



MONASH University

The Post-Settlement Lives  
of South Sudanese Australian Women  
Surviving and Belonging

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A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
School of Social and Political Sciences  
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For my sister, Jane  
1960 - 2015

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## Abstract

This research considers the everyday lives of South Sudanese Australian women through their individual and collective narratives of war, forced migration and settlement in a foreign country.

This thesis charts the links between Sudan's historic practices of enslaving its African ethnicities with imperialist British ambiguities, which did not fully challenge slavery during its colonial rule. The post-colonial, socio-political oppression of African Sudanese by an Islamist government saw the recurrence of mass enslavement during Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005). Women's narratives show the 22-year-long conflict to be gendered, designed to destroy communities' subjectivity and autonomy through the female body.

A feminist analysis provides a critical framework to better understand narratives of mass displacement, enslavement and sexual violence experienced by women during this war. The analysis addresses strategies these women used engaged to sustain survival during war and when seeking asylum. These strategies were also utilised during resettlement and finally can be seen in their drive for an embodied sense of belonging in their daily lives in Australia.

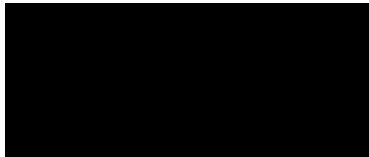
The research produced findings which show their narratives can be organised into three distinct stages: pre-arrival, settlement and post-settlement. The first stage of pre-arrival was experienced in multiple sites: Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, and Uganda. Settlement in Australia, as the second stage, shows how women began to gain control of their lives again by finding both safety and security. Post-settlement is located solely in the city of greater Melbourne in the state of Victoria. In post-settlement, despite ongoing acculturation difficulties, women continue to utilise and develop the agency and creativity they used to survive war and migrations.

The ways in which South Sudanese Australian women have negotiated the expectations of their own culture and that of the Western culture that they have settled in provide valuable contextual insight into the agency and resilience of former refugee women living in the Australian diaspora.

## Declarations

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature:



Print Name: Sara Leanne Maher

Date: .....28.09.2017.....

## Acknowledgements

After years of work at a settlement NGO, when I told people (from refugee backgrounds) that I was leaving my job, many were shocked, some were angry and they all wanted to know why. Surprisingly, my explanation was accepted without further question. Regardless of country of origin, age, or gender, the pursuit of higher education was an entirely justifiable reason for my resignation – actually, it was the *only* justifiable reason.

The decision to undertake a full-time PhD was clouded by fears, delays and doubts. I couldn't see the tangible benefits of putting on hold career, income, super etc. and living below the poverty line for three and a half years. But in the end, all of that was put aside when I stopped denying what the people I used to work with never questioned—the value of education. Education, especially for women, can create personal, professional and political change. The PhD process gave me knowledge about the world we live which changed the way I live in it. The project I chose was filled with painful histories and stories that were unimaginable and confronting, but also rich with extraordinary strength and resilience. I was given the privilege of access and inclusion by people I had known a long time and others I had never met before. For that I am profoundly grateful.

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## List of Acronyms

Adult Migrant English Programme	AMEP
Anti-slavery International	ASI
Australian Cultural Orientation	AUSCO
Christian Solidarity International	CSI
Christian Solidarity Worldwide	CSW
Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children	CEAWC
Complex Cases Support	CCS
Comprehensive Peace Agreement	CPA
Central African Republic	CAR
Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs	DIMA
Department of Premier and Cabinet	DPC
Democratic Republic of Congo	DRC
English as a Second Language	ESL
Department of Social Services	DSS
Government of Sudan	GoS
Government of South Sudan	GoSS
Humanitarian Support Services	HSS
Integrated Humanitarian Support Services	IHSS
International Criminal Court	ICC
International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda	ICTR
Internally Displaced People	IDP
Médecines' Sans Frontières International	MSFI
Monash University Higher Research Ethics Committee	MUHREC
National Congress Party	NCP
Non-Government Organisation	NGO
Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome	PSTD
Protection of Civilians	PoC
Rwandan Patriotic Front	RPF
Sudanese Armed Forces	SAF

South Sudanese Community Association of Victoria	SSCAV
South Sudanese Federation	SSF
Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army	SPLA
Sudanese People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition	SPLAIO
United Nations High Commission on Refugees	UNHCR
United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention	UN OSAPG
United Nations Mission in South Sudan	UNMISS
United Nations	UN
Victorian Multicultural Commission	VMC

# Chapter One: The post-settlement lives of South Sudanese Australian women

## 1.1. Introduction

The doctoral research presented here contributes to understandings of the gendered elements of war, forced migration and long-term resettlement. Working with the narratives of South Sudanese women,<sup>1</sup> this thesis seeks to capture the lived experience of these former refugees. Having survived war and displacement and negotiated both asylum and migration processes, they have now resided in Australia for significant periods of time. The project aimed to explore pre-migration disembodiment, the paradoxical nature of settlement and post-settlement subjectivities.

The South Sudanese are the largest group of forced migrants to have settled in Australia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first arrivals from Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005) began in the late 1990s. By 2001 the population was around 5,000. In 2006 the number had grown to just under 20,000.<sup>2</sup> The peak years for immigration were 2004 and 2005, when just under 6,000 people arrived (Jakubowicz, 2010). The current population is around 30,000 and the majority reside in Melbourne (Robinson, 2013). Regardless of whether participants were citizens, permanent residents, or identified as Sudanese or South Sudanese, throughout this study they are referred to as South Sudanese Australians, or as migrants, rather than as refugees—which they no longer are. In citations of other work, I use the term that the work itself uses.

