots away from men. This demonstrates the fluidity of the interpretative process.

Once all contributions were coded according to interpretive position, tables were constructed to get an overview of which positions were adopted in which groups. A careful reading was then done to understand why the people in those groups were taking those positions.

Finally, the content was read and coded for examples of public narratives, and a detailed account was taken of which narratives were appearing in service of which arguments. The findings are presented below.

7.3 Findings

7.3.1 Case study: Land Act News

Background to the issue

In South Sudan, land is traditionally considered to be owned by everyone, with community chiefs regulating its use (Mennen, 2012). Men have *de facto* ownership of land, however, because a man inherits the right to live on the land his ancestors lived on – a right he cannot sell (Mennen, 2012).

Women, by contrast, must access land through men (Mennen, 2012; A. Stone, 2014; USAID, 2013). According to customary law, unmarried girls live on their fathers' land and married women live on their husbands' land. Widows are inherited by their husband's families, continuing to live on land owned by their husbands' families, and women whose marriages fail return to their birth families' land. Conflict and displacement, however, have seen a breakdown in traditional social obligations to widowed, divorced and abandoned women (Bubenzer & Stern, 2012; A. Stone, 2014), and the number of women-headed households has increased (A. Stone, 2014), a reality which customary laws regulating land use do not accommodate.

With the end of the civil war, written law was introduced that stated women could own and inherit property (A. Stone, 2014). The government also began to survey, register and sell land – introducing the concept that land could be bought and sold. Confusingly, however, written law did not replace customary law, leading to a complex and contradictory legal system (Mennen, 2012). In practice, most land disputes are still settled in customary courts, while statutory courts are difficult to access outside of urban areas (USAID, 2013). This is the context in which the news item, *Land Act News*, was broadcast on 29 March 2013.

Programme description

Land Act News is a community-radio news story about a workshop convened to teach people that South Sudanese women are allowed to own land, according to the constitution. The news story draws primarily on the empowered woman narrative, invoking the concept of women's rights. For example, one workshop participant, quoted in *Land Act News*, explains:

[Written law] says that a woman has a right to own land, because the law says that the land belongs to the South Sudanese people. A woman is a South Sudanese citizen, so she has the right to own land and to have that land registered in her name. (L42-45)

The news story also presents women claiming these rights. Another workshop participant, quoted in *Land Act News*, explains:

I think it is important that women should own land. There are women who have land, either in the market or in the residential areas, starting with me. I have plots, and this thing called women's rights has been accepted by the government and other elders. Our government has made it clear to people who don't know that a woman has the right to own land. (L20-26)

A full transcript of the news item can be found in Appendix 6.

Interpretive positions

As Table 17 shows, in interpreting *Land Act News*, the young women's group is the only group to agree that women can own land, although the young women move fluidly between interpretive positions in their discussion. The older women's group exclusively disagrees, while the men's group contains men who agree and men who take negotiated positions. To understand why different people respond in these different ways, we will consider women and men separately.

Table 17: Positions adopted on whether women can own land

| Women can own land | Agreement | Negotiation | Disagreement |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| Women (16-25) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Women (26-45) | | | ✓ |
| Men (26-45) | | ✓ | ✓ |

Women

The issue of land ownership and access is, for woman, critical to their material and economic security. Without land access, women have nowhere to live and, due to their reliance on farming for substance, potentially nothing to eat. These concerns appear to drive much of their conversation.

Agreement. In the young women's group, those who agree that women can own land, do so in the light of this group's heightened concerns about the possibility of marital failure and the risks it poses to women's survival. They are acutely aware of the precarious nature of a woman's customary claim to her husband's land in such situations. One points out, for example:

If there is a husband who owns a house and he has left with his son, and the only one who is left is the wife, she can lose her land easily because the man is not there, and the first son is not there. (Female 16-25, L975-978)

They are also pragmatic about the fact that marriages break down and family support falls through. The following quote is typical of their discussion:

If there is a fight between you and your husband, and your family is not there, then there is nowhere else to go. You cannot live in your husband's house, and your family is not there. That's why every woman should have the right to register a house in her name. (Female 16-25, L1067-1071)

Some of them even question the fairness of the traditional system. One says, for example:

Of course every one of us wants to have her own house.... If you are married and you leave your husband's house and go back to your family and ask for a house., your family will ask you to stay with them. That is all that you get. Why don't women get a house when they decide to move out of the husband's house? (Female 16-25, L1079-1084)

In general, these young women appear keen to have an insurance policy, if their marriages fail.

Negotiation. The discussion is not entirely dominated by agreement, however. Many young women also adopt negotiated positions, which seek to balance proposed new ways of seeing and being against the realities of their existing lives. In particular, they express concerns about social obstacles that might stand in the way of implementing new norms – for example, the fact that people may refuse to register land in a woman's name:

Moderator: *[What about] if those who were selling the land told you they would not register it in your own name – you had to register it with your son's or father's or husband's name, and you found out that women could not have land of their own?*

R: *Women's land should be registered in their own name, because they might not have husbands. Those who don't have husbands – they should get it in their own names. Another woman could have a husband, but she could register it in her son's name.... It's better to register it in the son's name, if she has a son, because her son is a part of her, so the house will be her own house in another*

way, not like if it was registered in her husband's name. (Female 16-25, L1034-1045)

This respondent takes the negotiated position that women without husbands should be able register land in their own names, while women with husbands can register it in their sons' names. Such a move is common in the young women's group when respondents are confronted with social realities that stand in the way of unqualified agreement.

Disagreement. Then there are women, both young and old, who disagree that women can own land, seeing traditional narratives as impenetrable and proving unable, or unwilling, to consider any alternatives. These women take the customary system as a given and see appeals to customary law as their best chance for security. The older women's group, for example, dismisses outright the idea that women could own land independently and spends most of its time discussing what a woman should do if her husband tries to send her away from the land she shares with him. "When you have children, you don't have to leave", says one respondent (Female 26-45, L921-922). "Where your husband is is your house", asserts another (Female 26-45, L944). The idea that women could, or would want to, own land independently does not feature in the older women's discussion.

Men

In the interpretation of *Land Act News*, men either disagree that women can own land or take negotiated positions. They, too, view land as critical for material and economic security. They say they need land to bring their wives to and land to pass on to their sons.

Negotiation. Men who adopt negotiated positions often seem to do so because they see potential benefits to this arrangement. Specifically, given the relatively new possibility of *buying* land, some men see advantages to women buying land and bringing it into their marriages. For example, one respondent says:

If a woman is working, or is cooking kissra in the market or doing something else to earn money, and then buys land – she should come and tell you: “this is the money I got”, and then you keep the money [and buy the land]. In that case the woman has rights. Even if you divorce, she has to take her land. Some women, they can manage to do a job, and after they come home all the people get food to eat.... But if the women didn’t do anything or didn’t contribute to [buying] the land, she cannot tell you “I need my land”. (Male 16-25, L915-926)

Disagreement. Conversely, men who disagree that women can own land seem to focus on what they could potentially lose as a result of women’s land ownership, namely their inherited ancestral land. The following respondent finds the idea of losing his ancestral land to be such an anathema that he does not even finish his sentence:

[B]ut this thing they are saying – that when the woman leaves [she has the right to take land]... [trails off]. If the woman stays with the husband, there will be no more separating things. If she doesn’t go, she has the right to have her things. (Male 16-25, L886-889)

Men appear to be willing to accept women’s ownership of new, purchased land but unwilling to countenance the loss of their ancestral land to women.

Having looked at what positions people adopt with respect to *Land Act News*, and why they adopt them, we will now consider *how* they adopt these positions.

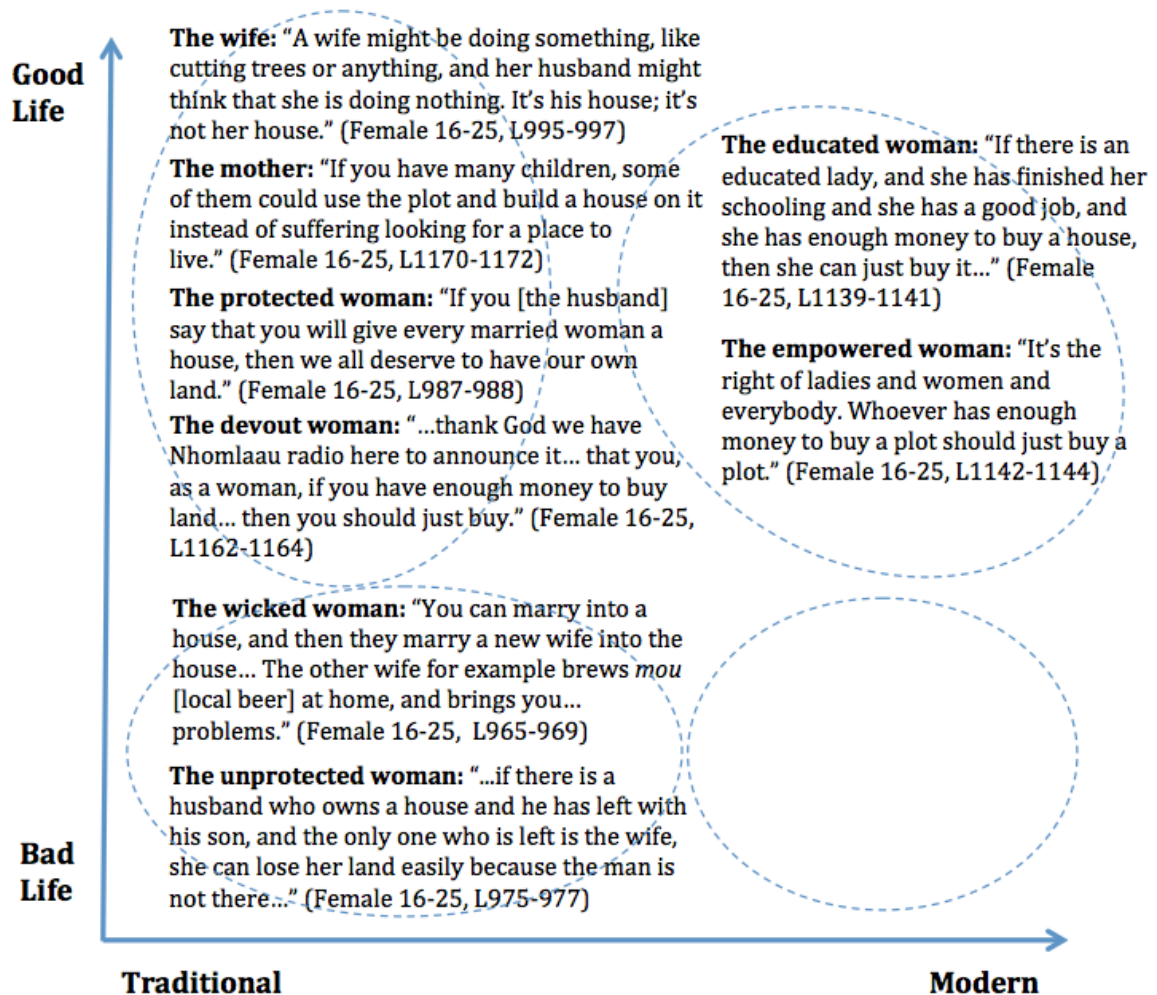
Use of public narratives

In making sense of *Land Act News*, those who disagree that women can own land draw exclusively on traditional narratives, while those who agree draw on both traditional and modern narratives, making use of more of the symbolic field available to them and using traditional narratives differently to those who disagree. In order to present this insight with clarity, it has been depicted visually in Figure 3 and Figure 4. The arguments for each position have been overlaid onto the symbolic field of narratives presented in Chapter 4. The key thing to note is that, in Figure 3,

both the left- and right-hand side of the symbolic field contain arguments, while in Figure 4 only the left-hand side contains arguments.

When people take a negotiated position, they use public narratives somewhat the same way as those who agree and somewhat the same way as those who disagree. The focus of this analysis will, therefore, be on agreement and disagreement, with an example of a negotiated position presented at the end of this section.

Figure 3: Narratives used to agree that women can own land



Narratives used to agree.

Those who agree that women can own land make considerable use of modern narratives. They draw particularly on the empowered woman narrative, just as *Land Act News* itself did, invoking women's rights and calling for gender equality. They also draw on the educated woman narrative. Both narratives can be observed in use in the following excerpt:

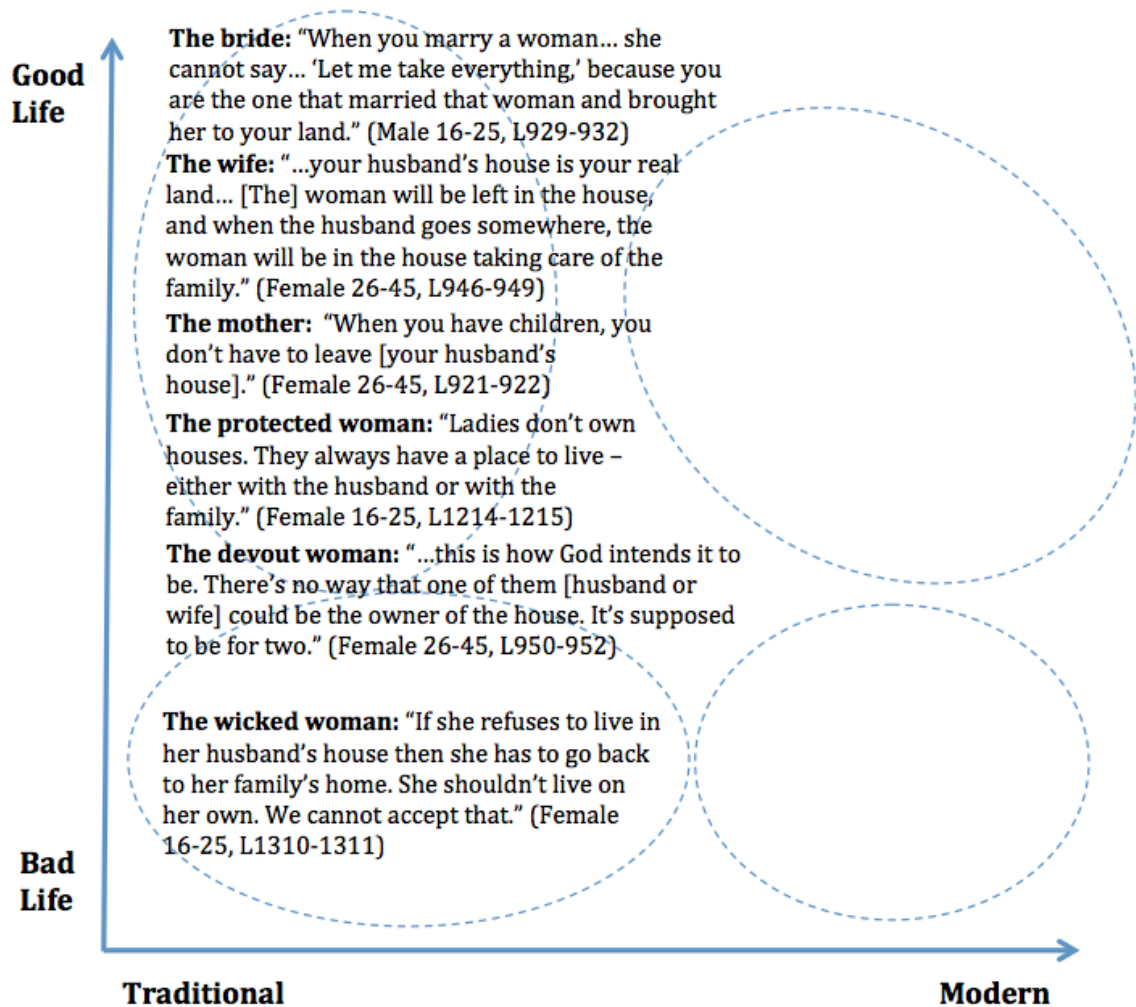
If there is an educated lady, and she has finished her schooling and she has a good job, and she has enough money to buy a house, then she can just buy it, even if she is still living with her family, because a plot of land is not something that you look for when you are in a husband's house. It's the right of ladies and women and everybody. Whoever has enough money to buy a plot should just buy a plot. (Female 16-25, L1137-1144)

In addition, they make use of traditional narratives, adapting them to suit the argument that women should be allowed to own land. They use the wife narrative, for example, to argue that even if a woman is not earning an income, her hard work in the domestic sphere justifies land ownership. "A wife might be doing something, like cutting trees or anything, and her husband might think that she is doing nothing", laments one respondent, "It's his house; it's not her house" (Female 16-25, L995-997). They also invoke God in support of their cause, saying things like, "[T]hank God we have Nhomlaau radio here to announce it... that you, as a woman, if you have enough money to buy land... then you should just buy "(Female 16-25, L1162-1164). In so doing, they implicitly identify themselves as devout women, whose cause God supports. They likewise invoke the wicked woman narrative, often in creative ways. One woman explains, for example, that because you cannot be sure of the wickedness of any future wives your husband may choose to marry, you should be able to own your own land so you do not have to share with them:

You can marry into a house, and then they marry a new wife into the house.... The other wife, for example, brews mou [local beer] at home and brings you all kinds of problems. (Female 16-25, L965-969)

They also use the narratives of the mother, the protected woman and the unprotected woman, to argue that women can own land. This can be observed in Figure 3.

Figure 4: Narratives used to disagree that women can own land



Narratives used to disagree.

Unlike those who agree that women can own land, those who disagree draw only on traditional narratives – using only one side of the symbolic field. The wife narrative is used, for example, to argue that good wives always have access to their husbands' land, and, therefore, women do not need to own land:

[Y]our husband's house is your real land.... [The] woman will be left in the house, and, when the husband goes somewhere, the woman will be in the house taking care of the family. (Female 26-45, L946-949)

The protected woman narrative is used to argue that women do not need to own land, because they will always be cared for. “Ladies don’t own houses”, explains a respondent, “They always have a place to live – either with the husband or with the family” (Female 16-25, L1214-1215).

The wicked woman narrative is used to characterise women, who might think of leaving their husbands and living alone on their own land. “If she refuses to live in her husband’s house”, says a respondent, “then she has to go back to her family’s home. She shouldn’t live on her own. We cannot accept that” (Female 16-25, L1310-1311). The bride narrative, the mother narrative and the devout woman narrative are similarly used to disagree that women can own land. This can be seen in Figure 4. There is virtually no difference in the narratives that men and women use to disagree and very little variation in the way they are used.

Some people, however, do indicate their awareness of modern narratives that might be used to argue in favour of women’s land ownership. Twice, during the course of the men’s group, men who disagree that women can own land actually speak to and contest the modern narratives of the empowered woman and the educated woman. One says:

[A] husband is the one who has responsibility for the woman.... Whether your wife is educated or she is not educated, she cannot say that she has responsibility [for things] without the husband. (Male 16-25, L964-966)

Another says, “[T]hat land is for your grandfather before. Therefore, does the woman have the right to take that land?” (Male 16-25, L908-909). It is as if these men are conscious of the power that the modern narratives wield. This will be addressed further in the discussion.

Narratives used to adopt negotiated positions.

Finally, those who adopt negotiated positions use both traditional and modern narratives. For example, in the following excerpt, the respondent first uses the empowered woman narrative, to assert that women have the right to own land, and then uses the mother narrative and the protected woman narrative, to explain that she would prefer to register land in her son's name:

Moderator: *I want you to tell us your opinion – if you think women should have houses registered in their own names.*

Respondent: *Yes, they have the right.*

Moderator: *Why do you think so?*

Respondent: *[Inaudible]*

Moderator: *I can't hear your voice.*

Respondent: *I think that if it was my land, I would just register it in my son's name, and he would stay on it.*

Moderator: *Do you think that your house should be registered in your son's name, because he's your own blood?*

Respondent: *If anything happened to you, your son would be there. (Female 16-25, L1095-1113)*

This example demonstrates that those who adopt negotiated positions use public narratives both in the way that those in agreement do and in the way that those in disagreement do.

What the analysis shows overall is that those who agree that women can own land (and those who take negotiated positions) are using more of the symbolic field available to them than those who disagree. They are also using traditional narratives differently. We will now turn to the next case study: *Women and safety birth program*.

7.3.2 Case study: Women and safety birth program

Background to the issue

South Sudan has the highest maternal mortality ratio in the world (IRIN, 2012) and one of the highest child mortality ratios (WHO, 2014). One in seven South Sudanese

women die in pregnancy or childbirth (UNDP, 2012) and one in seven children die before their fifth birthday (Namadi, 2012).

The country has “a crippling absence of healthcare staff and health structures” (MSF, 2008), due to decades of war, but, since the signing of the 2005 peace agreement, modest improvements have been made, including the introduction of antenatal care clinics (UNICEF, 2012), some maternity wards (Kolok, 2013) and the country’s first midwifery school (Michael & Garnett, 2011). Only five per cent of women deliver in healthcare facilities, however (Ali, 2012), and only ten per cent in the presence of a skilled birth attendant (South Sudan Ministry of Health, 2011). The majority choose to give birth at home, observing traditional rituals such as bathing the mother and child in hot water. They seek medical assistance only in an emergency and often arrive at healthcare facilities too late. Upon arrival, they are usually septic or anaemic, and many have malaria (IRIN, 2012). Sexually transmitted diseases and diarrhoeal disease are also a problem (L. Stone, 2012a), as are exhaustion and malnourishment (Veldwijk, 2012).

Many factors prevent women from reaching health facilities, including distance and cost, but cultural factors are also cited as a problem (Ali, 2012; IRIN, 2012). One such factor may be the belief in *ruaak* (found, during the course of this research, to exist among the Dinka in and around Turalei in Warrap State). *Ruaak* dictates that if a woman becomes sick while pregnant, it is because she has had a taboo sexual relationship and has not confessed. If she does not confess to a family member, usually an aunt, it is believed she will die during or immediately after childbirth. In some cases, it is also believed that her child will die or be born deformed. Taboo sexual relationships include pre-marital relationships, adulterous relationships and incestuous relationships. The Dinka have a broad definition of incest, forbidding people from marrying into the same clan, unless certain kinship cancellation rituals are performed (South Sudan Humanitarian Project, 2015a). In this context, *Women and safety birth program* was broadcast on 1st and 8th May 2013.

Programme description

Women and safety birth program encourages women to visit healthcare facilities during pregnancy and childbirth. In the excerpt from the programme played for focus groups, a local midwife tries to debunk the belief in *ruaak*, explaining that *ruaak* is actually either malaria or anaemia. The clip draws primarily on the wicked and unprotected woman narratives. The wicked woman narrative is used in two ways – firstly, it is used to characterise the gossiping women who will come and pressure you to confess to *ruaak*, if you get ill during pregnancy:

[W]hen you were married, people were always interfering in your business. If you were about to give birth, and you became sick., they would straight away say that you were suffering from ruaak, and people would starting coming to you and asking you about it. (L68-71)

Secondly, it is used to scare women with the possibility that a pregnant woman could die, leaving people believing that she had been wicked, when in fact she was suffering from either malaria or anaemia:

[P]eople will be staring at you saying, “Tell us, tell us.... If you don’t want to tell us, this thing will now kill you. It will go to your stomach and bring you diarrhoea”. From there the diarrhoea will start. When you have this diarrhoea, you keep on losing water from your body, and then you will keep fainting and losing consciousness. So now, from there, you will start saying the name of any man that you know, even though you have not slept with him.... You will start saying “It is Mr. X, Mr. X, Mr. X” until you die in the hands of people. They will bury you, and keep saying that it was ruaak that killed you, that you have been killed by a lot of men. (L102-112)

The clip also invokes the unprotected woman narrative, painting a sick, pregnant woman as vulnerable in the hands of people who treat her badly and do not take her to hospital:

[I]f you keep on being unwell until you give birth and you have not confessed any man that you have slept with, they will tell you “oh, you don’t want to confess? You will meet the hot water”. If you don’t confess to sleeping with any

man, then they will say “you wait for the hot water”. And when the water is boiled, people will come and make you talk. (L50-55)

A full transcript of the clip can be found in Appendix 6.

Interpretive positions

As Table 18 shows, in interpreting *Women and safety birth program*, women of all ages agree, disagree and adopt negotiated positions on whether *ruaak* is a fiction – moving fluidly between positions in the course of their discussions, while men are in agreement that *ruaak* is a fiction.²

Table 18: Positions adopted on whether *ruaak* is a fiction

| <i>Ruaak</i> is a fiction | Agreement | Negotiation | Disagreement |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| Women (16-15) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Women (26-45) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Men (26-45) | ✓ | | |

All respondents, regardless of which position they adopt, appear to be trying to understand the causes of maternal and child death (and child deformity) and how to avoid them. The issue of *ruaak* is, quite literally, a matter of life and death. Virtually everyone must know someone who has died in childbirth or lost a child. Given the high value placed on children in South Sudan, all women and men have a stake in understanding how maternal and child death can be prevented.

Agreement. In arguing that *ruaak* is a fiction, women and men seem primarily concerned to share medical information that can save the lives of mothers and

² This finding must be interpreted with caution, because the discussion of this clip in the men’s group was extremely short. (The moderator believed the recorder was running out of batteries.) Other interpretive positions may have emerged, had the discussion been longer.

children. For example, one young women interprets the clip in light of her own medical understanding, issuing a directive for pregnant women to eat well:

I believe there is no ruaak. We have found out that it is a lack of feeding for someone who is pregnant. Whenever you get pregnant, the blood that you have is the same blood that you're sharing with the baby in the womb, and if you have lack of feeding since you got pregnant, you will keep vomiting. You won't feel well. When you stand up you will feel like fainting. So, if you don't eat well, then your life will be bad. Then when you give birth, you will give birth and die, because you have lack of blood [anaemia]. (Female 16-25, L1152-1159)

A man similarly shares his medical knowledge:

On the issue I heard about from my sister [in the audio clip], about diseases, it is true, because we have a disease call abier [syphilis]. It can also contribute to that. We have malaria, which was mentioned; it does something like that. And hunger, which contributes to such things.... [S]he will lack something to eat in that house she married into. Once she conceives a baby., she will have anaemia – and in that condition, the woman will miscarry. She will die with the baby, and we will say, “This lady had sex with another man”, when we don't know the facts. (Male 26-45, L965-975)

He concludes with the advice, “People should not leave hospital and look for sorcerers. It is better for people who are educated to come to hospital” (Male 26-45, L985-992).

The position that *ruaak* is a fiction is also, at one point, adopted by a young woman, who appears to wish to free women from strict moral codes of behaviour:

About ruaak, I say that it is not true. The reason why I say it is not true is because a long time ago the reason why they were saying there was ruaak, it was because they were scaring the girls so that they didn't play around. They were telling their girls “you stay and behave well like the neighbour's girl. Don't do anything. If you do something or play around, you will have ruaak”. It's like they were controlling girls.... I believe that even long ago there was no ruaak; it was just to control the girls so that the girls could stay without sleeping with men. (Female 16-25, L1353-1364)

Indeed, she too shares medical knowledge and discusses ways to prevent babies from being born with deformities.

Negotiation. Those women who adopt negotiated positions are equally concerned to understand the causes of maternal and child death. They frequently appear to be receptive to new medical information but are reluctant to completely rule out the existence of *ruaak*, in case it proves to be real. For example, one young woman says:

I heard in the [clip]... that there is no ruaak... and [that] before we were suffering from malaria [and that] if you have a lack of blood [anaemia] then you may miscarry.... But, for me, I have a question.... I was from the city [Khartoum], but there in the city there is enough food, so you cannot have anaemia. But it has happened in Khartoum that a girl was suffering from ruaak. A child was born and the baby's bones could be seen. The child died, and the mother remained alive, and this was because she had slept with her own brother. That has happened. Does it mean it is ruaak or not? (Female 16-25, L1194-1204)

The speaker is clearly trying to work out whether agreement that *ruaak* is a fiction is feasible or has to be negotiated to accommodate her real-life example, which happens to be one of incest. Indeed, many of the negotiated positions that emerge in the groups arise due to concerns about incest. For example:

The ruaak that is killing nowadays is different from in the past, because sometimes it is ruaak when you sleep with someone who is related to you. The ruaak in the past was when you slept around with different men, and if you happened to die, they would say it was ruaak; but the ruaak that can kill now still exists.... When you sleep with your cousin from your mum's side or you dad's side, in that case the child born will be born with these kinds of conditions of the skin. This is happening now. (Female 26-45, L221-227)

This negotiated position appears in both women's groups.

Disagreement. The desire to prevent incest also appears to motivate women who disagree that *ruaak* is a fiction:

I want to encourage girls not to be sleeping with their relatives, saying that there's nothing called ruaak. Our elders were trying to prevent us from sleeping with our cousins. That's why they taught us the system of ruaak.... If we keep on telling [girls] that there's no ruaak, then they will go on sleeping with their cousins. (Female 16-25, L1469-1474)

It is also clear that women who disagree wish to show respect for the wisdom of elders. They frequently emphasise the importance of *ruaak* cancellation rituals, for example:

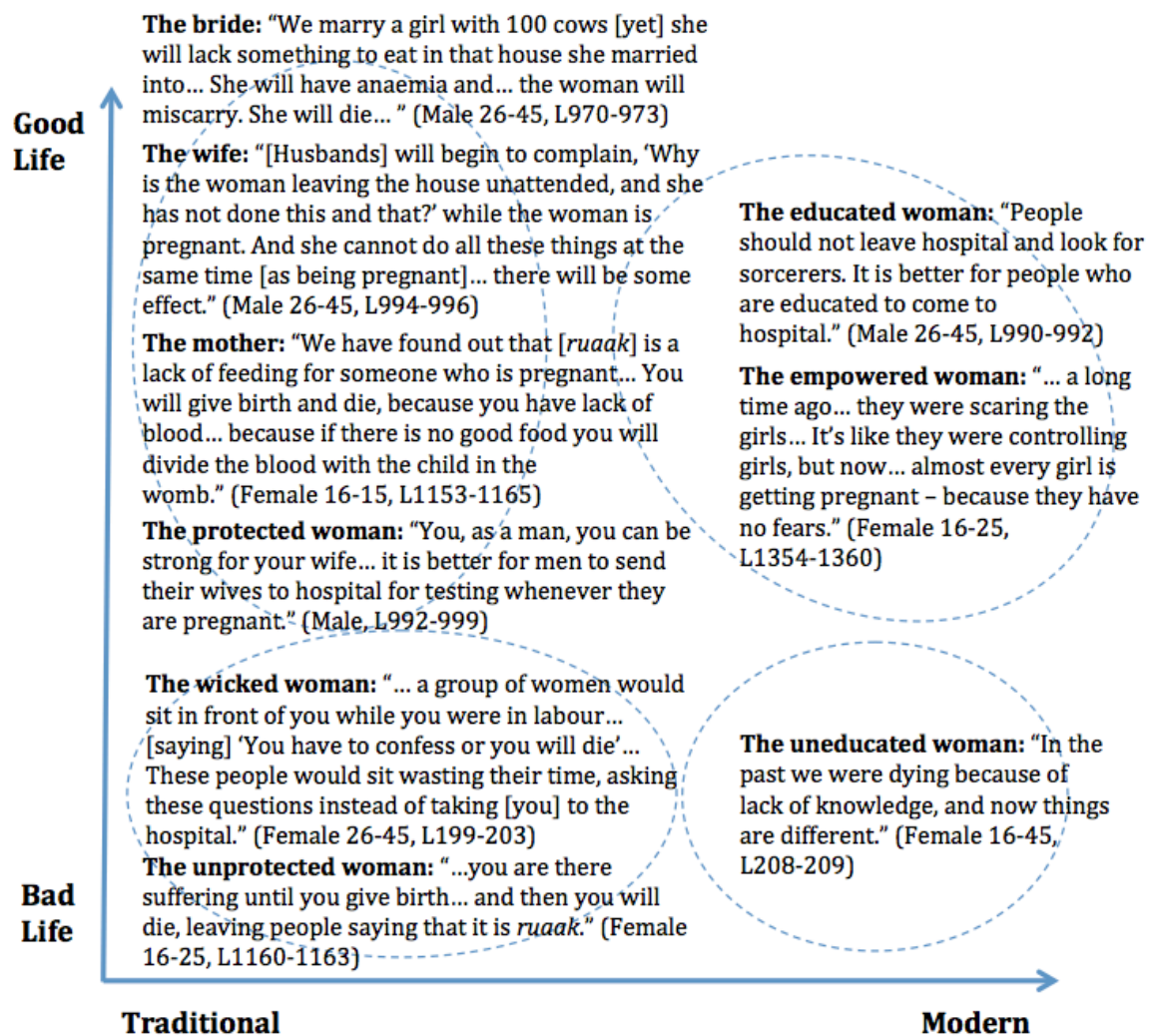
[Ruuak] has been acknowledged by the society for generations.... If it happened that you got married to someone who is related to you, there has to be a ceremony, and they bring some kind of cow to be slaughtered to break the relationship [i.e., the kin relationship].... This is what our ancestors believed, and now, to come and deny that this exists, that's not true. (Female 26-45, L273-285)

Having examined the positions people adopt when interpreting the clip from *Women and safety birth program*, and why, we will now examine how they adopt these positions.

Use of public narratives

In making sense of *Women and safety birth program*, people's pattern of public narrative use is similar to that for *Land Act News*. Those who disagree that *ruaak* is a fiction draw only on traditional narratives, while those who agree again make use of both modern and traditional narratives, using more of the symbolic field. This can be seen in Figure 5 and Figure 6.

The way public narratives are used to support negotiated positions again looks, in some respects, like a combination of the ways in which they agree and disagree. A negotiated position example is presented at the end of this section.

Figure 5: Narratives used to agree that *ruaak* is a fiction*Narratives used to agree.*

Just as for *Land Act News*, those who agree with the central premise of *Women and safety birth program* make use of modern narratives. The educated woman narrative is invoked, for example, to imply that educated people go to hospital, rather than believing in *ruaak*. "People should not leave hospital and look for sorcerers", says one man. "It is better for people who are educated to come to hospital" (Male 26-45, L990-992). The empowered woman narrative is also used. The participant who talked about how *ruaak* was used to "control" girls asserts:

[A] long time ago., they were scaring the girls.... It's like they were controlling girls, but, now., almost every girl is getting pregnant – because they have no fears. (Female 16-25, L1354-1360)

Admittedly, she does not go so far as to say that women have the right to sleep with whomever they want or that women and men should have equal sexual freedom – but this is the direction in which her statement leans. Girls are learning that there is no *ruaak*, and they are getting pregnant as they wish.

The empowered woman narrative is similarly invoked in the men's group:

I think women should have rights.... Instead of taking women to the hospital so that the doctor can look at the sickness, people will say, "Take the woman to traditional doctors", or people will say, "This disease will calm", until she may die. These are the things that are spoiling our area. (Male 26-45, L961-978)

The uneducated woman narrative is likewise used to agree that *ruaak* is a fiction, as is shown in Figure 5.

Traditional narratives are invoked, too. The bride narrative is invoked, for example, to show the absurdity of paying 100 cows for a woman and then allowing her to die of *ruaak*, instead of feeding her properly during pregnancy:

In our area, we marry a girl with 100 cows, [yet] she will lack something to eat in that house she married into. Once she conceives a baby., she will have anaemia, and, in that condition, the woman will miscarry. She will die with the baby, and we will say, "this lady had sex with another man".... (Male 26-45, L970-974)

The mother narrative is used to explain how lack of feeding kills the mother. The explanation offered is that she will die from lack of blood, because, in the absence of food, she will share her own blood with her baby:

We have found out that [ruaak] is a lack of feeding for someone who is pregnant.... You will give birth and die, because you have lack of blood....

Because, if there is no good food, you will divide the blood with the child in the womb. (Female 16-15, L1153-1165)

The wicked woman narrative is invoked – as it is in the clip – to characterise women who pressure others to confess to *ruaak* when they are sick during pregnancy:

Ruaak – it was a case where a group of women would sit in front of you while you were in labour., [saying] “You have to confess or you will die”.... These people would sit wasting their time, asking these questions instead of taking [you] to the hospital. (Female 26-45, L198-203)

It is also used to raise the troubling possibility that a pregnant woman might die leaving people believing that she had been wicked:

[What] I heard... it is true, because some people are not being rescued from malaria, and people will begin to suspect that she had sex outside [marriage], and that is the reality. (Male 26-45, L985-987)

The unprotected woman narrative is invoked too – much the same as in the clip – to show how women struggle and suffer, without protection, when they are accused of *ruaak*, when what they actually need is medical attention:

[S]ince you got pregnant you are there suffering until you give birth, and then, when they bathe you with the hot water, the fever will increase, and then you will die, leaving people saying that it is ruaak. (Female 16-25, L159-1163)

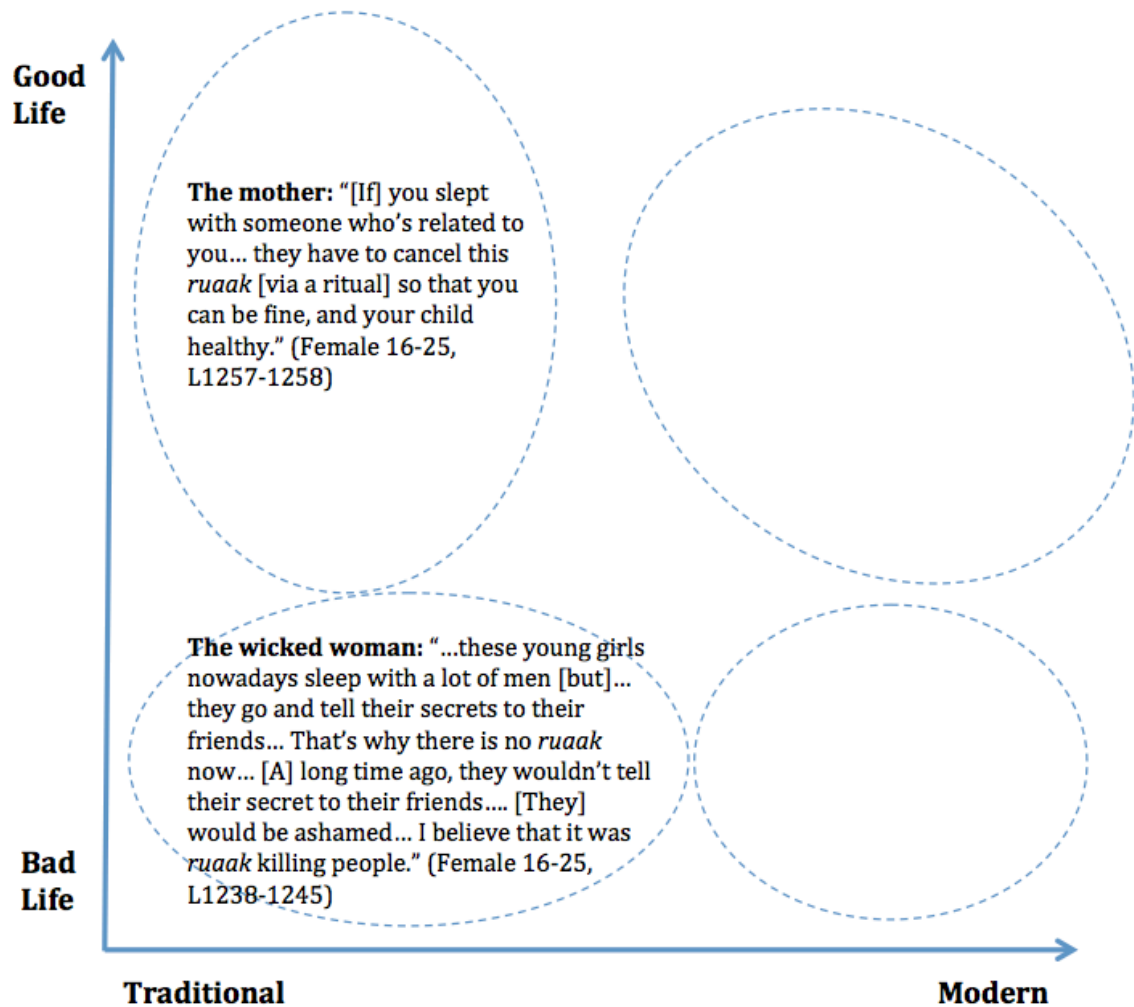
The wife, protected woman and wicked woman narratives are also used to argue that *ruaak* is a fiction. This is shown in Figure 5.