The Government of Sudan (GoS) conducted a military campaign against its African, syncretic, Christian ethnicities in the southern region of Sudan from 1983 to 2005. Distinct from Sudan's first post-colonial civil conflict (1955-1972), Sudan's second civil war, was both genocidal and gendered. GoS military and its proxies engaged 'scorched earth' campaigns designed to destroy ethnic communities through killing, mass rape, enslavement and displacement (Reeves, 2012; Jok, 2001, Kristof, 2005). Women and children were not simply

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to 2011 when the republic of South Sudan came into being, this community was identified as Sudanese. Throughout this thesis, when referencing periods prior to 2011, this identifier will be used.

<sup>2</sup> At that time of the 2006 Australian census, 19,050 Sudan born migrants resided in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007 in Hatoss & Huijser, 2010).

easy targets—likely to be in a village when it was attacked—they were ‘a major battle field for the Sudanese government’s war machinery’ (Jok, 2006, p. 60). The gendered elements of GoS aggression toward ethnic, African women was grounded in and attacked the maintenance of familial and cultural life while men were at war. The destruction of family also undermined both the morale of communities and support for the rebel army, the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA). While there are no firm statistics, estimates of fatalities over the 22 years of conflict, range between two and two-and-a-half million—from disease, famine and violence (de Waal, 1993; Edward, 2007; Zapata, 2011). Four million people were internally displaced and approximately one-and-a-half million were externally displaced across multiple international borders (Edward, 2007). The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) brought the war to an end in 2005. Southerners waited out a six-year period stipulated by the CPA, then participated in a referendum in January 2011. They then voted overwhelmingly for independence which was formally achieved in July 2011.

The Republic of South Sudan is a polyglot population of just over 13 million (World Population Review, 2017) and are mainly rural, sedentary farmers and agro-pastoralists, patrilineal and mainly polygynous (Ryle, 2012, p. 83; Duany & Duany, 2001). The country’s 64 ethnicities vary greatly in size. The Nilotic tribes dominate the population with the Dinka<sup>3</sup> by far the largest, at approximately 35% of the population, followed by the Nuer at 15.6 % (World Population Review, 2017). Dinka and Nuer also predominate within the Australian diaspora. Although data from the 2011 Australian census is not seen to provide a full and clear picture of the diversity of the diaspora in Australia, Dinka significantly outnumber the other groups (Robinson, 2013, p. 32). Cross-cultural communication is made possible through the *lingua franca*, Sudanese Arabic, also known as Juba Arabic. South Sudanese are either bi- or multi-lingual and are predominantly Christian, Catholicism being the majority faith (Lucas, Jamali & Edgar, 2013, p. 57).

The narratives of the women showed that prior to arrival in Australia all of the women in this study experienced multiple and protracted periods of displacement. Displacement occurred on an extraordinary scale, both internally and externally. Women in this study mentioned residing in refugee camps for between three and 15 years. Those displaced into urban settings in Cairo, Egypt, described periods of residence between one and 10 years.

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<sup>3</sup> Jaang or Monywaang in Dinka, (Ryle, 2012, p. 84). Alternative spellings: Jieng, or Muony-Jang, (Gurtong, 2016)

These stories reflect the history of the war and scale of displacement that occurred across the population.

In the early years of the second conflict, hundreds of thousands walked across the country to refugee camps in Ethiopia. In 1991, nearly 400,000 southern Sudanese refugees resided in three camps in the Gambela region of Ethiopia (Marks, 1991)<sup>4</sup>. In the same year, when the Ethiopian government fell to rebels, camp residents were forced back into Sudan in huge numbers. These flows came under attack from GoS forces and local militia. In early 1992, large numbers of survivors eventually made their way toward Kenya and crossed the border into a northern desert area to the newly constructed Kakuma Refugee camp. Kakuma camp became so large it has been described as a virtual city (Montclos & Kagwanja, 2000, p. 205). Kakuma also became a major departure point for southern Sudanese migrating to Australia. Other countries bordering Sudan: Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR) also hosted southern Sudanese in multiple refugee camps.

Internal displacement saw large numbers move north into the country's capital of Khartoum, under the spurious belief that they would find safety there (Hutchinson, 2004). From Khartoum, Egypt became a country of first asylum for tens of thousands (Edward, 2007; Moro, 2002) and consequently another major source of southern Sudanese migration to Australia.

Participants in this study arrived in Australia mostly between 2003 and 2006, although more arrived in 2004 than any other year. This reflects the migration patterns of the South Sudanese Australian community. (Lucas, Jamali & Edgar, 2013). Participants departed from the Kakuma Refugee Camp in northern Kenya, from Cairo in Egypt (Marlowe, Harris & Lyons, 2013) and Uganda. These patterns also reflected the departure points of the community in general.

Scholarship on the South Sudanese in Australia has primarily focused on the interactions between pre-migration and a range of issues arising in the initial, post-migration period of settlement. Themes include acculturation, education, employment, housing, mental health, parenting and militarised sexual violence (Bartolomei, Eckert & Pittaway, 2009; Colic-Peisker, 2009, Hatoss & Huijser, 2010; Hebbani, Obijiofor & Bristed,

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<sup>4</sup> Official camp registrations in 1990 were, 394,151, however a UNHCR satellite survey calculated a figure of 250,000 (Marks, 1991)

2009; Marlowe, Harris & Lyons, 2013; Jakubowicz, 2010; Marlowe, 2010; Milner & Khawaja, 2010; James & Lejukole, 2013; Phillips, 2013; Pittaway, Muli & Shtier, 2009; Savic, Hansen & Moore, 2013; Schweitzer, Melville, Steel & Lacherez, 2006; Nunn, 2010; Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2009; Wille, 2013).