Narratives used to disagree.

Unlike those who agree that *ruaak* is a fiction, those who disagree only use two public narratives and only draw from the traditional side of the symbolic field. The first narrative they use is the mother narrative. They entreat women to believe in *ruaak* for the sake of their unborn children. “[If] you slept with someone who’s related to you., they have to cancel this *ruaak* [via a ritual], so that you can be fine and your child healthy”, (Female 16-25, L1257-1258) says one woman. Another says,

“Even though people say [*ruaak*] is not true, I will never believe that. It is a must that if you don’t die, your child will die” (Female 16-25, L1350-1351).

Figure 6: Narratives used to disagree that *ruaak* is a fiction



The second narrative they use is the wicked woman narrative. They use this narrative to explain why *ruaak* does not *appear* to be a problem in modern times, despite it being a legitimate threat to women. Their explanation is that girls, when they have been wicked and had taboo sexual relationship, are so wicked, nowadays, that they are no longer ashamed and tell everything to their friends, thereby avoiding death:

[T]hese young girls nowadays sleep with a lot of men, [but]... they go and tell their secrets to their friends.... That's why there is no ruaak now.... [A] long time ago, they wouldn't tell their secret to their friends.... [They] would be ashamed.... I believe that it was ruaak killing people. (Female 16-25, L1238-1245)

This is how people use traditional narratives to disagree that *ruaak* is a fiction. Again, however, there is an indication that they are aware of the power of modern narratives. At least one respondent, who believes in *ruaak*, challenges the educated women narrative. She says, "Even if you finish university, if you marry someone who is related to you..., something bad will happen to you.... It can kill you" (Female 16-25, L1182-1185).

Narratives used to adopt negotiated positions.

Finally, those who adopt negotiated positions use public narratives in some respects like those who agree that *ruaak* is a fiction and in some respects like those who disagree. For example, in the following excerpt, the speaker takes a fairly complex negotiated position. She argues that *ruaak* does not exist but still maintains that it must be ritualistically cancelled. Responding to another participant's story about a lady from Khartoum, who slept with her brother and had a deformed child, she says:

Ok. For me, I cannot believe that there is ruaak.... For that lady in Khartoum, who gave birth to the child and the bones were showing, maybe she was suffering from syphilis or gonorrhoea. So these are the ways a child can be born like that. But if it comes to a problem of ruaak, a child can be born safely, and if they don't do the traditional practices to cancel ruaak, that's when something can happen to that child. (Female 16-25, L1223-1227)

In the first part of her response, she refers back to the unprotected woman narrative, suggesting that the lady in Khartoum might actually be "suffering from syphilis or gonorrhoea", but, in the second part of her response, she invokes the mother narrative, telling the other women in the group what must be done so that "a child can be born safely".

These are the ways in which public narratives are used to support different interpretive positions. It appears from this analysis that the way in which people adopt positions for *Women and safety birth program* is similar to the way in which they adopted positions for *Land Act News*. Those who agree with the central premise draw on both traditional and modern narrative, while those who disagree draw on only traditional narratives, and those who adopt negotiated positions use a strategy somewhere in between. We will now turn to the final case study: *Why women have low participation in Military*.

7.3.3 Case study: Why women have low participation in Military

Background to the issue

South Sudan was at war with what is now Sudan from 1955 to 1972, and again from 1983 to 2005. The sixty-year period from 1955 to 2005 is referred to as the Sudanese civil war – or the first and second civil wars (LeRiche & Arnold, 2012). During the war, the South – with a predominantly African and Christian population – fought the North – with a predominantly Arab and Muslim population. Southerners also fought each other (L. Stone, 2012b), which was the catalyst for the conflict currently taking place today.

The Sudanese civil war was characterized by a series of clashes involving attack and defence (L. Stone, 2012b). Women did not typically take part in armed combat but participated in support roles, performing tasks such as cooking and caring for the wounded. They also carried ammunition, medical supplies and other essentials (L. Stone, 2012b). John Garang, the leader of the SPLA – the Southern fighting force – believed that women should be kept off the frontlines to procreate and replace dying fighters, and this became official SPLA policy (Bubenzer & Stern, 2012; Jok, 1999; L. Stone, 2012a). However, women often thought of themselves as combatants.

The war ended with a peace agreement in 2005, which paved the way for the independence of South Sudan in 2011. With John Garang's support, the new constitution formally recognised equality between men and women and stipulated that there should be a 25% quota for women at all levels of government (Government of Southern Sudan, 2005). In this context, the live call-in programme *Why women have low participation in Military* aired on 17 May 2013. At the time, South Sudan was at peace. In December of that same year, a new conflict broke out between rival political groups in the South – but, when the programme aired, and when the research was conducted, there appeared to be no immanent prospect of war.

Programme description

In *Why women have low participation in Military* a female presenter invites callers to call in and discuss the topic of the day:

Our topic of the day, we are asking why the men are the ones who fight and the women are not, and, when we got independence, the women and the men are enjoying it and participating together. (L178-180)

In the excerpt from the programme played for focus group participants, two callers share their thoughts on this topic. The first explains that women cannot fight, because they come from the rib of man and are inherently weaker. He explains that, during domestic disputes, husbands must take care not to kill their wives. He maintains that the reason the country was not taken by the enemy during the war was that women did not fight and concludes that men are able to defend land better, because they have stronger hearts. He then digresses into a more general discussion of bravery and cowardice, in which he explains that people are not the same – some are brave, and some are fearful.

At this point, the presenter, in an interaction explained in Chapter 5, asks him if he means that brave women can fight. He clarifies, saying that women can only fight

within the home. The presenter misunderstands and asks whether he means that women can fight externally, for their country, but not within the home, because they respect their husbands. Bemused, the caller fails to clarify his position, and the call ends.

The second caller talks about the fact that it was government policy to keep women from fighting. If women fought, a husband and wife might both be killed; but, if women stayed at home, they could continue giving birth to new fighters. The caller mentions that, through wife inheritance, women continued giving birth even after their husbands were killed. He maintains that by giving birth during the first civil war, women produced the fighters who went on to liberate the country during the second civil war. This, he explains, is why women did not fight. The caller also talks about women's strength. He argues that in "traditional life" (L454) women used to fight with spears alongside men. The reason they did not fight during the civil war was not that they could not fight, but that they were doing other important things, such as giving birth, cooking and nursing. Who would do these things if not women? He concludes by saying that this is why women were given 25% representation. A full transcript of the clip can be found in Appendix 6.

Interpretive positions

In interpreting *Why women have low participation in Military*, there is quite a diversity of opinion on the first issue raised by the programme – whether women can fight, and much less diversity on the second issue – whether women deserve to share the benefits of independence. On the first issue, both women and men adopt the full range of interpretive positions; however, on the second issue, women unanimously agree that women deserve to share the benefits of independence, while men at times agree and at times adopt a negotiated position. This is shown in Table 19 and Table 20.

Table 19: Positions adopted on whether women are able to fight

| Women are able to fight | Agreement | Negotiation | Disagreement |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| Women (16-15) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Women (26-45) | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Men (16-25) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 20: Positions adopted on whether women deserve to share the benefits of independence

| Women deserve to share the benefits of independence | Agreement | Negotiation | Disagreement |
|---|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| Women (16-15) | ✓ | | |
| Women (26-45) | ✓ | | |
| Men (16-25) | ✓ | ✓ | |

Women are able to fight

In some sense, the first issue – whether or not women can fight – is an issue of symbolic relevance. At the time the research was conducted, South Sudan was at peace, with no immediate prospect of going to war. The issue may, therefore, have been significant in a metaphorical way – standing in for the issue of gender equality.

Agreement. In the focus groups, those who agree that women can fight make comments that suggest a commitment to gender equality in broad terms. For example, one man comments:

About the war – women and men are at the same level. Why should men go to war and not women? All of them should go to war. If a woman does not go to war, it might be because of individual fear. The same thing is true of a man who does not go to fight.... They are all at the same level.... Woman and man, the two of them are the same. (Male 16-25, L171-187)

Women, in addition, are keen to stress that men often hold them back and underestimate their capabilities, solely because they are women:

Women are prevented from going to war. Even though you have grown up to the age that you believe you can do something, you will be told, "No, you cannot do it"... They dismiss what I'm trying to do simply because I'm a woman. (Female 26-45, L444-451)

Negotiation. Women who adopt negotiated positions appear to want to agree that women can fight, but have difficulty reconciling this with the fact that women did not actually fight during the civil war. To get around this, they adopt negotiated positions, such as this one, which suggests that women can only fight other women:

It is a good question, why are the women not going to fight? And why did it happen like that? ... [If] women can go and fight, they cannot go and fight... with men on the other side. Like in the Sudanese civil war, if the Arab women could go and fight, then the Southern women could go and fight them. And they [Southern women] can fight, because it is their right to defend their country. (Female 16-25, L1282-1288)

Men who adopt a negotiated position, on the other hand, seem to want to acknowledge women's capabilities, without suggesting that they are equal to men's. They also appear to be uncomfortable with the idea of women actually fighting and dying:

What I think about women going or not going to war is – women are able to go to war, but... they will not be strong like men. If you think about it, there's never been anything that prevents women from going to war. The reason they don't go to war is because a woman is a mother that gives birth to children. If she goes to war, she will be killed. (Male 16-25, L447-452)

Disagreement. There are a number of reasons why people disagree that women can fight. Both women and men, at times, imply that women are cowardly. For example, one man says, "If it is a woman who is wounded, she will not continue to fight. She will just be crying, which will make people panic and be fearful" (Male 16-25, L405-405). Also, some people feel that women are inherently peaceful and may not want

to fight. One woman explains, for example, that a woman's power during wartime comes from her life-saving ability:

[If] somebody [gets] hurt, or wounded; if the mother who gives birth to children comes and shields you, that person will not be harmed anymore. They [the combatants] will give him to the woman who protects him. They will leave him for her. They will not do anything more to that person.... This is the power of a woman when people go for fighting. (Female 26-45, L533-549)

Finally, some people disagree that women can fight, because they are concerned about the continuation of the family line. One man comments:

When the woman goes to war, she might be killed. There will be nobody that will give birth to children after that. What I like – it is best that only men go to war. Even if they perish, women will remain and give birth to children. (Male 16-25, L79-84)

Women deserve to share the benefits of independence

On the second issue – whether women deserve to share the benefits of independence – women unanimously agree, while men sometimes qualify their agreement, adopting a negotiated position. Notably, men who agree that women are capable of fighting are more likely to agree on this issue, although it is not true in every case.

Agreement. Those who agree that women deserve to share the benefits of independence steadfastly assert women's right to equality – particularly political equality:

Okay, it is very important that the women share the benefits with men. It is something that people have been focusing on every day. It is better if women have equal benefits with men. That is what I want, for women to have equal rights. That is the reason I like this government, because they involve women, because women can say something good that can benefit the nation. It is not like men's ideology in the past, when they thought that they should be the only ones making decisions and getting benefits. (Female 16-25, L1453-1459)

Men who agree that women deserve to share the benefits of independence echo this sentiment:

Ok, yes, they can divide the benefits of the independence of the country. Men can get something, and women can get something, too. The women cannot be given something small while the men are given something big. They will be given an equal amount, because they are at the same level. The reason why they are equal is because, if they go to war, they are at the same level. (Male 16-25, 219-223)

Negotiation. Some, men, however, appear to want to check women's political power. They often concede to 25% representation but believe that that is enough:

The good thing about the independence is it is not that they are not given anything – they are given a share of two [he means 25%]. That is enough for them. They cannot say that they have not been given what they deserve. (Male 16-25, L429-432)

They are also keen to stress that women cannot be leaders:

[I]t is good if [independence] is enjoyed by all. But it's not that women can lead ahead of men. The reason why a woman cannot lead is because she cannot do what a man can do as leader, because she is a mother who gives birth to children. She cannot become the leader, because, when she is pregnant, she won't be able to be in the office. (Male 16-25, L492-496)

It thus appears that some men wish to hold on to a measure of political power.

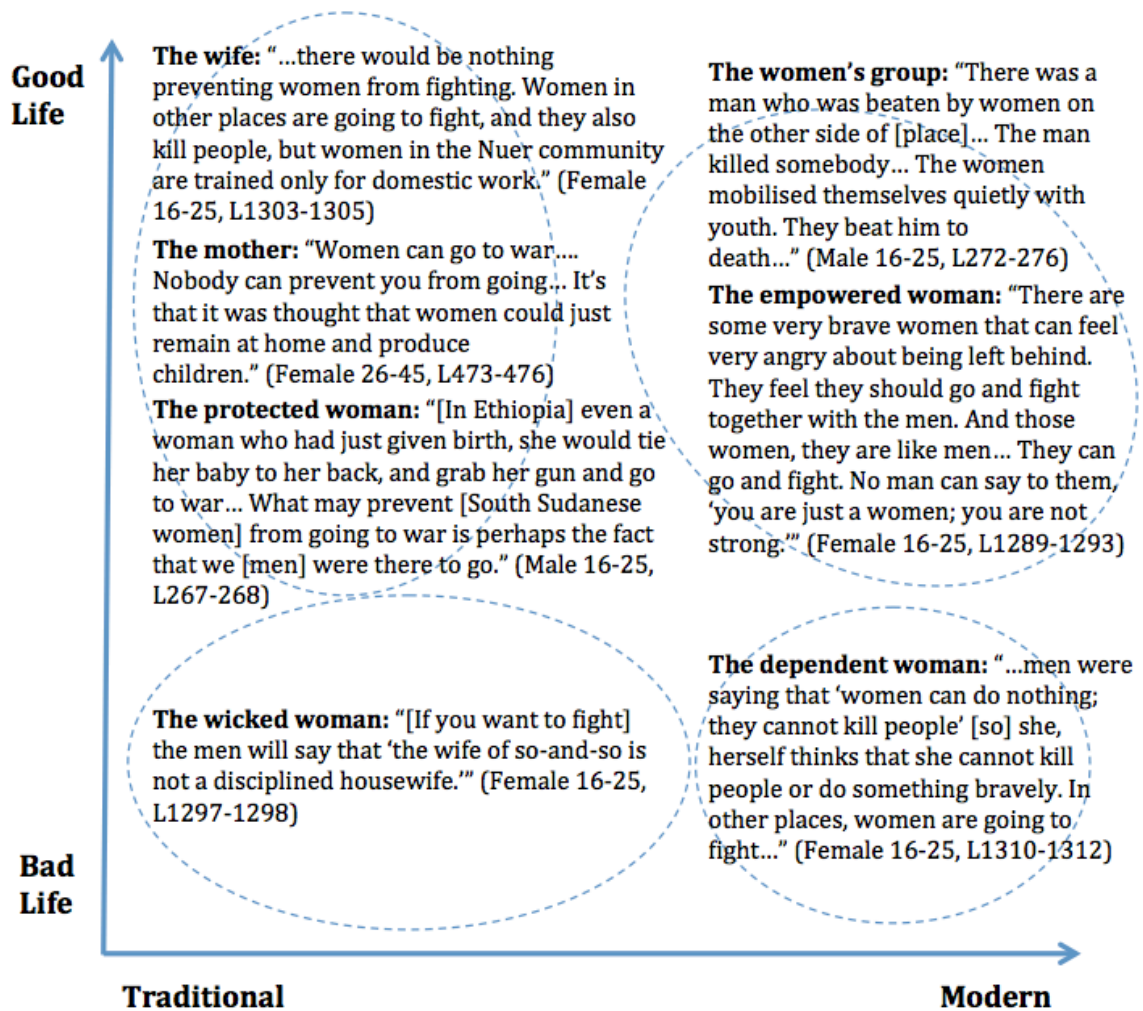
Having looked at what positions people adopt and having offered some insight into why, we will now examine how various interpretive positions are adopted.

Use of public narratives

The pattern of public narrative use for *Why women have low participation in the Military* mirrors that for *Land Act News* and *Women and safety birth program*. People who agree – with either of the two issues raised in the programme – draw on both

traditional and modern narratives, while people who disagree draw on only traditional narratives. This is shown in Figure 7, Figure 8, Figure 9 and Figure 10.

Figure 7: Narratives used to agree that women are able to fight



Women are able to fight

Narratives used to agree.

Those who agree that women are able to fight use both modern and traditional narratives. For example, the dependent woman narrative is used to argue that, although women *are* capable of fighting, the reason they do not do so is because they have been told by men they cannot:

Now [women] feel that they are not able to fight. And even during the war, if it happened that an enemy came to her house and fought her husband, she could not help her husband.... [Men] were saying that women can do nothing; they cannot kill people, [so] she, herself, thinks that she cannot kill people or do something bravely. In other places, women are going to fight. (Female 16-25, L1305-1312)

The modern narratives of the empowered woman and the women's group are similarly used to argue that women are capable of fighting. This is shown in Figure 7.

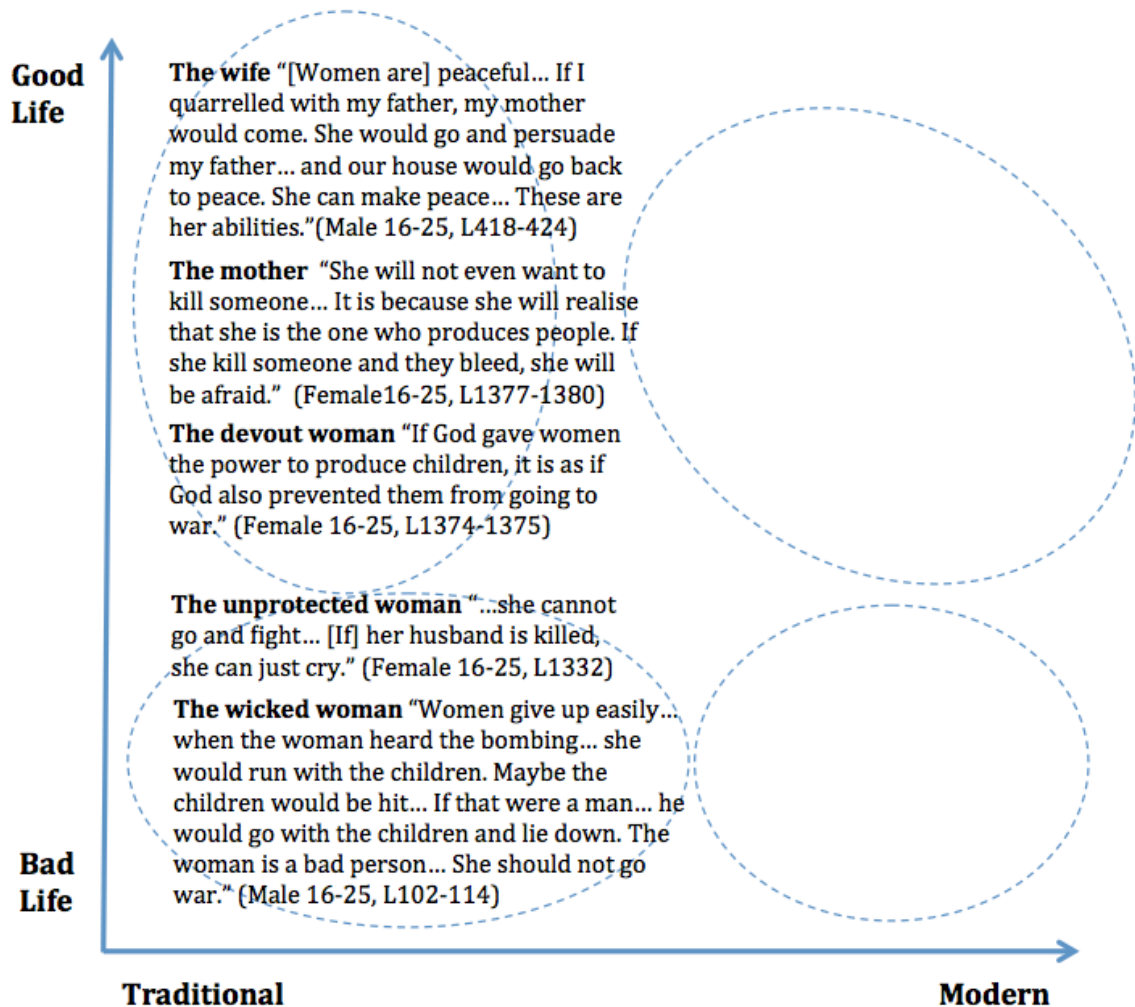
Traditional narratives are used as well. For example, the wicked woman narrative is used to imply that women are capable of fighting but choose not to for fear of being stigmatised for failing in their domestic duties. One woman explains that, if you, as a woman, want to fight, "The men will say that 'the wife of so-and-so is not a disciplined housewife'" (Female 16-25, L1297-1298). The other traditional narratives used to adopt this position are shown in Figure 7.

Narratives used to disagree.

Those who disagree that women are able to fight draw exclusively on traditional narratives. For example, the narrative of the wife is used to suggest that women are inherently peaceful – as evidenced by the respect they show for their husbands and the peace they keep in the home:

[Women are] peaceful. Why? Why, even my mother and my father, if they quarrelled – or if I quarrelled with my father, my mother would come. She would go and persuade my father, which means that whatever disappointed my father, he would give it up, and our house would go back to peace. These are the abilities of a woman.... She can make peace. Even when others are fighting, she can separate them. These are her abilities. (Male, 16-25, L418-424)

The narratives of the mother, the devout woman, the unprotected woman and the wicked women, are also used to disagree that women are capable of fighting, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Narratives used to disagree that women are able to fight

Narratives used to adopt negotiated positions.

Narratives used to adopt negotiated positions can, as we have seen before, be both traditional and modern. For example, in the following excerpt, a respondent adopts the negotiated position that brave women can fight but not cowardly women. To argue for the first point, she uses the empowered woman narrative, and to argue for the second point, she uses the unprotected woman narrative:

[I]f women join men in fighting, if they are brave women, they can do the same work that men are doing. But if they are cowards, if they have seen... a man killed.., they can just cry.... (Female 16-25, L1348-1350)

We will now turn to the second issue in the case study *Why women have low participation in Military*.

Women deserve to share the benefits of independence

Narratives used to agree.

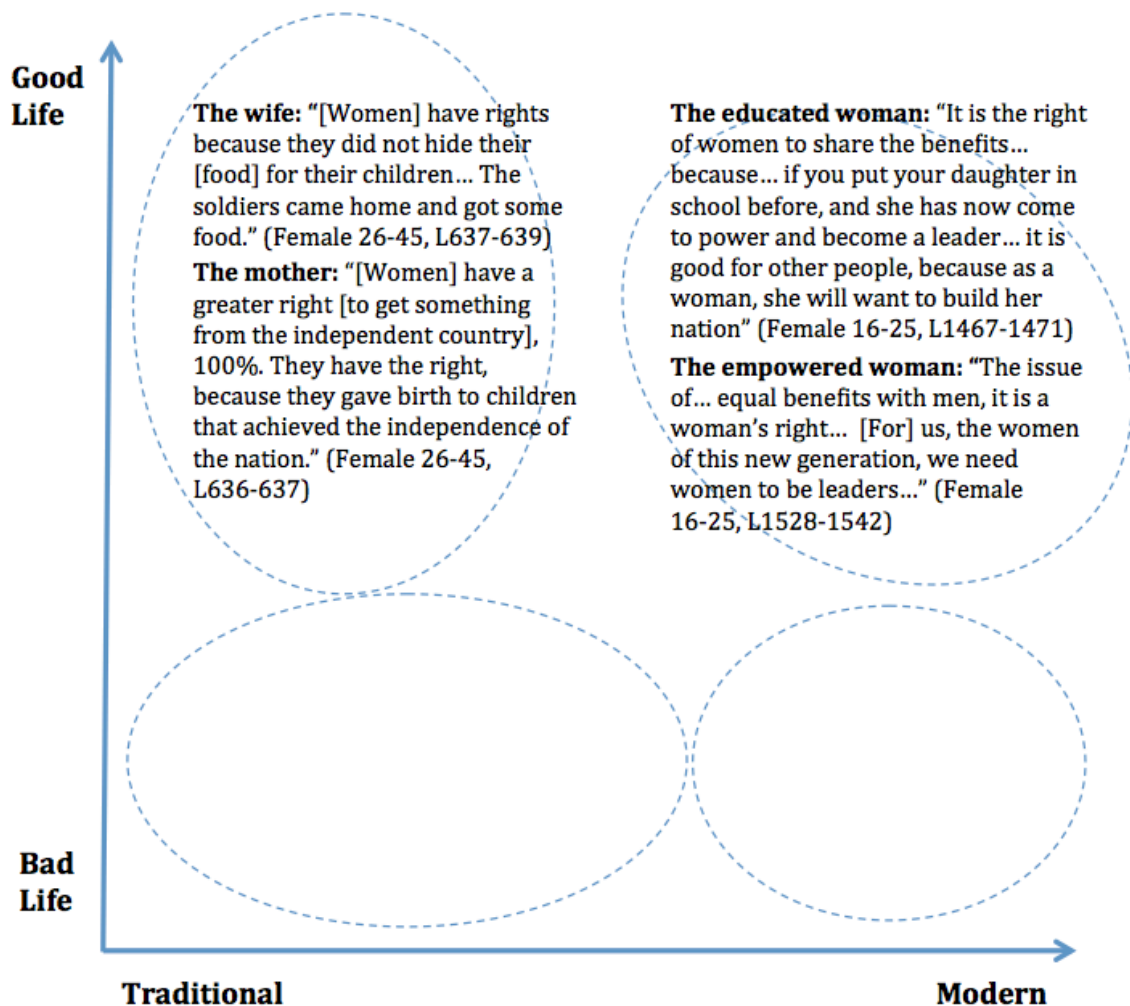
Finally, on the issue of whether women deserve to share the benefits of independence with men, those who agree, again, draw on a mixture of modern and traditional narratives. On the modern side, one of the narratives they draw on is the educated woman. For example, the following respondent argues that her educated daughter entitles her to share the benefits of independence:

It is the right of women to share the benefits.., because.., if you put your daughter in school before, and she has now come to power and become a leader.., it is good for other people, because, as a woman, she will want to build her nation. (Female 16-25, L1467-1471)

The empowered woman narrative is also extensively used, as is apparent in all of the examples in Figure 9.

On the traditional side, narratives such as the wife narrative are used. It is argued, for example, that women deserve to enjoy the benefits of independence, because they performed their domestic duties and fed the soldiers – both their own husbands and other people’s husbands: “[Women] have rights because they did not hide their [food] for their children...” says one respondent, “The soldiers came home and got some food” (Female 26-45, L637-639).

Figure 9: Narratives used to agree that women deserve to share the benefits of independence



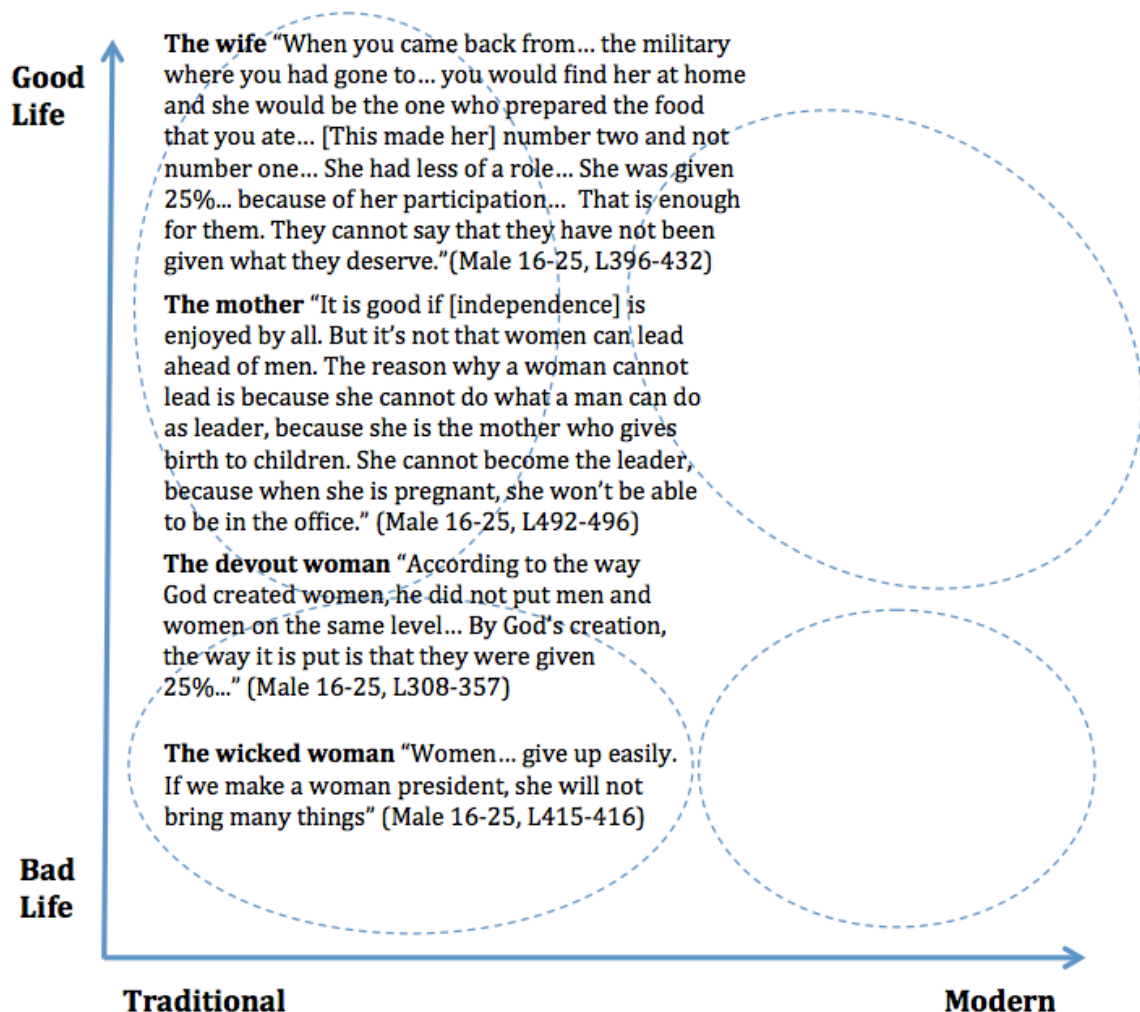
Narratives used to disagree (within a negotiated position).

As Table 19 shows, there was no one who categorically disagreed with the idea that women should share the benefits of independence. Men adopted negotiated positions, suggesting women should enjoy some benefits but within limits.

As already explained, when people make negotiated arguments, they usually draw on narratives from both sides of the symbolic field, because they often argue both for and against the central premise in coming to a negotiated position. In the interest of comparability, however, only those parts of the negotiated arguments advocating

limits to women's share of the benefits were examined for Figure 10. These were found to contain only traditional narratives. For example, the wicked women narrative was used to argue that women were too lazy to lead. "Women... give up easily", one male participant asserted. "If we make a woman president, she will not bring many things" (Male 16-25, L415-416). The wife, the mother and the devout woman narratives were also used, as depicted in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Narratives used to disagree that women deserve to share the benefits of independence (within a negotiated position)



Because the subject matter being discussed pertained to women's rights and women's political representation, any disagreement, even within a negotiated argument, was, by its very nature, a challenge to the empowered woman narrative. Thus, there were many challenges to the empowered woman narrative apparent in the men's focus group. For example, one man said, "The good thing about the independence of South Sudan – it is good if it is enjoyed by all. But it's not that women can lead ahead of men" (Male 16-25, L492-493).

Overall, in this analysis, we see the same interpretive pattern we saw for *Land Act News* and *Women and safety birth program* – people who agree with the programme's central premise draw on both modern and traditional narratives, while those who disagree to an extent, draw exclusively on traditional narratives. The implications of this will now be discussed.

7.4 Discussion

This chapter set out to investigate how community members used public narratives to interpret community radio content, supporting a variety of different gender and development goals. The community discussion, generated by community radio content, was taken to be the second symbolic site where gender and development goals and rural South Sudanese communities meet. This chapter enabled us to confirm many of the findings from the previous empirical chapters, but it also added one important theoretical insight – although both modern and traditional narratives are flexible symbolic resources that can be used to argue in service of gender and development goals, traditional narratives can also constitute barriers to such goals.

Examining three case studies, representing community responses to three different illustrative pieces of community radio content, the chapter showed that a full range of interpretive positions were adopted in relation to all three pieces of content.

All three programmes promoted different gender and development goals. *Land Act News* advocated for women's property rights, *Women and safety birth program* advocated the idea that *ruaak* was a myth, in the interests of improving maternal and child health, and *Why women have low participation in Military* promoted gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as women's public participation and leadership.

In all cases, those who agreed with the central premise of the programmes made broad use of the symbolic field of public narratives identified in Chapter 4. They drew on both traditional and modern narratives, adapting traditional narratives in ways that facilitated agreement with gender and development goals. This is the same broad pattern of narrative use we saw in Chapter 6. In adding the second symbolic site, however, this chapter shows what an oppositional perspective looks like. This chapter has examined not only how people argue for, but also how they argue against, gender and development goals. What is notable is that those who argue against gender and development goals only use traditional narratives. The findings have two potentially important implications.

First, the analysis suggests that modern narratives can be powerful symbolic resources for those arguing for gender and development goals. The educated woman and empowered woman narratives, in particular, were invoked with regularity to agree with the positions programmes promoted. Indeed, the impact of these narratives was such that those who disagreed with the positions programmes promoted occasionally felt obliged to acknowledge and contest the modern narratives – as if aware of the power they wielded. Whether the ability to invoke modern narratives in support of development objectives actually translates into meaningful changes in women's lives is unclear, but the modern narratives certainly appear to have symbolic power.

Second, it highlights that traditional narratives are flexible symbolic resources, that can be adapted for different interpretive positions, and that people are extremely creative and adept at using them. For example, in the discussion about whether or not women should own land, the wife narrative was used to argue both for and against women's land ownership. In arguing for women's land ownership, it was used to imply that women deserve to own land, because of the tremendous amount of domestic work they perform as wives. In arguing against women's land ownership, it was used to imply that women do not need to own land, because they will always be able to live on the land they share with their husbands. Similarly, the mother narrative was used to argue that land ownership would enable women to better provide for their children and that being a mother makes a woman's position in her husband's house secure, so she does not need land.

In conclusion, while the chapter reveals that traditional narratives *can* constitute barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals – a finding that did not emerge in the previous chapter but is consistent with much of the gender and development literature reviewed in Chapter 2 – it also confirms that traditional narratives can be used to achieve said goals. Moreover, it provides further examples of the ways in which gender and development goals can be reimagined in ways that are locally and contextually relevant. In the final chapter, I discuss this insight in greater detail, presenting it as one of the three main theoretical contributions of this thesis.

Chapter 8: Discussion and implications

On 25 September 2015, when the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, like the Millennium Declaration and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action before it, it laid out a series of gender and development goals designed to address a range of issues, such as women's education, employment and public participation. The gender and development literature shows that realising such goals requires understanding local cultural context. The central goal of this thesis, therefore, has been to investigate how local cultural context – conceived of in terms of a series of interlocking *public narratives* – facilitates and constrains the achievement of gender and development goals, using South Sudan as a case study. The thesis makes three theoretical contributions. First, it introduces public narratives as a theoretical and methodological lens, through which to study local cultural context, and demonstrates how this lens unlocks layers of complexity and contradiction, not necessarily captured by other lenses currently used in the gender and development literature. Second, it suggests that, contrary to what certain critical gender and development scholars have advocated, it is potentially unwise to dispense with the concepts of “traditional” and “modern”, as the traditional-modern binary might be meaningful for certain people, at certain times, in certain places. Third, it demonstrates that, contrary to what most mainstream gender and development scholars, and some critical scholars, suggest, the traditional elements of local cultural context do not necessarily constitute barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals; rather, they can be used to reimagine gender and development goals in ways that are locally and culturally relevant.

8.1 Public narratives as a way of studying local cultural context

The first theoretical contribution of the thesis has been to introduce *public narratives* to the gender and development literature, as a theoretical and operational

lens for studying local cultural context. The gender and development literature is replete with studies demonstrating that insufficient understanding of local cultural context can impede progress towards gender and development goals (Boyden et al., 2012; Chi et al., 2015; De La Puente, 2011; Doss, 2001; Goetz & Gupta, 1996; Hames, 2006; Leach & Sitaram, 2002; Müller, 2006; Muzyamba et al., 2015; Neogy, 2010; Ramnarain, 2015; Razavi, 2007; Read-Hamilton & Marsh, 2016; Sawade, 2014; Sialubanje et al., 2015; Upton, 2010). The literature has used a basket of terms to conceptualise local cultural context – including *practices*, *social norms*, *gender roles*, *beliefs* and *attitudes*. However, as I argue in Chapter 2, these terms fall short in terms of their *comprehensiveness* and their ability to account for *temporality*. A public narrative approach brings both *comprehensiveness* and *temporality* to the study of local cultural context, unlocking, in the process, many complexities and contradictions of local cultural context that are potentially relevant to the achievement of gender and development goals.