The findings of this research strengthen contemporary scholarship on the post-settlement period (Deng, 2017; Levi, 2014; Ochala & wa Mungai, 2016). This scholarship has a focus on parenting. Deng (2017) addresses the experience of parenting and being parented in South Sudanese families in Australia. The study explores cultural changes through the narratives of both parents and youths, and addressed the challenges these changes brought to South Sudanese families in contemporary society in Australia. Ochala and wa Mungai (2016) have addressed the gender challenges single African mothers face in accessing services and the stigma of single parenting within their own cultures. Through the narratives of South Sudanese mothers, Levi (2014) addresses parenting teenagers in a resettlement environment. The conceptual tools with which these themes will be conceptualised and analysed throughout the thesis are found in the work of Sara Ahmed, (2004) and Elaine Scarry (1985), who together address the objectification of pain and what pain does. In this study, pain is understood as integral to the new subjectivities this has created in post-settlement.

The genesis of this qualitative study is to be found in a long association with the South Sudanese community that is both professional and personal. From 2004, I worked in direct service for a non-government organisation (NGO) providing settlement support with an education focus. In 2006, I was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to address Community, Adult Education based settlement programmes for newly arrived African Women on Humanitarian and Women at Risk Visas. Research to develop this settlement model was conducted in Denmark, United States, Canada and New Zealand. From there, I went into research and community development roles, again with NGOs. In 2012, after two visits to Sudan with a South Sudanese colleague, I organised an oral history project which recorded the life stories of women elders from multiple ethnicities in Melbourne. *The Anyikool Project* was concluded in 2014 and the thirty-two hours of recordings were archived into the State Library of Victoria's oral archive as the first recordings of African Australian women (Maher, 2014). This research was extended in the same year, initiated from a position of continuity, trust and lengthy, purposeful relationships.

Three of the women who participated in this research have been known to me since 2004 and were also interviewed for *The Anyikool Project*. Eight other *Anyikool Project* interviewees also participated in this research. The continuity with these women means that in the women's view I am an insider. Twic elder Mary described this at the end of a first Twic small group interview:

*I: And she is saying, that you yourself, you are like one of the group and she is saying if there is anything, if you want to have a discussion with us, we feel like you are one of our community group and they are happy anytime for you to join them or if there is anything that you want to say, they are happy for you to.*

(Mary, Twic Dinka)

Eleanor who participated through snowballing and was not previously known to me, expressed a sentiment that was shared by a number of other participants:

*I: [] first of all she would like to thank-you very much for doing this project and also, she feels that the fact that you decided to do this project, it means that you have emotional, good feeling toward the people of South Sudan that this has affected you, so she is happy that you are doing this programme. [] She prays for you that God will help you. That you thought about them to ask them about this and she is thinking that it may have been God that touched you to interview them, and maybe this will somehow go somewhere.*

(Eleanor, Ngok Dinka)

The original subject of this research was the effects of the mass slavery which had occurred during Sudan's second war (1983-2005). During fieldwork interviews women raised the value of the research in relation to this subject and their families. During the second small group interview of Twic women, Leda said:

*I: It's important you are doing this research because my children are here in Australia, and they are going to school so therefore they will be educated people and they can be able to read and write. And even if my nephews and my niece back home, they don't know how to read and write, my son can be able to read it to them, and say 'look there was this research that was done' and they will agree that this is exactly what happened. This did happen for sure, that the Mural used to come and kill people, and rape and take cows and take everything that belonged to them at that time. So, it is something that goes into the history.*

(Leda, Twic Dinka)

The value women placed on the research was in part based on the project as legitimising and acknowledging what had happened to them in the war, individually and as a



community. I was privileged by their engagement and willingness to talk about their present lives and the past, given the sensitive and potentially distressing nature of that time. I am however very mindful of my own privilege as a highly educated white woman engaged in research with women from the Global South. This will be addressed further in Chapter Three which will review literature related to the ethics of the project. Throughout the thesis the phrases Global South and Global North are used and while it is acknowledged that these expressions have varying meanings, in this work the Global South delineates a world region that is underdeveloped economically which is dominated by the economic and political development of the Global North (Odeh, 2010).

This research adds to the literature on forced migration and settlement by placing women's experiences at the centre of the study. It also honours the strength and resilience of these women and the extraordinary lives they have lived as refugees and, now, as 'new' Australians. I do not seek to emphasise South Sudanese Australian women as highly vulnerable, or to essentialise their experiences of war and migration. Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are often associated with the refugee experience. However, this thesis does not assume PTSD to be a standard response to war and displacement. My analysis does not assume that traumatic events traumatise, or cause PTSD (Westoby, 2009; Westoby & Ingamells, 2009). Sideris (2003) wrote that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) *'is limited in its capacity to provide insight into effects of the destruction of social and cultural order on individuals'* (Sideris, 2003, p. 713). This study acknowledges the collective suffering of these women as physical, psychological and structural but does not assume that suffering always takes the form of PTSD. The intention here is not to create a fixed identity based on those experiences, but to convey the complex reality of their lives prior to and after migration.

This project drew primarily on the stories of women considered to be elders within their communities. According to 2011 Australian census data only about 10 percent of the community are over 50 years old (Robinson, 2013). Of the 42 women who participated in this research, the majority ranged from their late 40s to late 50s. Approximately five were in their 60s, one was about to turn 70, the oldest was 72. Women are considered to be elders as a reflection of the status they have achieved in their communities, that status is not solely based on an achieved age. Elders are respected leaders and authority figures and maintain important roles in family and community. They convey traditional cultural practices, mediate family conflict and educate boys and girls in their expected gender roles

(Ebbeck & Cerna, 2007). This study represents six different ethnic groups who all share the same regard for elders, be they men or women. The limited number of older women in this community was a primary reason to focus the study on women in a higher age range, given their memories of conflict and forced migration.