8.1.1 Comprehensiveness revisited

As I argued in Chapter 2, to be *comprehensive*, a theoretical and operational lens used to study local cultural context should be able to account for both *ways of life* and the *meanings* people give to them – two things which Bruner has argued are fundamental to understanding culture (Bruner, 1990). Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated empirically that public narratives are able to do this. In Chapter 4, using public narratives as a theoretical and operational lens, I identified thirteen standard stories about women in three rural South Sudanese locations that represent diverse, and at times even contradictory, ways of life for South Sudanese women. The public narrative approach allowed for a nuanced and comprehensive picture of different ways of life to emerge, in all their complexity and inconsistency. For example, it showed that public narratives exist which laud women's presence in public life, and public narratives exist which do not. It showed there are public narratives that regard women's talk as gossip and public narratives that regard women's talk as a powerful force for social change. It showed there are public

narratives that encourage women to depend on men economically and public narrative that discourage this. It is rare to see studies, which use terms like *practices*, *social norms*, *gender role*, *beliefs* and *attitudes*, acknowledging such contradictions. For example, Neogy's study of malnutrition in Indian women (2010), referenced in Chapter 2, highlights practices which may impact negatively on women's nutrition, but does not acknowledge practices which may impact positively. Similarly, Haylock and colleagues' discussion of violence against women implicates social norms supporting such violence but does not acknowledge the possibility of simultaneous social norms which discourage it (2016). A public narrative approach has facilitated understanding of different ways of life, in the South Sudanese context, and drawn attention to their contradictions and nuance – contradictions and nuance, which potentially have relevance for the achievement of gender and development goals.

A public narrative approach has also engendered understanding of what different ways of life *mean* to the people who live them. Building on Charles Taylor's proposition that cultures position different possible ways of life in relation to "the good" (1989) and Bruner's proposition that public narratives suggest "desirable" and "undesirable" ways of life (1986), the thirteen public narratives were mapped onto a symbolic field with a good-bad axis, according to the way people viewed them. A further, modern-traditional axis was added, when this emerged as a relevant dimension in the data. Mapping the narratives onto the good-bad axis enabled us to see the normative force of certain narratives – just as the concepts of *social norms*, *gender roles* and *attitudes* might – but further mapping them onto the modern-traditional axis added an additional layer of meaning, rarely captured by other concepts. Certainly, the gender and development literature often labels as "traditional" certain practices (Begum, 2015), gender roles (De La Puente, 2011; Müller, 2006) and beliefs (Glick, 2008; Neogy, 2010), and argues that they are barriers to development goals, but the labelling and meaning are rarely argued to be a property emerging from the data. The public narrative approach enables us to look at the meanings of certain narratives *as they are understood by members of the*

culture; for example, the mother narrative was understood, by members of the culture, to be a traditional narrative, oriented towards “the good”. Moreover, the approach allowed us to see, holistically, how different narratives related to one another in terms of their positioning. The *bride*, *wife* and *mother* narratives, for example, were part of a family of narratives considered “good” in a traditional sense, while the *empowered* woman and *educated* woman narratives were part of a family of narratives considered “good” in a modern sense. The approach, thus, gave us a broad picture of the constellations of meaning surrounding the lives of women in the rural South Sudanese context.

Meaning was also made available in a second sense. The public narrative approach enabled us to appreciate not only the meanings of different public narratives at an aggregate level but also what people *meant* when they invoked these public narratives in describing their lives, discussing their aspirations and life challenges, and – critically for the central research question – arguing for or against different gender and development goals.

For example, consider the argument made in Chapter 7 that women deserve to share the benefits of independence with men, because they are the mothers of the children who liberated the nation. Understanding the mother narrative gives us a much deeper appreciation of what the woman who makes this argument actually means. First, the mother narrative tells us that women in South Sudan undertake *all* of the required care work for children. Children are entirely women’s responsibility (apart, perhaps, from some monetary or material support from men). This means the successful raising of the children who liberated the nation is *entirely* the achievement of women. Independence would have been impossible without women. Second, because *all* South Sudanese women are understood to be, or to become, mothers (regardless of the veracity of this claim), an argument based on motherhood is equivalent to an argument based on womanhood – all women deserve to share the benefits of independence, because they are all mothers or potential mothers.

To illustrate further, consider the argument, also made in Chapter 7, that a woman cannot claim ownership of land if she leaves her husband, because, when she becomes a bride, he brings her to his land. Understanding the bride narrative gives us a much more complete picture of what a person making this argument might mean. According to the bride narrative, a woman is exchanged for cows when a man marries her – potentially hundreds of cows. The exchange is what marriage is. Because a man pays cows for a woman, if she leaves him, and the cows are not returned, he is already economically disadvantaged. If, on top of this, she tries to take his land, the injustice is compounded.

Finally, take the argument, in Chapter 6, that the government should provide jobs to educated women. Understanding the educated woman narrative makes it much clearer what the Peace and Reconciliation Commissioner making this argument means. Educated women, according to the educated woman narrative, do good things when they are employed, like looking after their families and helping the country to develop (a point he makes explicitly). It therefore makes sense to provide them with jobs.

These three examples demonstrate how understanding public narratives helps to unlock not only the general, shared meanings behind different ways of life but also the specific meanings behind what people say, yielding a deeper, richer understanding of local cultural context and its complexities – which, in turn, provides critical insight into why people might accept or reject gender and development goals.

8.1.2 Temporality revisited

In Chapter 2, I also argued that narratives account for temporality, in a way that other concepts do not, and that this might illuminate a dimension of local cultural context often obscured and enhance our understanding of people's individual lives

and experiences – something public policy makers and experts often do not sufficiently consider (Seckinelgin, 2012). Narratives are particularly well suited to take note of changes over time (Squire et al., 2013), which allows ways of life to emerge in all their complexity, and this, too, has been demonstrated empirically.

Consider, for example, the public narrative of the displaced woman, presented in Chapter 4, in which a woman is displaced from the place where she comes from, or belongs, and struggles to return. Change is inherent in this narrative. Moreover, the narrative appears well suited to reflect the experiences of many South Sudanese women; indeed, 80% of the South Sudanese population was displaced during the civil war with the North (Bubenzer & Stern, 2012). The concepts of practice, social norms, gender roles, beliefs and attitudes, would not necessarily capture this aspect of local cultural context, yet this is key to explaining why some women, such as Rebecca in Chapter 5, value the security of the life offered by traditional public narratives, such as the bride and wife narratives, post conflict. The narrative thus gives us insight into why there might be resistance to certain ways of life promoted by gender and development goals.

Indeed, narratives illuminate the temporal nuance and complexity of people's individual lives and experiences. Consider Grace's story in Chapter 5. If one had tried to understand her life using concepts like practices, social norms, gender roles, attitudes and beliefs, it would likely have yielded a fairly static picture of the way she lives (unless data had been collected at multiple time points). A narrative approach, however, enabled us to see how her way of life changed over time. For example, initially, she presented herself as a protected woman, saying:

My father [was] the one who was [initially] responsible for me, because he is the one who brought me into the world. He was the one responsible for me until I got married, and the one who took responsibility for me after that was [my husband]. (Grace, L244-246)

However, after her first husband was killed in a plane crash, her self-presentation changed, and now she represents herself as an empowered woman:

[R]ight now, I'm working. I can have anything that I want – for example clothes or food, or if my children are sick [I can take them to hospital] – for example, right now, my husband is far [in Juba] – and they will not need to borrow pens from other students in the class. I buy my own things.... (Grace, L178-181)

Asking Grace about her practices, beliefs, attitudes and such, earlier in her life would have potentially yielded one picture of the way she lives – a “traditional” picture, while speaking to her now would potentially have yielded a different picture – a “modern” picture. A narrative approach allows us to capture both of these pictures and appreciate them in the wider context of her life story.

Similarly, consider Elizabeth's story. Initially, Elizabeth's account of how she managed to be educated strongly parallels the empowered woman narrative. By her own account, she made a decision and pursued it with remarkable determination:

[A]t the time I was growing.., [m]y parents were not allowing me to go to school. I was forbidden to go to school, but I escaped all the time [and went to school], till I completed my primary one. I was taken to the island, so that I couldn't keep going to school. From there I escaped.... (Elizabeth, L38-41)

This picture of herself as extremely strong willed is at odds with how she now presents herself and accounts for her education. Now, she draws more on the wife narrative, saying, “My husband has taken me back to school” (Elizabeth, L171) and “My husband is giving me a chance to go to school” (Elizabeth, L304-305). If one only obtained the current explanation she offers for her continuing education, one might conclude that she has a very “traditional” view of the way a woman should live – acquiescing to the will of her husband. Conversely, speaking to her earlier in her life might have led one to conclude she was a very “modern” woman – one who believed in the power of women to make their own decisions. Again, a narrative approach enables us to capture both of these pictures.

Without a temporal dimension, intricacies such as these may not have emerged as clearly. Indeed, while some articles in the gender and development literature do acknowledge that aspects of local culture context, such as practices, social norms, gender roles, beliefs and attitudes, change over time (De La Puente, 2011; Doss, 2001), it is rare for them to empirically document such change. A narrative approach, however, has temporal change built in. Although it must be acknowledged that a story is a *current* social construction of the past, and may itself change over time, the nature of stories nevertheless gives us a window into temporality – which, in turn, allows us to appreciate more of the nuance and complexity of women’s lives.

In short, introducing public narratives into the gender and development literature, as a way of conceptualising and studying local cultural context, has facilitated a *comprehensive* understanding of context – allowing us to understand both *ways of life* and their *meanings* through one lens, and it has brought *temporality* to the study of local cultural context – yielding rich insights into the way people live their lives, with all their complexities and contradictions. This, in turn, has given us insight into how and why gender and development goals might encounter different combinations of acceptance and resistance in the local cultural context.

8.2 The salience of the traditional-modern dichotomy

The second theoretical contribution of this thesis has been to show that, despite the problematisation of the traditional-modern dichotomy by certain critical scholars, the traditional-modern binary has meaning for certain people, at certain times, in certain places.

In Chapter 2, I highlighted what Escobar has called “the trap” of thinking in terms of a traditional-modern dichotomy (1995, p. 219) and foregrounded some of the concerns of postcolonial feminist scholars. These scholars question “dubiously defined nativist notions of custom and creed...” (Mama, 2001, p. 67); they point to white Western feminists’ penchant for presenting “third world women” as

“tradition-bound” (Mohanty, 1988, p. 56); and they assert that “theories which... label us ‘traditional’... need to be continually challenged” (Amos & Parmar, 1984, p. 7). Such assertions come from well-founded concerns about the neo-colonial overtones of the traditional-modern dichotomy – concerns which, given my commitment to reflexivity, I have weighed and considered. Nevertheless, whether through the mechanisms of hegemonic discourse, or by virtue of the transitional moment, or via a combination of factors, the traditional-modern dichotomy did appear to have significance for people in the rural South Sudanese context, at the time of fieldwork.

In Dinka, the terms *piir thaar* (past life) and *chieng thaar* (past culture) were used to convey ideas about the traditional, while *piir yam* or *piir jadid* (new life), *piir yemen* (the life of now) and *chieng yam* (new culture), were used to convey ideas about the modern. In Nuer, the term *chiang a wal* (how people lived in the past) was used to convey ideas about the traditional, and the term *chiang emmee* (how people live now), was used to convey ideas about the modern.

Both the Dinka and the Nuer participants in this research spoke, unprompted, about the differences between traditional and modern ways of life. One focus group participant, for example, explained:

Life has changed and the world also has changed.... Now, the life we have in South Sudan is different from the life we had before.... There is a big difference between the life of before and the life of now. (Group 4, Female 16-25, L51-57)

This traditional-modern dichotomy pervaded their thinking about ways of life for women, and they positioned each public narrative about women accordingly.

This highlights the fact that, despite feminist and postcolonial critiques about the traditional-modern binary, it may have meaning for certain people, at certain times, in certain places. Perhaps it is particularly salient for cultures in transition, as South Sudan was in 2013 when this research was conducted. In the eight years preceding

the research, the country had emerged from civil war, gained independence and acquired a new gender-progressive constitution. The findings from this thesis suggest that the traditional-modern binary should not be discounted as a frame of reference in the gender and development literature, if it emerges as salient to research participants. A similar point has been made in the anthropological literature, by those with research interests unrelated to gender and development. Pigg, for example, reflects, after ethnographic fieldwork on shamans, in Nepal:

We... bracket the terms 'modern' and 'traditional'.... Again and again, these terms creep back into our vocabulary in self-consciously apologetic scare quotes, even though, for the most part, it is thought best to avoid these labels all together. This avoidance of tainted adjectives merely evades the problem.... It will not do to look the other way simply because we now find the traditional-modern dichotomy problematic. Whether or not this dichotomy serves us well in social analysis, the fact is that these terms are thriving in the world we aim to describe and interpret. (1996, p. 163)

However, having argued for the salience of the traditional-modern binary in certain contexts, I do not wish to suggest that traditional aspects of local cultural context should be construed as obstacles to gender and development goals. Such a position must be problematized in light of the empirical findings of this thesis.

8.3 Traditional narratives as facilitators of gender and development goals

The third theoretical contribution this thesis offers is the insight that traditional aspects of local cultural context – operationalised here as traditional public narratives about women – do not necessarily constitute barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals. Much of the gender and development literature which studies local cultural context suggests that “traditional” and “customary” elements of context – including practices, social norms, gender roles, beliefs and attitudes – constitute barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals. This thesis has been able to demonstrate, however, that traditional public narratives are flexible resources not necessarily misaligned with gender and development goals;

indeed, they can be used to reimagine gender and development goals in ways that are locally relevant.

As I outlined in Chapter 2, the mainstream gender and development literature sees development as a process whereby newer, more modern ways of life come to replace older, more traditional ways of life. The literature presents tradition as a barrier to the realization of gender and development goals – a position exemplified by Nussbaum’s statement that “throughout the world, cultural traditions pose obstacles to women’s health and flourishing” (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 1). Many empirical studies adhere to this mainstream perspective (e.g. Begum, 2015; Dræbel & Kueil, 2014; Fonjong, 2001; Glick, 2008; Haylock et al., 2016; Kamal, 2007; Moghadam, 1994; Read-Hamilton & Marsh, 2016; Sawade, 2014; Sialubanje et al., 2015). Sawade, for example, concludes that the “norms and traditional patriarchal values of... society...” (2014, p. 129) present barriers to the achievement of girls’ and women’s education, gender justice, and sexual and reproductive health, and that these must be “addressed” (2014, p. 139).

Critical empirical studies in the gender and development literature – while suggesting that processes of social change are more complex – have also tended to view traditional ways of life as being at odds with gender and development goals. However, they have argued that what might be considered “traditional” should be better understood and appreciated, as it may indicate a need to rethink gender and development goals or the means by which the international development community seeks to achieve them (e.g. Campbell & Mannell, 2016; Müller, 2006; Muzyamba et al., 2015). For example, Muzyamba and colleagues argue that rights based approaches to HIV prevention in Zambia conflict with women’s “traditional values such as respect for elders and ‘harmonious’ marital relationships” (2015, p. 1) and that the human rights approach should potentially be re-evaluated.

The findings from this thesis, however, suggest an even more complex picture. Certainly, as both mainstream and critical empirical studies have demonstrated, traditional elements of local cultural context *can* constitute barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals. This picture emerged clearly in Chapter 7, when community members who opposed the gender and development goals promoted via community radio marshalled traditional narratives in support of their arguments.

However, across the chapters, there was also considerable evidence that women, and men, used traditional narratives to *support* gender and development goals. In Chapter 5, for example, we saw how women were able to use both traditional and modern narratives to explain, legitimise and pursue, their child-focused, educational and employment aspirations, which were well-aligned with gender and development goals. In Chapter 6, we saw how guests on community radio used both traditional and modern narratives to make their arguments in support of gender and development goals, and, in Chapter 7, we saw community members who argued in favour of gender and development goals likewise using both traditional and modern narratives in service of their arguments. In all cases, traditional narratives were marshalled, alongside modern ones, as facilitators of gender and development goals.

The idea that the traditional and the modern can seamlessly coexist, although acknowledged outside of the gender and development literature (e.g. Gusfield, 1967), has yet to be fully appreciated within the gender and development literature. In particular, the fact that both the traditional and the modern can *support* gender and development goals is not widely recognised. It is, however, highlighted by certain scholars. For example, Jolly (1996) documents a Vanuatu women's centre's engagement with the issue of domestic violence. She relates how women used both appeals to modern human rights discourse and appeals to *kastom*, or tradition, in their fight against domestic violence. She concludes that, in so doing:

[They] successfully negotiated those invidious oppositions which equate tradition with women's oppression and modernity with women's liberation by simultaneously claiming greater powers in both.... (1996, p. 183)

Razavi similarly points out that women often engage in “forum shopping”, when they are seeking accesses to land and resources – alternately appealing to customary law, or statutory law, and “using arguments grounded in either ‘customary’ or modernist principles, whichever is to their advantage” (2007, p. 1491). This thesis adds to the claims put forward by these earlier studies, demonstrating, in a new context, how traditional and modern are not necessarily in tension and can both constitute resources for the achievement of gender and development goals.

Moreover, this thesis suggests that gender and development goals can be given additional meanings, in the process of incorporating them into traditional understandings, which make them compatible with the realities and challenges of women’s daily lives. In this thesis, girls’ education, for example, was reimagined as a way to reduce family poverty through higher bride price, *as well as* a way to facilitate women’s employment, empowerment, equality and leadership. Women’s property rights were regarded as a way to make women better mothers, *as well as* a right to which women were entitled under the South Sudanese constitution. Such findings resonate particularly well with Mannell’s work on international gender and development policy in South Africa, which suggests that policy initiatives, such as gender mainstreaming, are adopted, manipulated and transformed, in their translation from global to local spaces (2014), in ways that resonate with local knowledge.

Indeed, the reimagination of gender and development goals, which has been documented empirically in this thesis, suggests it might be worthwhile to revisit the original research question. Qualitative research is often a circular process, where one revisits the initial research question and assumptions in light of the findings.

This thesis asked how public narratives about women facilitate and constrain the achievement of gender and development goals – foregrounding public narratives and gender and development goals as the key constructs of interest. Two particular insights regarding the limits of the original research question arise from the findings. First, while not explicitly stated in the question, an assumption, based on the literature, was that some aspects of the local cultural context would constitute barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals, while other aspects would constitute facilitators. In public narrative terms, the underlying expectation was that some narratives would facilitate, while other narratives would constrain, the achievement of gender and development goals. In contrast, what the findings reveal is that narratives themselves do not necessarily facilitate or constrain the achievement of gender and development goals. Rather, they can be *used* in ways that facilitate and constrain. This revelation foregrounds not only public narratives, as an operationalisation of local cultural context, but also individual women and local communities as active agents using public narratives as symbolic resources. Simply knowing or understanding local cultural contexts – symbolic spaces comprising ways of life and meanings – is not sufficient to allow one to definitively predict the acceptance or rejection of gender and development goals. One must examine how women and community members themselves navigate and interact with both gender and development goals and local cultural context.

A second insight emerging from the findings is that public narratives can be used to understand much more than how local cultural context relates to gender and development goals. While understanding how to further gender and development goals was part of my initial motivation and guided my research agenda, as Chapter 5 revealed, placing women at the centre of the inquiry shows that women have many life concerns, ranging from coping with family rupture to educating their children. Some of these are related to gender and development goals, while some are not and need not be. Future research might foreground, more explicitly, women's experience, and examine how modern and traditional narratives can be

used as symbolic resources more broadly in women's lives. I will revisit this idea when I discuss directions for future research in section 8.8.

8.4 Contributions to wider development discourse on gender

In addition to the three specific theoretical contributions this thesis makes to the gender and development literature, hitherto outlined, this thesis adds in small part to a wider debate about gender and development discourse more broadly. In particular, it lends weight to those who argue that Gender and Development (GAD) discourse and postcolonial feminist discourse are more useful than Women in Development (WID) discourse when it comes to understanding and improving the lives of women in developing countries.

Women in Development discourse – which underpins what I have called the *mainstream* perspective in the gender and development literature – came to the fore in the 1970s, after Ester Boserup critiqued the invisibility of women in international development frameworks (1970). Women in Development discourse is strongly rooted in Modernization Theory, which views development as a long-term, irreversible, socially progressive process, whereby developing countries pass through a series of stages in order to become more like the countries of Western Europe and North America (Misra, 2000). Although it has been roundly critiqued, it is still the foundation of most global development processes (Moser, 1993; Wilkins, 2015). According to WID discourse, women must be brought into development processes, becoming full economic participants in their countries' transitions from traditional to modern societies (Cornwall, 2003; Misra, 2000; Razavi & Miller, 1995).

In contrast, Gender and Development discourse – which partially informs what I have called the *critical* perspective in the gender and development literature, particularly the critical *empirical* work I have highlighted – emerged towards the end of the 1970s. It is rooted in Dependency Theory, and looks at and questions social

structures and relationships of power (Cornwall, 2003). Just as Dependency Theory posits more broadly that underdeveloped countries must be understood in terms of their relationships to developed countries, GAD discourse posits that women's lives must be understood in terms of their relationships to men (Misra, 2000). Although GAD discourse has gained ground, it would be wrong to assume that it had supplanted WID discourse as the foremost discourse underpinning gender and development initiatives (Moser, 1993; Wilkins, 2015).

Finally, postcolonial feminist discourse – which also partially informs what I have called the *critical* perspective in the gender and development literature, particularly the critical *theoretical* work I have highlighted – criticises the homogenisation of women's experience in international development frameworks. It decries the lack of attention to race, class, and other facets of women's lives that make each women's lived experience unique, and is rooted in postcolonial discourse more broadly (Misra, 2000). Despite its critical power, postcolonial feminist discourse has also not supplanted WID discourse.

However, in particular ways, this thesis lends weight to the argument that Gender and Development (GAD) discourse and postcolonial feminist discourse might be more useful than Women in Development (WID) discourse when it comes to improving the lives of women in developing countries.

First, the findings from this thesis problematise one of the key roots of Modernization Theory, which underpins WID discourse. They suggest that traditional elements of local cultural context may not be barriers to development – indeed, they may facilitate development. This inherently challenges and complicates the idea, implicit in Modernization Theory and WID discourse, that “traditional” implies lack of development and “modern” implies development. It highlights an important shortcoming of the WID approach, which seeks to incorporate women

into a development paradigm that rests on Modernization Theory, but doesn't question one of the key foundational assumptions of that theory (Marchand, 1996).

Second, the findings from this thesis suggest that relationships between men and women, which are emphasized in GAD discourse, are vital to understanding local cultural context and possibilities for women. Although the thesis set out to examine public narratives about women, it emerged that all narratives were inherently relational, as men featured prominently within them. For example, in the bride narrative, men were the fathers and the bringers of cattle; in the protected woman narrative, they were the protectors; and in the empowered woman narrative, they were the power holders from whom women had to claim their rights. This highlights the importance of understanding gender relations in seeking to improve women's lives, one of the strengths of a GAD approach. Indeed, the perspective taken in this thesis could have been even more overtly relational had it focused on narratives of men as well, which constitute the other side of the gender equation. This is discussed further in section 8.8, which looks at directions for future research.

Finally, the findings from this thesis, while they critique the postcolonial feminist rejection of a modern-traditional binary in *all* contexts, nevertheless highlight the value of acknowledging the heterogeneity of women's experience. This is strongly emphasized by postcolonial feminist discourse (Misra, 2000). Chapter 5, which examined the life narratives of individual women, drew attention to the diversity of experience among women in rural South Sudan, and the ways in which that diversity might shape their acceptance or rejection of gender and development goals. This underlines the importance of the postcolonial feminist perspective, and also suggests directions for further research, which will be discussed in section 8.8.

In sum, although WID is still the dominant development discourse on gender, despite decades of critique, this thesis demonstrates, in a number of small ways, the relative value of GAD and postcolonial feminist discourses.

8.5 Insight into women's lives, radio and community in South Sudan

In addition to its theoretical contributions, this thesis also makes an important empirical contribution to our understanding of women's lives and community radio in South Sudan.

There is a dearth of studies on women in rural South Sudan, apart from a small body of research referenced in Chapter 1, despite there being much to achieve in the rural South Sudanese context in gender and development terms. This thesis has provided evidence of thirteen public narratives about women, present in three locations in rural South Sudan, which the South Sudanese perceive to be underpinned by a traditional-modern binary (Chapter 4). It has also provided detail about the lives and aspirations of South Sudanese women in these rural locations – particularly their aspirations, which tend to be in line with gender and development goals (Chapter 5).

This thesis has further provided information on the nature of programming about women on NGO-funded community radio in South Sudan – showing that it tends to support gender and development goals. It suggests that, while presenters tend to support gender and development goals using modern narratives, community members, who speak on community radio, often reimagine gender and development goals in ways that resonate with traditional aspects of the context (Chapter 6).

Finally, it has shown how community members, who listen to programmes about women on community radio, interpret what they have heard – accepting, negotiating or rejecting gender and development messages concerning women's property rights, maternal and child health, and women's public participation and leadership (Chapter 7). In this way, it provides evidence of community radio as a symbolic site, where community members meet gender and development goals, and

foregrounds community members as active agents, shaping how gender and development goals are understood.

8.6 Strength and limitations

This study is not without its limitations. Bauer and Gaskell (2000) have proposed six criteria for assessing the quality of qualitative research, designed to provide the reader with *confidence* in the results and to convince the reader of their *relevance*. These criteria are: triangulation and reflexivity, transparency and procedural clarity, corpus construction, thick description, local surprise and communicative validation.

8.6.1 Triangulation and reflexivity

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods and approaches. According to Bauer and Gaskell (2000), using multiple methods and approaches to study social phenomena is like looking at a mountain from different angles; it inevitably leads to apparent inconsistencies, which must be grappled with reflexively by the researcher. Bauer and Gaskell, therefore, maintain that evidence of triangulation, and evidence of the reflexive pondering of inconsistencies, constitutes the first quality marker.

This thesis includes triangulation in several forms. First, it includes method and data triangulation. Several different methods have been used to elicit four different types of data – interview data, focus group data, media content and a media content log. Secondly, it includes investigator triangulation, as different interviewers and focus group moderators were used, which controls for the bias of any one individual (Flick, 1992).

Data from different data sources have highlighted inconsistencies – both inconsistencies *between* data sources and inconsistencies present in *all* data sources, which have required consideration. When it comes to inconsistencies *between* data sources, the fact that, in media content, all public narratives are used to support gender and development goals, while in focus groups and interviews traditional

narratives are presented as both enablers and barriers to the realisation of these goals, represents an inconsistency that has had to be considered. It likely reflects the influence of NGO funding on community radio production, or a bias in the sample, where radio content was provided that aligned with gender and development goals. (This is discussed further in section 8.6.3.)

With respect to inconsistencies in *all* data sources, the apparent inconsistencies between traditional and modern narratives present across the data have necessitated careful consideration. This has led to the conclusion that people in rural South Sudan do not necessarily experience apparent inconsistencies between traditional and modern narratives as inconsistencies. The narratives are able to comfortably coexist.

One form of triangulation the thesis does not use, however, is theory triangulation (Flick, 1992). The thesis has not approached the data from multiple theoretical standpoints; rather, narrative theory was selected as the best theoretical lens through which to study local cultural context, after a consideration of the alternatives – such as social norms, gender roles and attitudes. Future research may wish to examine the local cultural context for women in rural South Sudan through different theoretical lenses to see if the findings of this thesis still hold.

8.6.2 Transparency and procedural clarity

The second quality criterion is transparency and procedural clarity. Bauer and Gaskell (2000) suggest that a qualitative study should have, at a minimum, a detailed description of the methods of data collection, information about the selection and characteristics of respondents and materials, the topic guides used for any interviews and focus groups, and any and all coding frames used for analysis. This thesis contains all of the above, spread throughout Chapters 3 to 7 and included in the appendices.

8.6.3 Corpus construction

The third quality criterion is corpus construction. This is akin to sampling in quantitative research. According to Bauer and Gaskell, in qualitative research, one aims, through corpus construction, to maximise the variety of unknown representations by ensuring, “A good spread of... interviews or texts across a wide range of strata” (2000, p. 14).

This thesis has collected data from men and women, ages 16 to 45, from two different tribes, in three South Sudanese communities, of three different sizes, in three different states. Moreover, efforts were made, in the selection of interview participants, to take women from different parts of their villages – some from the marketplace and some from their homes.

The corpus construction has limitations, however. Focus groups, for example, may have contained people who knew each other, because the studies communities were small. Also, the three study communities were similar in that they all had Internews-funded community radio stations and were in the North of South Sudan. Furthermore, the selection of media content about women was obtained via convenience sample, which may have produced a bias in the sample. Although journalists were asked to provide all content they had available pertaining to women, the content provided may have been biased in some way. It may have represented their best content, for example, or the content closest to what they thought I, the lead researcher, wanted to hear. It may, for example, have been more closely aligned with gender and development goals than a random sampling of content would have been, had such a thing been possible. Finally, although Bauer and Gaskell maintain that sample size does not matter in corpus construction for qualitative research, one could argue that the corpus was too small to allow for meaningful comparison of differences across strata – across research sites for example, or between tribes, or between older women and younger women. Such comparisons were not attempted. These may be interesting areas for future research.

8.6.4 Thick description

The fourth quality marker is thick description. By this, Bauer and Gaskell mean “extensive use of verbatim reporting of sources” (2000, p. 14), which enable the reader to accept the interpretation offered or come to a different point of view.

This thesis has made extensive use of direct quotation, using it to support key points in every data chapter. Sometimes very long quotations have been included – for example, the story of the “wicked woman” in section 5.3.2. However, at other times, space constraints have meant that not all quotations could be as long as I might have wished. For example, all of the figures in section 7.3 contained relatively short quotations so that they could be depicted visually on a symbolic field. Thus, there were sometimes trade-offs between space and thick description.

8.6.5 Local surprise

The fifth quality marker, and one which is meant to convince the reader of the relevance of qualitative research, is local surprise. Bauer and Gaskell maintain that qualitative research must have surprise value – with respect to either some common-sense view or some theoretical expectation (2000).

The third theoretical contribution of this thesis contains such a surprise. There is a viewpoint, often put forward in the gender and development literature, that “traditional” and “customary” elements of local cultural context tend to constitute barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals. This thesis has shown, conversely, that traditional narratives about women can be used to advocate for and facilitate the achievement of gender and development goals.

8.6.6 Communicative validation

Finally, Bauer and Gaskell advocate, where possible, for communicative validation: “Validating the analysis of interview or text materials by confronting the sources and obtaining their agreement...” (2000, p. 15).

This was possible to an extent. The security situation in South Sudan in 2016 had deteriorated to the point that it was not possible to travel back to the original research communities. However, as detailed in Chapter 3, in June 2016, I travelled to the capital, Juba, to present my research findings to an audience of Internews employees and journalists, as well as to employees and journalists from other media organisations working in South Sudan. The audience of 20 to 25 people was mostly composed of South Sudanese nationals, and, among them, were Internews journalists, who had been working at the community radio stations I visited in 2013.

I presented my findings for one hour and then took questions and feedback for half an hour. Before the presentation, I asked the audience to consider, while I was speaking, whether the findings resonated with their own experience, and whether there was anything they thought I had not got right – particularly any nuance that had been missed or any observations which did not ring true. On the first point, feedback was positive. There was frequent nodding throughout the presentation, and feedback indicated that the findings resonated well. For example, one audience member commented:

I think, to me, the public narratives are really interesting. I've seen, like, [the presentation] is trying to illustrate the different views of the people whom you've either had discussions with, or had interviews with, and, I think, based on my personal experience, it really resonates well.... (Male, South Sudanese).

Some of the biggest nods during the presentation came when I suggested that traditional narratives did not necessarily constitute barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals. I used the example of a father who sent his daughter

to school, *both* because she would command a higher bride price *and* because she would go on to be a well-respected member of society, to demonstrate to the audience that people might support gender and development goals on the basis of both traditional and modern narratives. This insight was particularly well received.

On the second point, feedback indicated that there need not be any change to the way the findings were presented. This surprised me, and I even went so far as to suggest certain modifications I had been considering. For example, I asked if it truly made sense to present the wicked woman narrative as encompassing idleness, failure to perform domestic duties, gossiping, spending time in public places, drinking and promiscuity – given how different these things are. The response I received was, “Yes”. One female South Sudanese audience member said, for example, “Yes, because these are all the things a women mustn’t do”. I similarly asked if the women’s group narrative was truly a modern narrative. This, too, was confirmed.

There were limitations to the communicative validation exercise, however. As mentioned, it was not with the original study participants, it was of limited duration and it is possible that my status as an expatriate expert from an elite academic institution may have stemmed the flow of critical comments, despite my best efforts to encourage them.

8.7 Practical implications

It is important for academic work to offer practical implications. Wilkins and Mody have claimed that:

Critiquing dominant development discourse, although a necessary step in our reflective process, is not sufficient. We need to build on this reflection to consider ways to improve development practice.... (2001, p. 393)

When I visited South Sudan in June 2016 for the communicative validation exercise, conflict had again broken out in South Sudan. It broke out in December 2013, seven

months after the original data for this thesis was collected and barely two and a half years after South Sudanese independence. The new civil conflict, often characterised as a struggle between the Dinka and the Nuer, was born out of a power struggle between political elites (BBC, 2014). It has taken South Sudan from a post-conflict state back to a state of civil war, displacing 2.2 million people (BBC, 2016) and killing at least 50,000 (ReliefWeb, 2014), including one of the South Sudanese journalists who facilitated this research. After the hopefulness that characterised the period when the data for this thesis was collected, it is a tragic development. Unsurprisingly, the situation for women has also deteriorated. Recently, sexual assaults of women were reported in Juba near a United Nations compound, and there were 1,300 reports of sexual assault in a five month period in 2015, in Unity state, where Leer is located (Gale, 2016). Parts of South Sudan have also faced famine, since the conflict began (BBC, 2015), and, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the radio station in Leer is no longer operating.

Given the dramatically changed circumstances, the recommendations that follow may be difficult to implement in South Sudan at the present time. However, they are made in a general way, in the hopes that they may benefit international development organisations committed to the achievement of gender and development goals that are still working in South Sudan, as well as organisations working in other similar development contexts.

The practical recommendations are twofold. First, gender and development practitioners might want to consider using public narratives as a theory and methodology to better understand local cultural contexts. Local cultural contexts are complex, nuanced and, at times, contradictory. Current lenses used to understand local cultural context – including practices, social norms, gender roles, beliefs and attitudes – often provide only a partial understanding, unless used skilfully in combination. When operationalised quantitatively, they may miss nuance. When operationalized qualitatively, they may require time consuming ethnographic

fieldwork. A public narrative approach is a concise theoretical and methodological approach to understanding local cultural context – including ways of life and their meanings – in temporal form. It recognises that the primary way in which people make sense of themselves and the social world is through narrative (Bruner, 1990). It requires the collecting of stories and the analysis of stories with an eye to identifying public narratives, which are stories larger than the single individual. As this thesis has demonstrated empirically, the approach can yield rich insights into the nuance and complexity of local cultural context, which gender and development practitioners can use as they endeavour to achieve gender and development goals, in local cultural contexts.

The second practical recommendation concerns the outlook and approach of gender and development practitioners. Gender and development practitioners may wish to try moving beyond linear notions of change, in which modernity replaces tradition, and consider far more seriously how traditional aspects of local cultural context can be assets in achieving gender and development goals. For example, development communicators who are engaged in actively designing development communications to promote gender and development goals may wish to try using traditional narratives to advocate for those goals. As one of the expatriate audience members at the communicative validation exercise commented:

My feedback is basically this:... different agencies obviously develop messaging.... In many areas, child education is something that... agencies really support, and increasingly support. They want to increase enrolment, but they've observed that in primary school, they have a lot of girls being enrolled, but as soon as they reach senior, they'd be down to only five, three. Basically, it's sort of that traditional narrative [of the bride]. And it's interesting because the way [the agencies] sort of combat this is consistently the use of the modern [narratives]. They'll say, you know, women have a right to education. And I think it's interesting to say.... There should be fluid engagement on different narratives – to say, the traditional set up does not necessarily go against the modern narrative. It's very interesting.... Maybe people who are in charge of content creation can think about that approach.... Not., "Oh we only have just one approach to address this problem". (Male, Expatriate)

He further agreed that development agencies in South Sudan were tempted to try and “stamp out” traditional narratives and went on to say:

For me, from my specific view, [this thesis] just reinforces the fact that communities are an invaluable resource to enrich the discussion.., cause... many organisations... [don't have] proper consultation to say, “oh, what about what the community thinks?” And they fail to tap into that, which makes their engagement very one way. (Male, Expatriate)

Indeed, the findings from this thesis suggest that gender and development communicators and practitioners may be wise to explicitly consult the people in a given cultural context, to understand how so-called traditional elements of that context might be used to support gender and development goals.

8.8 Directions for future research

Future research building on this thesis could take several different directions. First, in keeping with a GAD approach to gender and development, it could seek to foreground, to a greater extent, the perspectives of men, and to look more explicitly at gender relations. In the present research, the perspectives of men were only solicited in focus groups, and were sought in order to include male perceptions of women in the overall analysis. Future research could involve a comparative analysis between women and men, as Chapter 7 suggests that men might have perspectives on certain gender and development goals that differ from women. Future research could also investigate public narratives *about men*, which must also constitute the local cultural context of rural South Sudan and which will similarly have important implications for the achievement of gender and development goals. (For example, if men see themselves as protectors and providers, they may be threatened by women's employment.) Or, alternatively, future research could more explicitly study narratives of *gender relations* – the ways in which men and women interact and relate in the rural South Sudanese context.

Second, in keeping with a postcolonial feminist approach to gender and development, future research could pay greater attention to points of nuance, particularity and difference among women themselves, as suggested by the data. For example, the findings in Chapter 7 suggest that older women and younger women may have different perspectives on certain gender and development goals – with older women being more resistant to these goals than younger women. Future research could look at this in more depth, explicitly comparing older and younger women in the rural South Sudanese context, to draw out differences in their orientation towards gender and development objectives and differences in the public narratives they use.

The varied nature of public narratives by geographic location could also be explored in future work. In this thesis, as detailed in Chapter 4, the data from the three research sites were collapsed, and points of narratives *similarity*, rather than points of narrative *difference*, were emphasised in the analysis. However, as we saw in sections 3.7 and 4.4 there were differences between research sites. They varied, for example, in terms of the type and extent of conflict they had experienced, the pressing political issues that were salient to them when fieldwork was conducted, and the extent to which women held positions of power. This led to subtly different narrative manifestations. In Turalei, for example, the empowered women narrative was typified by the first woman to be elected governor of a state in South Sudan: Nyandeng Malek, while Leer it was typified by the first woman to be ordained pastor in the Presbyterian Church. While such nuance was acknowledged in this thesis, future research could investigate the implications of these kinds of differences more thoroughly. Perhaps, for example, as a result of these two female leaders, research participants from Turalei and Leer drew more on the empowered woman narrative than research participants from Malualkon. With only five interviews and three focus groups per location, such differences could not be studied systematically, but future research could collect additional data and interrogate such differences more explicitly.