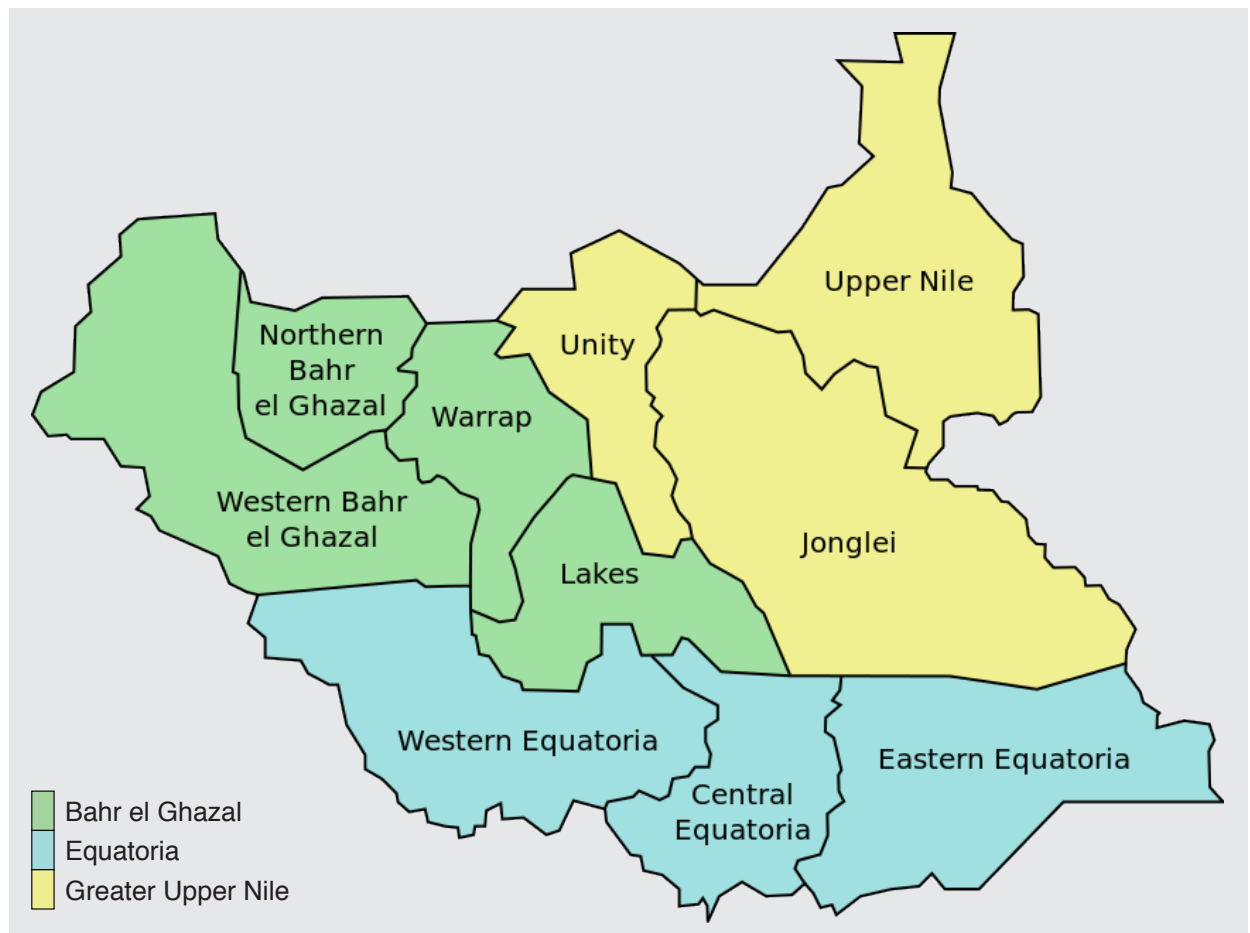
Thematic analysis of the data clearly highlighted themes ubiquitous in war and forced migration, that is, the loss of country, culture, home and family. Pre-arrival experiences were typical of those experienced by refugee women in many contexts; they included violence, sexual violence, significant loss of family and community, human rights abuses, protracted periods of dislocation, insecurity and deprivation and struggling to protect and provide for their children (Kaplan & Webster, 2003). Those events occurred during war, and in its aftermath of displacement and asylum. Analysis of the data showed that forced migration for South Sudanese women could be conceptualised as a process with three interconnected stages: pre-migration, settlement, and post-settlement. Each stage is addressed separately in Chapters, Five, Six and Seven.

To better privilege what women survivors can say about war and organised violence, this data was examined through a feminist lens. That lens positions personal narratives as critical, methodologically and ontologically. They add nuance to understandings of how relationships of power are enacted during gendered, militarised violence (Sideris, 2003). These narratives give alternative voice to survivors who may be unheard, overlooked or ignored. African feminist theory invites contextualisation of the diversity within different African nation states, as the foundation for the production of both knowledge and theory as it relates to Africa (Mama, 2011). Mama also argues that the analysis of violence against women requires both historical and contemporary analysis through the trope of imperialism, as the whole of the continent has experienced and is connected via the experience of colonialism (Mama, 2011, p. e17). Nordstrom described the creativity needed to successfully withstand the events of war as intensely personal, with each woman living through a unique individual reality (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 10). Nordstrom's claim resonates with the stories of the women I spoke with in this research, however, it also seems that at various points individual realities converge into communal or collective realities. These narratives point to far-reaching consequences of conflict on women and their families. They also indicate resistance to violence and disembodiment. These women remained committed to their families and caring for their children in the most appalling circumstance. The fracturing of

communities and the domestic sphere is evident, but so too was the hope and creativity these women maintained in spite of that.

The following section looks to the history of conflict and violent oppression in Sudan through the prism of slavery. This outline will provide a background for the gendered and genocidal nature of Sudan's second civil war that is accounted for in the narratives of the women who participated in this project.