Another reason it might be important for future research to look at differences in public narratives, and public narrative use, by research location is because the dominant ethnic groups of the three sites varied. Maluakon and Turalei were home to different clans of the Dinka ethnic group (Malual and Twic Mayaardit), while Leer was home to the Nuer ethnic group (Adok clan). Given that the current conflict in South Sudan – with its catastrophic consequences for women – breaks down along ethnic lines, differences in the perspectives of Dinka and Nuer could be an important avenue for future research.

Finally, as mentioned in section 8.3, future research might foreground, more explicitly, women's individual life experiences and how they are framed by the possibilities and limitations of modern and traditional narratives, as well as gender and development goals. Even within research locations, there was enormous variability in women's individual life stories, and the ways in which they used public narratives. A postcolonial feminist approach would suggest that such nuance, detail and difference warrants further research.

Third, future research could expand this study longitudinally, to look at how public narratives *themselves* shift and change over time. Although this thesis, with its cross-sectional rather than longitudinal design, does not necessarily capture evidence of public narratives *changing*, it should, nevertheless, be recognised that public narratives might be reconstituted and renegotiated over time (Andrews, 2007; Hammack, 2008; Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995). If public narratives are the aggregate of many stories, then changing these stories can change public narratives. As Hammack explains, "personal narratives can disrupt dominant discourses in a society, thereby destabilizing master narratives..." (Hammack, 2008, p. 237). This, in turn, presents the possibility that individual narratives can destabilise, subvert or challenge widely shared public narratives. This may be especially so if individual narratives outside the norm are widely shared through a medium like community

radio. Community radio would therefore present an interesting site within which to track public narrative shifts over time.

This brings us to the fourth possibility for future research; it could interrogate, in greater depth, the production contexts and processes of NGO-funded community radio. The three community radio stations studied in this thesis represent NGO-funded media capacity building initiatives, which, in some respects, could be said to promote a hegemonic gender and development agenda. However, this thesis has demonstrated that they also constitute sites where gender and development goals are renegotiated using traditional narratives, and given additional, contextually relevant meanings. (See section 8.3.) This could be viewed in two ways. First, it could be viewed as exemplifying the *unintended consequence of development* – about which there is a growing literature (Mosse, 2005; Newby, 2010). The international development community likely does not intend for gender and development goals to be reimagined. For example, it likely does not intend for girls' education to be reimagined as a mechanism to reduce family poverty by increasing bride price. Further study of NGO-funded media production contexts and processes – and the ways in which public narratives are used within them – could therefore make a contribution to the literature on development's unintended consequences.

On the other hand, the reimagination and renegotiation of gender and development goals documented here could be viewed as exemplifying *dialogic communication* within the development space, something which has been increasingly called for by critical gender development scholars (Wilkins, 2014). Dialogic communication implies two-way communication, which enables marginalised and oppressed communities to contest and resist dominant development discourse, and participate in social and political processes of interpretation and meaning construction (Wilkins, 2014). For example, from a dialogic communication perspective, the fact that the bride narrative is used to support a social justice oriented development goal such as women's education could be seen as local ownership of, and participation in,

the interpretation of the gender and development goal, rather than a deviation from the way in which the goal should be achieved. Further study of the production contexts and processes of NGO-funded community radio, and its use of narratives, could make a contribution to the study of dialogic communication within development spaces, in the interests of furthering a development agenda more deeply grounded in participatory, social justice frameworks.

Finally, future research can expand this study beyond the specific sites examined in rural South Sudan, to see whether a public narrative approach proves useful for understanding local cultural contexts in other settings, whether the traditional-modern dimension is salient in other settings and whether traditional elements of local cultural context are similarly used to argue for and against gender and development goals, in other settings.

In conclusion, this thesis has made three contributions to the gender and development literature. First, it has introduced a new theoretical and operational approach with which to study local cultural context – *public narratives*, showing that this approach is well suited to illuminate the complexities and contradictions of local cultural context. Second, it has suggested that there is value in looking at the traditional-modern dichotomy, as it may have meaning for certain people, and certain times, in certain contexts. Last, it has demonstrated that traditional public narratives about women need not constitute barriers to the achievement of gender and development goals; rather, traditional narratives can be used to reimagine gender and development goals in ways that resonate with, and have meaning for, women in different cultural contexts and the societies in which they live.

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Appendix 1: Journals

- BMC International Health and Human Rights
- BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth
- Community Development Journal
- Comparative Education Review
- Development and Change
- Development in Practice
- Feminism & Psychology
- Gender & Development
- Geographical Journal
- Global Policy
- Health & Place
- IDS Bulletin
- Journal of Agrarian Change
- Journal of Development Studies
- Journal of International Development
- Maternal and Child Health Journal
- Reproductive Health
- The Professional Geographer
- Third World Quarterly
- World Development

Appendix 2: Focus group guide

Instructions

- *Welcome everyone*
- *Pass out consent forms and explain/summarize the contents*
- *Points for moderator introduction*
 - There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I am about to ask. I expect that different people will have different points of view. Feel free to share your point of view even if it is different from what others have said.
 - Do not feel like you have to respond to me all the time. This should be a discussion, so feel free to respond to what other participants in the group have said.
 - We want to make sure that everyone has a chance to share. If you are talking a lot, I may ask you to give an opportunity to others to speak. If you are not saying very much, I may call on you to give your opinion.
 - Before we begin, I'd like to ask everyone to switch off their mobile phones to make sure there are no distractions.
 - I am going to start recording now. Please speak up. Your views are very important and we want to make sure we do not miss anything you are saying.

Introductions (5 minutes)

- First, we will begin with introductions. Can you tell me your name, something about yourself, anything you feel is important about your life, yourself, and your role in the community? While you give your introductions, I am going to write everyone's names so I can remember them. *[Moderator writes names in order of seating]*

PART 1: INFORMATION ABOUT RADIO STATION

Information Access (5 minutes)

Now, I would like to start by asking you some questions about radio listening.

- What radio stations do you listen to regularly? Which are your favourites? Why?
- Are there any particular programs you listen to regularly? Which are your favourites? Why?

Programming on radio station

Now I would like to ask you some questions about [NAME OF RADIO STATION]. I myself don't have the opportunity to listen to [NAME OF RADIO STATION] (very often) so over the course of this discussion, I'm going to ask you to tell me some of the things you've heard on [NAME OF RADIO STATION]. Please be as specific as possible, and give me as much detail as possible, because I haven't heard what you'll be talking about.

1. To start the discussion, could you please tell me about something you remember hearing recently on [NAME OF RADIO STATION]. This could be anything: a program, a story, a piece of information, a discussion, etc. **(10 minutes)**
 - Can you describe it for me in detail?
 - What did you think of it?
 - What (if anything) did you learn from it?
 - Did it affect you in any way? If so, how?
 - Did you discuss it with anyone? If so, who? What did you say?
 - Do you remember the name of the program you heard it on? (If yes, what time was that program? Who was the presenter?)
2. Now I'd like you to tell me about something (else) you heard on [NAME OF RADIO STATION] that you **talked about** with other people. **(10 minutes)**
 - Can you describe it for me in detail?

- Who did you talk about it with?
 - Can you describe the discussions you had about it? (What did you say? What did others say?)
 - Did it affect you in any way? If so, how?
 - Do you remember the name of the program you heard it on? (If yes, what time was that program? Who was the presenter?)
3. Have you ever called or visited [NAME OF RADIO STATION]? **(5 minutes)**
- If yes: Why did you call or visit? What did you say?
 - If not: Why not?
4. Can you remember the names of any of the programs on [NAME OF RADIO STATION]? **(5 minutes)**
- If yes: What is the name of the program? When is the program on? Who presents it?
5. Have you seen any changes in the programming on [NAME OF RADIO STATION] in the past one year? What changes have you seen? Are these good or bad? **(5 minutes)**
6. If you could improve [NAME OF RADIO STATION], what would you change or improve? **(5 minutes)**
- What would you like to hear more of?
 - In order to hear more about that, you'd have to hear less about other topics. What topics would you be willing to hear less about to make room for more on this/these topics?
 - What other information do you want that is not currently available to you? Information about what topics?

7. Have you ever heard any stories about **women** on [NAME OF RADIO STATION]? **(10 minutes)**
- If yes: Please tell me the story that you remember the best
 - Can you describe this story for me in detail?
 - Why do you remember it?
 - Did you discuss it with anyone?
 - If yes: Can you describe the discussions you had about it? (What did you say? What did others say?)
 - Did it affect you in any way? If so, how?
 - Do you remember the name of the program you heard it on? (If yes, what time was that program? Who was the presenter?)
8. Have you heard the program [NAME OF WOMEN'S PROGRAM] ON [NAME OF RADIO STATION]? **(5 minutes)**
- What do you remember about it?
 - What do you think of it?
9. Now I would like to read (play) you a news story that aired on [NAME OF RADIO STATION] recently. **(15 minutes)**
- [Play clip]
- What do you think of this story?
 - Do you remember hearing this story on the radio?
 - Did you discuss it with anyone?
 - *If yes:* Can you describe the discussions you had about it? (What did you say? What did others say?)

PART 2: STORIES ABOUT WOMEN

Now I'd like to leave our discussion of [NAME OF RADIO STATION], and talk a little bit more generally about women in this community. **(40 minutes)**

1. Let's imagine the life of a woman who was born in this community. Let's imagine that her life is a book, with different chapters. What are these chapters? *(Ask for the name and description of each chapter – if this idea does not make sense, explain this in another way)*
2. Now let's think about the key events in this woman's life. What are they? Can you tell me about them in detail?
3. Now I'd like to ask you about the most significant people in a woman's life. Who are they? Why are they significant?
4. And what dreams for the future do women in this community have?
5. What areas of life do women experience stress, conflict or problems? How do they deal with this?
6. How are women's lives in this community different to men's lives?
7. What are the things women can do? What are the things men can do?
8. What can women do better? What can men do better?
9. What is the best possible kind of life for a woman in this community?
10. What is the worst possible life of life for a woman in this community?

Appendix 3: Interview guide

PART 1: LIFE STORY

1. Life Chapters

I would like you to imagine that your life is a book, with different chapters. How many chapters have there been in your life? Could you please tell me about each chapter?

Ask for each chapter:

- Can you describe this chapter?
- When did this chapter start? When did it end? How old were you?
- Can you give this chapter a name?

If this question doesn't work, then move to question 2. Ask about the earliest (first) experience, and say 'and then what happened?' In this way, elicit the life narrative. Then ask about the rest of the key events.

2. Key Events

- Earliest (first) experience that you remember
- Another experience you remember as a young child
- An experience as an older child
- An experience as an adult
- Best experience of your life
- Worst experience of your life
- A turning point or moment of change
- Are there any other experiences from your life that you would like to tell me about?

3. Significant (important) people

- Can you tell me about the four most important people in your life? Their impact could be either positive, or negative.

4. Dreams and plans for the future

- What are your dreams for the future?
- Do you have any plans that will help you achieve your dreams?

5. Current problems and challenges

- Can you tell me about any problems or challenges you are currently facing in your life?
- How do you plan to overcome these problems or challenges?

6. Personal beliefs

- What are your personal beliefs?
- Do you believe in God?
- What is your philosophy in life?

7. Life theme (subject)

- How would you name the whole story of your life?

PART 2: RADIO QUESTIONS**1. Radio listening**

Now I would like to ask you some questions about listening to the radio.

- Do you listen to the radio?
- When?
- With whom?
- Which stations do you listen to?

- What types of things do you like to listen to?
- Do you ever hear anything about women on the radio?
- Can you tell me some of the things you remember hearing about women on the radio?

2. Stories about women on radio

Can you tell the story of a woman you heard about on the radio?

- Why did you remember the story of this woman?
- Does this story have any impact on your own life?
- Do you ever talk to anyone about the things you hear on the radio? Who, when, what do you talk about? Can you give me an example?
- Do you listen to [name of radio station]?

3. Information about community station

If yes, now I would like to ask you some questions about [name of radio station]:

- What do you think of [name of radio station]?
- What do you like?
- What do you not like?
- What could be improved?
- Do you remember the names of any of the programmes on [name of radio station]? (If yes, what are they?)
- Do you ever talk to anyone about the things you hear on [name of radio station]? Who, when, what do you talk about? Can you give me an example?

Appendix 4: Coding frame by topic

| Global theme | Organising theme | Basic theme (topic) | Example |
|-------------------|---------------------|---|---|
| Traditional /good | The bride | Stories about cows | <i>[Your] relatives and friends and family members can contribute to the cows they are going to pay. Everybody collects their contributions, and then they do the wedding ceremony.... [You] tell your parents "I want to marry this girl", then they will collect money to pay the dowry and you tell all your elders to help you in collecting that money. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1554-1566)</i> |
| | | Stories about marriage | <i>I talk again about the life of long ago.... [W]hen you're mature enough you will buy this local skirt. This local skirt, you will decorate it.... You wear it when you're going to the drama. Now you will be called a mature girl. From there, if you are lucky, then you will get married, and you will have already been taught by your mother and father how to do different kinds of housework. (Group 4, Female 16-25, L906-926)</i> |
| | The wife | Stories about women's role in the family | <i>As a woman, the first thing you discover is that you have to cover yourself [wear a skirt], and you don't hang around the market. You have to stay at home. And then you grow up knowing yourself that you are a woman. You have to go and bring the water, and then stay at home and do your duties. You cook; you follow your routine as a woman. (Elizabeth, L669-673)</i> |
| | | Stories about the relationship btwn men and women | <i>If the woman is married, she needs the husband who married her to take control of her.... A man needs freedom, man wants freedom to go anywhere to go and do something, while a woman is at home. (Group 6, Male 26-45, L1202-1205)</i> |
| | The mother | Stories about looking after siblings | <i>I want to bring my little brothers, my younger brothers up, to make them go to school. If I have power of supporting them, then, to at least make them learn, not to be like me. 'Cause as you understand I've already broke out of school and I don't know whether I will go back or not. So, I'm willing to take them to school and make them learn, get what they want in future, afterwards. (Amina, L283-288)</i> |
| | | Stories about looking after children | <i>If there is something missing in the house, like the children run out of food, it is the mother who knows. She is the first person to know, "Today, my children don't have food to eat". [The] father doesn't know. (Nyalok, L170-173)</i> |
| | | Stories about looking after street children | <i>If you find somebody's child working in the market, and not in school, you should tell them, "Please take your child to school", and if they think in a good way they will know that you told them something good for their children and they may not take their child to work in the market again. And for us women, we give birth with pain, and it's too hard for us to just see children standing in shops in markets selling things, or sitting under trees in the market while others are in school. (Helen, L30-35)</i> |
| | The protected woman | Stories about men being responsible for women | <i>My father [was] the one who was [initially] responsible for me, because he is the one who brought me into the world. He was the one responsible for me, until I got married, and the one who took responsibility for me after that was [my husband]. (Grace, L244-246)</i> |
| | | Stories about male providers | <i>What is important in the life of women is when they are being treated fairly by their husbands. If the husband has got one South Sudanese pound, and gives it to the wife, that can help the woman, because the husband isn't keeping the money from the wife. If the husband does not buy clothes for the wife, that causes a problem... as the man didn't buy clothes for you, and you are not being taken care of. (Didi, L176-182)</i> |
| | The devout woman | Stories about religion | <i>I heard that God helps people. Those who go to church, when I asked them, they said, "God helps people. You go and pray, and God will forgive your sins. If sins overcome you and you go to Him, he will be able to forgive you". When I heard all of these things, I said, "I have to surrender my life to God". (Elizabeth, L333-336)</i> |

| Global theme | Organising theme | Basic theme (topic) | Example |
|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Traditional /bad | The wicked woman | Stories about bad women | <i>There was a story that Geng geng [a well-known Dinka storyteller] told, that a home that has a bad wife is like a house which is leaking. A home which is leaking can disturb people during the rainy season.... It's like a bad woman who cannot bring up her child. (Group 4, Female, 16-25, L1037-1041)</i> |
| | | Stories about gossiping | <i>Problems can just happen whenever people bring some gossip to your house.... Women will be happy if you give them what they want in their own house. But the moment they see something in their sister's house or their neighbour's house, that will be a big problem. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1371-1382)</i> |
| | | Stories about drinking | <i>Right now I'm looking after my brother-in-law's children, who lost their mother because of alcohol. My brother-in-law was killed during the war.... [His wife] would often go to the market and buy mou [local beer] and drink it. If my husband talked to her [about her drinking], she would fight with everybody. She would even go to his office and fight with people there. She came back to me at home, and we fought, so I called the police. Then after she died, she left her children.... (Helen, L442-452)</i> |
| | | Stories about promiscuity | <i>[Adultery] will bring to you a bad reputation, to you and your child, if you begin to have a problem with your husband and you run to sleep with another man. Above all, committing adultery will not solve your problem that you are having in your family; running to sleep with another man will not solve your problem at all. It is accepted that a man is allowed to marry more than one wife but a woman is not allowed to marry more than one husband.... (Group 4, Female 16-25, L1885-1891)</i> |
| | | Stories about women in the market | <i>When you marry a woman who is living in the market, she cannot [will not] come and stay with you, and you will not respect each other. Those ladies who are living in the market, you cannot get one and say that you will control her and convince her not to live in the market again and stay with you as a wife. (Group 3, Male 16-25, L1184-1191)</i> |
| | The unprotected woman | Stories about single women struggling | <i>Me, I lost my Dad when I was three days old.... The one who took care of us is my uncle, the brother to my Dad.... He came and took care of us, until we grew up, and [then]... he also passed away. When my uncle passed away there was no one left to take care of us – only my mother, who struggled. (Group 4, Female 16-25, L1525-1533)</i> |
| | The displaced woman | Stories of separation | <i>I have three kids. They [were] left. They are in Khartoum. No one is even talking about them. No one can bring them [to me]. That's why I have been telling you that, since I was young, I grew up with bad things.... If I name [my life], I could name it "bad things that happened to me". It is like they separated my stomach [because she was separated from her children]. (Christine, L346-360)</i> |
| | | Stories about running away/ fleeing | <i>When I was seven years old, the war broke out here. When people ran away, I used to carry my younger sibling, and I didn't feel tired. I just ran with my sibling, until we reached the place where the other people stopped. That was a really bad period. (Pondak, L42-45).</i> |
| | | Stories of return/ reunification | <i>[I]magine, I took eleven good years without meeting my mom or my sisters and brothers. So, I came here 2009 on date 23 May. It's, like, I reached the airport without believing that I was coming back home. I was like dreaming. I could not even say, "Hey... wake up". So, it was wonderful... that day... I cannot forget it.... It was happy like never. (Amina, L185-194)</i> |