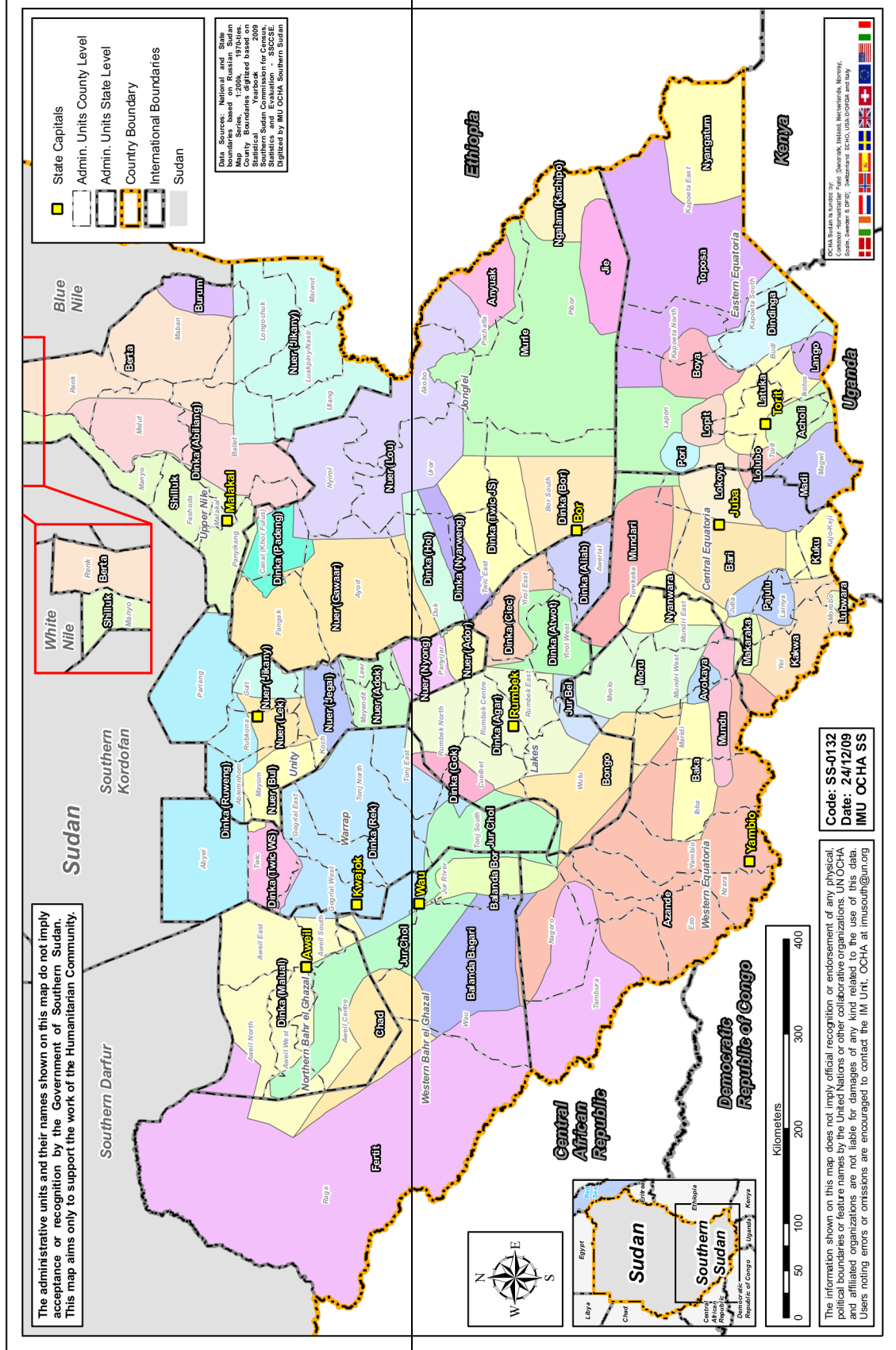
Map 1.1: Ten states of South Sudan grouped in the three historic provinces of Sudan<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> In 1993 for administrative purposes, the GoS, decreed Bahr el-Ghazal (green), Upper Nile (yellow) and Equatoria, (blue) to be ten new states (outlined in black), for administrative purposes. Those ten states were decreed 28 states by the Government of South Sudan in 2015. Early 2017, the 28 states became 35 states.

# Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Southern Sudan

Ethnic boundaries shown on this map are not an exact representation of the situation in the Country.



Map 1.2 Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Southern Sudan

## 1.2. A timeline of violence and oppression

This section provides an overview of conflicts past and present and how women's narratives reveal the systemic violence and oppression affecting the lives of women during war.

The violent oppression of Sudan's African ethnicities across the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was narrated by these women as social, political and racial. An understanding of the historical oppression of slavery in Sudan backgrounds that narration and contextualises the mass-scale slavery that occurred in the second war. Later in this section, the relationship between the contemporary conflict in South Sudan and women in the Australian diaspora is explored. Conflict broke out in the newly independent Republic of South Sudan in December 2013—and is ongoing at the time of writing. The conflict has been catastrophic for women in South Sudan (OHCHR, 2017) and there is a direct connection to the scholarship on transnational mothering and emotional labouring during conflict.

During the second Sudanese civil war (1983-2005) mass-scale enslavement of African ethnicities by Arab militia occurred routinely (Aguer, 2006; Collins, 1992; Douglas, 2003; Eibner, 1999). A baseline of abductions in the borderlands region of the Bahr-el-Ghazal is provided by a sole, formal study. Conducted during the war by the Rift Valley Institute in Nairobi, a database contains twelve thousand names of abductees from Dinka, Lou and Fertit tribes in that region between 1983 and 2002. Half were under 18 and most were male (Rift Valley Institute, 2001). Fegley wrote that the database does not provide a full picture of slavery in the country, as it accounts only for the north-western quarter of the country (the Bahr-el-Ghazal) which was a Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLM) controlled area (Fegley, 2008, p. 38). Other estimates for that area in a similar time frame are as high as two hundred thousand (Eibner, 2005).

Abductees were taken into rural and urban slavery in the north of the country and its neighbouring countries. Rural slavery involved labouring on farms and in cattle camps, while urban slaves were engaged in domestic duties. Sexual abuse is inherent to slavery, especially for female slaves. Eye-witness and personal accounts described the lives of slaves including frequent beatings, racial insults, the assigning of Muslim names, being made to speak Arabic and having to convert to Islam (Jok, 2001). The sexual abuse of female Dinka slaves included rape, gang rape and female genital mutilation in accordance with specific, localised Islamic practices (Eibner, 2005). It is unlikely that there will ever be an accurate and verified number

of abductees. Difficulties in keeping accurate records over the period of a very long war and the remoteness and size of the area involved contribute to a lack of data of numbers taken, where they were taken and what happened to them.

The enslavement of African Sudanese was based on historical assumptions of ethnic inferiority and interpretations of Islam that allowed for the enslavement of *infidels*<sup>6</sup> (Jok, 2001). Sudanese Arab enslavement of non-Muslim groups in central Sudan existed prior to the conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These practices date back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and are found in Dinka oral histories which recall slave raids on their forefathers in that era (Beswick, 2004). Kuku oral histories also give accounts of colonial era slave raids (Maher, 2014). However, the history of the slave-raiding that occurred during the war can be traced back to approximately 1770, when the nomadic, Muslim cattle herders, the Baggara, arrived on the outer frontier of Ngok Dinka territory in the northern province of Bahr el-Ghazal. The state of insecurity and instability along the Arab-African frontier of Sudan dates from this era (Beswick 2004). The Kiir River is the physical boundary between the south and the north of Sudan. Twic and Malual Dinka communities occupy the south of the Kiir River and the Ngok Dinka are to the north. The Baggara were a slave-raiding society and the battle with various Ngok sub-groups for territory and resources began shortly after their arrival. Baggara raids were highly effective as the Baggara were on horses—never before seen by the Dinka. The Baggara splintered into various sub-groups—the Rizeiqat, the Missiryia Humr, and the Hawazma—and spread into the north west of Bahr el-Ghazal, raiding Malual and Twic Dinka in that area. Their gains in cattle and slaves became known further afield and brought slavers from Islamic Dar Fur<sup>7</sup> into the west and itinerant Muslim traders into the east—in search of the same rich sources. The slave trade in Dar Fur and Dar Fur’s western neighbour, the Islamic kingdom of Wadai, expanded exponentially. Travellers’ eyewitness accounts of slave caravans travelling to these kingdoms include a caravan of one thousand in 1796 and between ‘five and twelve thousand’ in 1820 (Beswick, 2004, p. 159).

The gendered elements of Baggara enslavement of Dinka meant that over time the two groups became genetically linked (Beswick, 2004; Collins, 1992; Jok, 2001). However, shared DNA did not reduce slavery or conflict. When the second war broke out (1983-2005), Baggara groups were recruited and armed by the GoS as its proxy. Combined Baggara militias

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<sup>6</sup> Non-believer

<sup>7</sup> Dar Fur was spelt as two words up until the 20th century

were known as Murhalin<sup>8</sup> and took full advantage of the historical precedence and practices of slavery. Militias gained financially from abductees who were trafficked across the northern border into Khartoum and neighbouring countries. They also gained women and girls as bounty (Collins, 1992).

Omar el-Bashir took power in Sudan by military coup in 1989 and the Islamist National Congress Party (NCP) established him as president of the country. The NCP's interpretations of Islam prescribed non-Muslims as *infidels* and the war was declared *jihad*.<sup>9</sup> This gave full rein to Murhalin to act with impunity and define their actions as legitimate. Raiding intensified and abductions for the purposes of slavery, for the first time in Sudan's history, became government sanctioned (Jok, 2001).

Reports of slaving in the second Sudanese war began to appear in 1986 in *The Sudan Times*, which was overseen by Dinka editor Bona Malual. In 1987 he published *The Dhein Massacre; Slavery in the Sudan*. Written by Muslim scholars Ushari Ahmed Mahmud and Suleyman Ali Baldo, the report exposed wartime slavery, genocide and human right abuses to the national and international community (Mahmud & Baldo, 1987). The report detailed a massacre, between March 27 and 28, 1987, of over one thousand Christian Dinka, by Rizeigat and other ethnic Baggara groups, in Dhein, an area north west of the Kiir River border. Dinka men, women and children were shot and burnt to death in train carriages. Mahmud and Baldo (1987) included oral accounts of local slavery from Dinka survivors. The report offered an analysis of the root causes of the violence and GoS policy that contributed to it. The findings of the report were denied by the GoS, who jailed the authors. However, the report was key in initiating and engaging the interest of international actors.