| Global theme | Organising theme | Basic theme (topic) | Example |
|--------------|----------------------|---|---|
| Modern /good | The educated woman | Stories of education as key to a good life | <i>[I]f you are educated and you don't have a cow or a goat, and you are educated, if you find a job advertisement you can apply for the job. From there .., you will be able to buy your own cows and goats. (Elizabeth, L106-109)</i> |
| | | Stories about educated women | <i>[Y]ou see Nyandeng Malek? – she is ruling now because she is educated. Education let her lead our people, and because of education she has her motorcade. If she wasn't educated, she wouldn't have all those cars. Education is a good thing, especially for us as women... (Helen, L281-285)</i> |
| | The empowered medal | Stories about gender equality | <i>[I]f we are allowed to go to school.., then you will have this kind of equality where the men will be there, and then they will love to see a woman next to the man in any position. Or maybe tomorrow the girl will be ahead, and the man next to her in the position. This is what I would love to see. If women are educated you will see that kind of reversal.... (Elizabeth, L567-573)</i> |
| | | Stories about female providers | <i>[R]ight now I'm working. I can have anything that I want – for example, clothes or food, or if my children are sick – for example, right now my husband is far – and they will not need to borrow pens from other students in the class. I buy my own things, and if I didn't have money, if I didn't have my business right now, my life would be different. (Grace, L178-182)</i> |
| | | Stories about women's rights | <i>[We] have heard that a woman has a right like man and that a woman is equal with man according to what has been said in our constitution.... We tell elder people that a woman has right to call and man to sit down and listen to her, but in the past, it is a man who can call and woman to sit down and listen to him while a man seated on the chair.... [N]ow, a man has to sit down and listen to a woman. (Group 6, Male 26-45, L478-503)</i> |
| | | Stories about "the 25%" | <i>Twenty-five percent, it is ours. And we put it in practice. We are using it. Because the future generation that is growing up now, like the girls whose names were called out yesterday [on the radio, for having passed their exams], it is because of 25%. If it weren't for the 25%, girls would not be educated. Because now there are young girls [and] if they are going to go on well with education, they will come out and own 25%. (Nyalok, L308-312)</i> |
| | The women's group | Stories about women solving problems | <i>Right now, if we have problems as women we sit down together and we discuss them together.... For example, if we sit down and we say that in our Payam women are in need of something.., we call all the women in the Payam. We sit down and discuss the issues of the women in those areas. (Grace, L338-347)</i> |
| Modern /bad | The uneducated woman | Stories about interrupted education | <i>What I used to think when I was young, it was to go to school. Because there was a war, I could not manage to do that. I was in a bad generation. I didn't get what I was aiming for. I would really like – it was something that used to come into my mind from when I was young up until now – to go to school and be educated.., but unfortunately I didn't make it. (Sarah, L107-113)</i> |
| | | Stories about trouble with school fees | <i>Okay, after all, life in school.... After all, it became a little difficult because it's like I was tired or what, I don't even know.... So from there, everything became difficult, sickness all the time, school fees increasing. From there, I broke out from the school, because of these conditions. (Amina, L134-139)</i> |
| | | Stories about women being behind | <i>Challenges that are facing women are very many.... [T]here are some who are illiterate and some with little education. In this case women are still behind.... [N]ow, if our country is independent we [would] like to be supported so at least we can know something.... We need to be shown about hygiene because there are some women who do not still know about hygiene.... [W]hat made us like that is because we are still behind in education. (Josephine, L81-91)</i> |
| | The dependent woman | Stories about women's inability to support themselves | <i>[T]here's nothing I can manage to do because I'm lame. If I go to the organization [NGO] to work with the foreigners they will not agree because I'm lame. They will say, "She cannot do anything. As you can see, she is lame". If I say I have to cultivate, I cannot manage; if I want to work at the market, I cannot manage. There's nothing I find easy to do. (Betty, L109-114)</i> |
| | | | |

Appendix 5: Coding frame by purpose

| Global theme | Organising theme | Basic theme (purpose) | Example |
|----------------|---------------------------|---|---|
| Survival | Survival | To address survival challenges | <i>If a woman is having some problems, if she comes to the group, she will share her problem with the group.... Then [she] will do all this sewing and bed sheet making and then [she] can sell them in the market and it will help [her] family. The women who are not in the group, they suffer in so many ways. (Mary, L131-135) (The women's group)</i> |
| Family rupture | Family rupture | To explain family rupture | <i>Right now I'm looking after my brother-in-law's children, who lost their mother because of alcohol. My brother-in-law was killed during the war.... [His wife] would often go to the market and buy mou [local alcohol] and drink it. If my husband talked to her [about her drinking], she would fight with everybody. She would even go to his office and fight with people there. She came back to me at home, and we fought, so I called the police. Then after she died, she left her children.... (Helen, L442-452) (The wicked woman)</i> |
| Aspirations | Child-focused aspirations | To explain child-focused aspirations | <i>My own experience, I was not educated. If I was an educated woman, I could manage to maintain my life with my family, to do the best which is needed for survival. So what I can tell my child to do [i.e., get an education], it is for the future life.... (Nyalok, L140-142) (The uneducated woman)</i> |
| | | To legitimise child-focused aspirations | <i>I grew up in this place, and how my life started when I was a child is different from life nowadays. In my life., not everyone was allowed to go to school. And now everyone has a right to go to school, and nobody is staying at home. Like now, my children, they go to school. No child stays at home. (Mary, L24-28) (The empowered woman)</i> |
| | | To achieve child-focused aspirations | <i>What I would like to do is to take my children to school so that they can also help me in the future.... I'm now praying to my God that my husband will be able to take [my children] to school to educate them for me. (Betty, L102-103) (The devout woman)</i> |
| | Educational aspirations | To explain educational aspirations | <i>I only wanted to go to school and learn.... I wanted to know how to read, so that when I take my child to hospital I will be able to read what is written on the medicine, to know what the medicine is for and to know whether the medicine is harmful for my child, or safe. (Elizabeth, L87-92) (The mother)</i> |
| | | To legitimise educational aspirations | <i>If I had not reached Primary 7, then the cows which I was married with might have not been brought to my parents. Because I know, so far, if you are educated, then you can bring many cows and so many good things to your parents. (Elizabeth, L141-145) (The bride)</i> |
| | | To achieve educational aspirations | <i>[W]e moved to Nairobi. At that time, at least, I was grown and I could understand that the school is good for me.... So I decided to settle at school, try to learn, and I was improving.... I call it a happy moment. (Amina, L102-112) (The displaced woman)</i> |
| | Employment aspirations | To explain employment aspirations | <i>[I]n future life my dream is for me to work hard and get enough resources, so that I will be independent and confident of the survival of my children...." (Teresa, L286-287) (The mother)</i> |
| | | To legitimise employment aspirations | <i>Yes, now, women themselves, they have power.... Before, in the church policy, there was no woman ordained as a pastor. And this year, it happened. There is a woman who was ordained as a pastor, this year, together with men.... Now we are here as women. We have confirmed for ourselves, that what men do, women can do.... Women, they have work and we have seen their work. (Nyalok, L323-331) (The empowered woman)</i> |

| Global theme | Organising theme | Basic theme (purpose) | Example |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| | | To achieve employment aspirations | <i>The [water] project is going well. Nothing will stop it.... People can plant some beans or vegetables easily because they have water. It is also good for people who have farms and animals. For those who have their small gardens, if their plants grow, maybe the organizations [NGOs] can buy it from them and sell it somewhere. This is our idea here.... We are not going to divide [the produce from the farm].... We are not doing that., because we want the farm to become bigger than when we started out. As I said before, we are going to look for an organization to buy everything.... (Helen, L531-549) (The women's group)</i> |
| Barriers to aspirations | Educational barriers | To explain educational barriers | <i>Now that I'm married, the situation is different from before. I have my household responsibilities. I spent a lot of time at home, and, then when my house was better, I went back to school.... (Helen, L147-149) (The wife)</i> |
| | Employment barriers | To explain barriers to employment | <i>I am uneducated; I didn't go to school. If I was an educated woman, I could take courage, because I would be able to support myself on my own, but I'm not educated.... Now I ask myself, "How can I survive and support myself when I'm not educated?" (Sarah, L18-21) (The uneducated woman)</i> |

Appendix 6: Clips

Land Act News

P: Presenter

FP: Female workshop participant

MP: Male workshop participant

DIR: Director for Land and Surveying

Duration: 3:08

P: The Land Act of South Sudan says that a woman is allowed to own land. This is what has been discussed for three days [during a workshop] coordinated by the organization NRC [Norwegian Refugee Council] and the South Sudan Land Commission. People who attended the workshop discussed that a woman has the right to own land. One of the participants who attended the workshop, [name], encouraged women to own land.

FP: For me now, I think it is important that women should own land. There are women who have land, either in the market or in the residential areas, starting with me. I have plots, and this thing called women's rights has been accepted by the government and other elders. Our government has made it clear to people who don't know that a woman has the right to own land. It was made clear to them, and now they've understood it and accepted that women must have the right to be given land. There is a rumour – they are saying that a woman has no right to own land, because if you marry a woman and she has not given birth [i.e., has no children with you] she might leave with the land. But human rights says that, even if the woman has no children, since you married her not knowing she would be childless, she must have the right to own land. If you divorce her, she can go with the land, and if she remains with you, she can still own the land.

P: One of the participants called [name] says before the independence of South Sudan women did not have the right to own land, but the constitution of South Sudan gave women 25%.

MP: There are two types of laws governing South Sudan. There is written law and unwritten law. Unwritten law – the law that originates from Waath Alel [There was a convention that was held in Waath Alel, in approximately 1994, when all the customary laws were discussed, but they were not written down] – Waath Alel law says a woman has no right to own land or be given land. But the law that we have discussed and read today – the written law – says that a woman has a right to own land, because the law says that the land belongs to the South Sudanese people. A woman is a South Sudanese citizen, so she has the right to own land and to have that land registered in her name.

P: The participants who attended the workshop will go and teach other people about the right of a woman to own land. They were taught about a woman's right to own land, so that they could go and teach other people about a woman's right to own land. The Director for Land and Surveying in Aweil East county, [name], was the one organizing the workshop with NRC.

DIR: There is an organization that met with them, and I have shown them the survey map of Wanjok. I showed them that Wanjok has been surveyed, and we have shown all the roads. We encourage whoever attended the workshop to go and disseminate what he or she has learned in the workshop – that the law of South Sudan and that of the land as citizens – this is the law that gives us rights, even the right to regulate cattle movements. If you cultivate in the cattle gateway, there will be a law used against you. If you cultivate in the cattle pathway there is a law that says how many years you will be imprisoned for and what the fine will be. Everything has been differentiated [clarified in law]. Even if you go to the dessert

and do something wrong over there, because the desert belongs to the public there is a sentence that will be used against you, and you will be fined. All these laws are in the 2009 South Sudan Act.

P: Those who attended the workshop will go and teach the other members of the community the laws of the South Sudan Land Act. This workshop was conducted in Mobil, and it ended on Friday.

[End]

Women and safety birth program

P: Presenter

MID: Midwife

Duration: 4:25

MID: I'm going back to explain about Malaria, and how it was killing us in the past. People used to say that it was *ruaak* [a traditional belief that if you didn't confess your pre-marital sexual relationships to the midwife or your aunt before giving birth to your first child, you would die in childbirth]. Nowadays, this *ruaak* [death as a result of not confessing] is not there, and I think it is because people now give birth at hospital. That's why this *ruaak* is not there.

For those of us in the past, when you were married, people were always interfering in your business. If you were about to give birth, and you became sick the day before you were going to give birth, they would straight away say that you were suffering from *ruaak*, and people would start coming to you and asking you about it. If you are pregnant, and you have a fever, and sometimes feel like vomiting, then people will say that you are suffering from *ruaak*. Those who live in your house will be sure

that you have *ruaak*. They will say, “Since you’ve had this child [in your womb], you’ve just been lying down. We will have to send her back to her parents home”.

Then when you go home, each and every aunt of yours will be coming and saying, “My daughter, please confess this *ruaak* of yours so that you can be free”. But what you are suffering from is Malaria, and people don’t know that. You may fall sick from fever again after some time. Then after some time you are fine again. If this happens before you give birth, you may miscarry, and then you will die, leaving people saying that *ruaak* killed you. They will say “Mr. X’s daughter has miscarried because of *ruaak*, and she has already passed away”. But it is Malaria instead of *ruaak*.

If they don’t identify it as Malaria before you give birth, then you will have lack of blood [anaemia]. Now we give the medicine for that condition, and some people go and throw the medicine away instead of swallowing the medicine. And then we find it on the way, and we go and pick it up.

Sometimes you may have anaemia and you can also be affected by Malaria. Then, if you have the two things, you will die, leaving people saying, “She has been killed by *ruaak*”, and, if you keep on being unwell until you give birth, and you have not confessed any man that you have slept with, they will tell you, “Oh, you don’t want to confess? You will meet the hot water”. [After delivery, a woman is meant to shower in scalding hot water.] If you don’t confess to sleeping with any man, then they will say, “You wait for the hot water”. And when the water is boiled, people will come and make you talk. Your mother will talk to your aunts and say, “You come and talk to my daughter. Please ask my daughter. I’ve been asking her, and she tells me that there is no man she has slept with, and I don’t believe her”. They will bathe you with hot water, and when they bathe you with hot water, the fever that you have because of Malaria will be increased by the hot water. Then you will not be able to sleep the whole night, and when the morning hours come, your mother will go to your aunt’s house “my daughter who you washed with hot water did not sleep, and I believe it is because of *ruaak*. You come and talk to her”. They will be telling you,

“You say the name of the man, because you can see you are not dying”, and you will say, “I haven’t slept with any man”, but that is Malaria. There’s nothing like *ruaak*. People will be staring at you saying, “Tell us, tell us. You mean there’s no one? If you don’t want to tell us, this thing will now kill you. It will go to your stomach and bring you diarrhoea”. From there the diarrhoea will start. When you have this diarrhoea you keep on losing water from your body, and then you will keep fainting and losing consciousness. So now, from there, you will start saying the name of any man that you know, even though you have not slept with him. Now you will lose consciousness, because you will lose the water from your body. Then you will start saying, “It is Mr. X, Mr. X, Mr. X”, until you die in the hands of people. They will bury you, and keep saying that it was *ruaak* that killed you, that you have been killed by a lot of men. But after all, it is Malaria. Now there is no *ruaak*.

Before we didn’t have clinics for giving birth, and now we have them. Before we didn’t have a market where these young ladies can go and sleep around with men, but now we have a market where these young ladies can go and sleep with men. But they don’t die because of *ruaak*, and why? The reason is because we have clinics.

When it comes to a woman who has already given birth once [i.e., who has children already], if you are pregnant you have symptoms of Malaria, then it gives you diarrhoea and you pass away, people will be saying that the children you’ve already delivered really respected you [i.e., didn’t kill you as a result of your *ruaak*], but this child now wanted you to confess and tell the men that you have slept with. Your death will be blamed on you, but it is not *ruaak*, it is Malaria.

P: Thank you. You have talked a lot, explaining to us what *ruaak* means, and that it’s not *ruaak*.

[End]

Why women have low participation in Military

P: Presenter

C1: Male caller 1

C2: Male caller 2

Duration: 4:48

Italics spoken in English

P: We are listening to Naath FM. We have *one caller on line*.

C1: Hello

P: Hello, Naath FM. Hello?

C1: How are you?

P: I'm fine. I'm very fine. Tell me your name and where you are calling from.

C1: I'm [name].

P: Ok, [name], *our topic of the day* we are asking why the men are the ones who fight, and the women are not, and when we got independence, the women and the men are enjoying it and participating together.

C1: Yes, it is a very good topic. According to my opinion, women cannot go for fighting. We used to leave the women behind, because they are from the rib of the man. Like, you married your wife, you are in a fight, you cannot fight with her the way you can fight with a man, because you can kill her easily. She doesn't have power. Now, we used to favour the women, because what we have heard from the very beginning in the bible. So you cannot just fight with a woman the way you fight

with a man, with all your power. You fight her in half-way. This country couldn't be taken by the enemy, because women weren't participating in the war. Where I'm staying now, nobody can take it from me because I'm a man; I have power; I can defend it.

P: Yea

C1: Like when we used to fight with the Arabs, it is because you have a strong heart. You fight with all your strength. The men used to go to fight, because he has confidence in himself – he can do it.

P: Mmm

C1: The people are not the same. There are those who are afraid in their heart. They say, "If I go to fight this person, he may beat me and harm me", and those who are brave, even though he [the enemy] is big like that, you can go and fight. Because I'm confident, I will fight. I cannot fear. I can fight with another man.

P: Mmm. So...

C1: There is a person who goes to fight and has to force himself, and the person who really means to fight. There is that person who used to go to fight and forced himself, but you never know who will beat who, and if you are going to fight, you can defeat him – the one who you are fearing.

P: Yeah. Ok, in that case according to your *contribution*, you're saying the women can fight; she cannot be forbidden from fighting?

C1: If it is fighting outside of the family, the woman cannot – the external war – unless the fighting is within the family.

P: Ok, so you are saying the women can fight with somebody who comes to take away the country, but within the family they cannot fight. [She is saying the opposite of what he said.] Do you mean that the woman can fight outside, but between the woman and man they cannot fight, because they have *respect*?

C1: Ok

P: Ok fine, good. For the few minutes we have shared thank you, *thank you. You are the first caller of today....* We have *another caller on line. Hello, Naath FM.*

C2: Good morning.

P: Good morning to you. Tell us your name and where you are calling from.

C2: My name is [name].

P: Okay [name], good morning.

C2: We are fine.

P: *Okay, the topic of the day* which talks about why the men go to fight and the women are not.

C2: Yes, it is a very nice topic. Anyone who has an idea will contribute a little for the rest to hear. For the women not to fight, it is a policy that the government has had for a long time. When we were fighting with the enemies, it was suggested that everybody would participate in the war. When we looked into it; it is not good; it is not okay. Because a husband and a wife, if they are both on the front line, the whole house can be destroyed. Maybe both of them can be killed, and we will have a great

loss and we will not achieve independence, because there will be no support [meaning no young generation who is growing up to continue fighting]. It is good for the women to continue giving birth, so that those children will revenge back [fight the enemy] in the future. Even if the husband is killed on the frontlines, another man can inherit his wife and give her children. From *Anyā Nya* [the original rebellion that started the Sudanese civil war in 1955], if there were no women giving birth, there would be no one to continue the war for the second time [referring to 1983 when the rebellion re-started]. During *Anyā Nya*, there were women whose husbands had been killed, but they were still giving birth. They still had children who were participating in the SPLM liberation. They [these children who were born by an inherited marriage] fought for freedom, now we have a nation, and they are serving the government. That is the strategy South Sudan was using and the reason that women are not needed on the frontline.

P: Okay fine. In this moment we share together in Naath FM [when you have your time to contribute], are you saying that the government agreed before that the women should not be involved in fighting on the frontlines? They will be there just to give birth? Not to participate in the fighting?

C2: In our villages - leave the government - in our traditional life, there were very strong ladies. When we used to fight, when we were teenagers, there were some ladies who used to fight men. They had a spear and would fight with the men. They are there in our traditional life. There was no type of fighting the women did not know. They knew how to fight with a spear, with a stick, to use their hands, to kick, they knew. But the women did not fight again, because they were doing different activities during the war. They used to give birth, they used to cook, they used to care for the wounded soldiers. If they were involved in the fighting, who would do these activities? So, we will not involve them again at the moment, because the time they were needed to participate is gone. For all these activities they were doing during the war, we gave them their 25%. Now, the fighting that remains is between

two countries [between Sudan and South Sudan regarding demarcation of the border]. It doesn't need any women. It remains for the men only. Nothing needs women.

P: Okay fine. Fine [name]. Thank you for this moment we share together on Naath FM. *Thank you.*

[End]