The first academic article documenting historic and contemporary Arab enslavement of the southern Nilotic tribes of Sudan was published in 1992 (Collins). The article stated that the slave trade along the Sudanese borderlands had in 1985 re-emerged with a vengeance. Collins described the phenomenon as being a result of a complex dynamic of war, famine, tradition, religions and cultural conflict (Collins, 1992). United Nations special rapporteur for the Commission of Human Rights, Gasper Biro reported twice in 1994 and in 1995 on the unchecked and alarming rise in slave raids in Bahr el-Ghazal (UN 1994a, 1994b, 1995). Swiss-based Christian Solidarity International (CSI), a human rights group advocating for persecuted

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<sup>8</sup> Narratives reference these militias as Rizeiqat, Missiryia, Baggara and Murhalin

<sup>9</sup> Holy war



Christians, sent activists into the borderlands area, mainly Twic County, in 1995. The reports included eyewitness accounts of raids, killings and abduction (CSI, personal communication, 1995). The story broke ground in America after two reporters, Kane and Lewthwaite (1996), for an American newspaper, *The Baltimore Sun*, travelled to Sudan to report first hand, in response to Minister Louis Farrakhan, head of the US Nation of Islam, who demanded proof that slavery existed in Sudan. Meanwhile, due to an internal dispute over cash payments for slave repatriation, CSI splintered. Those who had written the 1995 report broke with CSI and formed Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) and drafted two follow-up reports after visiting the area again in 1998 (CSW, personal communication, 1998a, 1998b). These reports too included eyewitness accounts of ongoing abductions and enslavement.

In 1999, an article in the *New Yorker* magazine examined slavery and the war. It also documented reaction in Sudan to the Mahmud and Baldo report 12 years earlier (Finnegan, 1999). Sudanese elites denied the existence of slavery and dismissed Mahmud and Baldo's report as a fabrication. American magazine, *The Atlantic Monthly*, published an article about CSI's repatriation scheme. Through Arab 'mediators' they paid a set amount of US dollars per head to return slaves across the border. The author reported disapproval from United Nations (UN) agencies and other NGOs involved in Sudan and strongly criticised CSI (Miniter, 1999). *The Middle East Quarterly* published an article by John Eibner, head of CSI, refuting the Miniter article and claiming the practice of cash payments was justified in the circumstances (Eibner, 1999). The NGO Anti-Slavery International (ASI) published their own report; *Is there is slavery in Sudan?* (ASI, 2001). The report included testimonies from those who had been enslaved and had either escaped or been repatriated. ASI documented meetings with multiple NGOs operating in Sudan as well as representatives of the Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWC). CEAWC had been set up by the GoS in response to international pressure. The ASI report contains a two-page addendum from CEAWC listing the ways in which it thinks the report unfairly presented the issue and reiterated the position of the GoS; that slavery was largely a result of inter-ethnic rivalries. There is a second addendum from the Director of Anti-Slavery International in response to CEAWC restating the evidence of enslavement by various militias (ASI, 2001).

A second journal article documented the history and contemporary practice of slavery in Sudan during the war, concluded that it would likely end when the war ended (Lobban, 2001). Dinka scholar from the Bahr el-Ghazal, Jok Madut Jok, based at an American university,

published the first scholarly book on the subject the same year (Jok, 2001). Based on extensive fieldwork undertaken during the war, it is the most comprehensive and detailed account of the phenomena. A detailed account of Sudan's civil wars by American historian Douglas Johnson, followed but notably only a few pages were dedicated to the issue (Johnson, 2006). A 2005 conference on slavery in Sudan, held at Oxford University, included a paper from John Eibner of CSI who commented on the dearth of scholarly work on slavery in the Islamic world. Lastly, a 2007 article notes that the GoS restructured CEAWC in 2002 limiting its purview to just two regions of Sudan, west Kordofan and south Darfur (Moszynski, 2007). Moszynski also commented that since CEAWC's inception in 1999 it had never applied its mandate to prosecute anyone found guilty of abduction and enslavement. During negotiations for the CPA, no attempts were made to address possible restitution to victims of slavery as a war crime or to assist in the repatriation of those still enslaved despite the agreement criminalising slavery (Moszynski, 2007, p. 61). Moszynski suggests CPA negotiators were forced to largely ignore the issue in order for the final agreement to be achieved.

This collection of NGO reports, academic scholarship, journalism and conference papers, over a twenty-year period, constructed a clear understanding of government-sponsored abuse of human rights on an extraordinary scale. There is no agreement on the number of people enslaved (Aguer, 2006; Eibner, 1999; 2005, Miniter, 1999), and only Jok's work addresses slavery during this war as a gendered issue (Jok, 2001). Women's accounts of slavery suggest that war-time slavery in Sudan was gendered. Narratives addressed historical accounts of slavery, of individuals, childhood friends, and family members including the women's own children. These stories evidence the precedence of slavery as a form of organised, gendered political violence conducted throughout a protracted and genocidal war. These themes will be examined further in Chapter Five. The following section backgrounds the current violence in South Sudan and how it has impacted on the lives of these women who now live in diaspora. Those impacts are addressed in Chapters Six and Seven.

Since the end of that war in 2005, South Sudan has achieved its independence in 2011 but little else. The newest country in the world, prior to the outbreak of the current conflict in 2013, was also the poorest. Of the approximate population of 12.43 million, 83 percent reside in rural areas and 50.6 percent of the population live in poverty (UNDP, 2016). Weak

rule of law and endemic corruption<sup>10</sup> contributed to a volatile and unstable social and political environment, exacerbated by a legacy of trauma, violence and injustice. Health and education provisions rank poorly in international indexes. With a female literacy rate at 16 percent, 7.3% of girls are married before they reach 15 and 42.2% between the ages of 15 and 18. This has contributed to a large number of girls dropping out of primary school. Of the 37% enrolled in primary school, only around 7% completed the curriculum and only 2% go on to enroll in secondary school (Nakimangole, 2013, p. 26). At the time of writing, drought in neighboring Horn of Africa countries, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and Somalia, is having catastrophic results for vulnerable populations in the most vulnerable areas of those countries. Indexes of health and education reflect these conditions and the effects of the current conflict in South Sudan. In December 2013 violence erupted in the country's capital city of Juba, sparked by political tensions that had long existed between Dinka President Salva Kiir and the Nuer vice-president Riek Machar. Violence between soldiers loyal to both sides quickly escalated into widespread ethnic conflict. The conflict has moved across the country, creating the enormous levels of displacement and disruption. Famine was declared in early 2017 (Barker, 2017) and by August 2017, over one million South Sudanese refugees had crossed into Uganda (Sudan Tribune, 2017a).

The civil war within South Sudan comes just two years after independence in 2011 and just eight years after the second civil war with the north ended (1983-2005). Eight successive peace accords signed by the Government of South Sudan, (GoSS) and the armed opposition faction Sudanese People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition (SPLAIO) have failed. The last agreement of August 2015 also effectively failed. Breaches continued from both sides and in June 2016 military violence erupted again in the capital Juba, with hundreds of soldiers killed (Burke, 2016).

The conflict has been catastrophic for the civilian population. In October 2014, after a visit to a Protection of Civilians (PoC) compound in Bentiu, Unity State, a town that experienced some of the worst violence, the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura, stated, that in her thirty years of experience in conflict zones across the African continent, the women and children of South Sudan were victims of the worst sexual violence she had ever seen (Wudu, 2014). In March 2016, the United Nations

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<sup>10</sup> '...according to the NGO Global Witness, more than US\$4 billion has been embezzled since the country became semi-autonomous in 2005' (Pinaud, 2014, p. 193).

Human Rights Office described the scale of sexual violence as shocking and the situation in South Sudan as 'one of the most horrendous human rights situation in the world' (United Nations Human Rights Office, 2016, para. 5). Internally, over 200,000 live in a number of makeshift camps called Protection of Civilian sites (PoC), located in United Nations Mission in South Sudan (United Nations Mission in South Sudan, 2016). These sites are unsafe and insecure. A targeted attack on the Collo and Nuer residents, by GoSS soldiers in the PoC site in Malakal, February 2016, left 25 dead and 120 injured, despite the presence of 1,000 armed UN peacekeepers. Medicines Sans Frontières International (MSFI), who lost two staff in the fighting, accused UNMISS of 'complete and utter failure' to protect civilians. In February 2017 famine was declared in the northern central area of the country, previously known as Unity state (Sudan Tribune, 2017b). As of May 2017, well over one million South Sudanese had become refugees in six neighbouring countries (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2017).

The relationship between South Sudanese Australians and their homeland is a very close one. Mobile phones provide instantaneous contact, so events or happenings are immediately known in each country. The conflict in Juba was known in Australia as it happened. Inter-ethnic debate raged across social media. Any sense of unity that had existed within the Australian diaspora collapsed. Fieldwork interviews were also affected by the war. Fieldwork was conducted in 2015 and 2016 and in both periods tension was high. Respondents shared feelings about the conflict in their homeland and the ways in which it had disrupted a sense of community amongst South Sudanese Australians before, during and after interviews. Multiple interviews were cancelled due to the conflict. The number of homeland deaths was such that funeral rites and practices were frequent. In a four-week period, five interviews were cancelled due to funeral processes.

The conflict and the transnational response to it, has caused considerable stress and difficulty, including significant financial strain. Cultural and familial responsibilities extend to the provision of ongoing financial support in the form of remittances to family in South Sudan and other locations. Remittances provide basic survival for some; for others remittances pay for education, accommodation and health care. Remittances are also used to provide moral and practical support during bereavement in transnational locations.

Relations among South Sudanese ethnicities have been severally strained, but this has perhaps been felt most strongly between Dinka and Nuer. Nuer in Australia commemorate

the outbreak of conflict in Juba on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013 as the 'Juba Massacre'; Dinka are seen to be responsible for Nuer deaths at that time. Attempts have been made to repair relationships between these two groups and in the community in general and are ongoing. Supported by the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC), the South Sudanese Community Association of Victoria (SSCAV) was established and office holders elected in May 2015. Inauguration occurred in October of that year. Prior to the establishment of the SSCAV, there was no single representative group of South Sudanese. The process that led to the formation of the SSCAV was under way prior to the 2013 conflict. There was acknowledgment within the community, non-government organisations and government agencies that the community would benefit from a single representative body. However, the SSCAV inauguration occurred after the conflict began and inter-ethnic tensions have undermined the organisation's capacity for unifying representation. A number of Nuer elders formed the South Sudanese Federation (SSF) in opposition to the SSCAV. Tensions between other ethnic groups also exist and tend to rise and fall in response to events in their homeland. Not all of the communities within the diaspora are in conflict, but the effects of conflict have been felt by all.

### 1.3. The consequences of war on women

Violence can affect all aspects of our lives from the personal to the political. Societies around the world experience violence in multiple forms. Violence is a prevalent part of the human experience. The study of violence 'emerges repeatedly in the analysis of both everyday life and momentous social change' (Walby, 2012, p. 65). Yet the phenomena of violence in Africa remains understudied, particularly in rural areas. There is a tendency for social scientists to focus on actor groups rather than societal structures and the processes and causes of violence (Viet, Barolsky & Pillay, 2011, p. 26). The majority of participants in this study were from rural areas of their homeland and while this study addresses the causes of structural and political violence, it largely focuses on the after effects of this type of violence on women who now live in diaspora. At the time of writing the second war in Sudan had ended 12 years ago. This project addresses the long term consequences of violence of this kind.

Women and men experience war differently. While men are more likely to fight, and be killed, women's bodies become battlegrounds, the sites of violence and violation (Berman, Girón & Marroquín, 2009; Issifou, 2017; Sideris, 2003; Usta, Farver & Zein, 2008). Violent conflicts in post-colonial Africa have been frequently described as 'new wars' (Green & Ward, 2004). New wars are fought on state peripheries, often over resources, with an eroded distinction between combatants and non-combatants. Women, children and the elderly, rather than armed opposition forces, can be made targets (Strauss 2012; Viet, Barolsky & Pillay, 2011; Walby, 2012). Inter-state conflict, inter-group violence and inter-personal violence occur simultaneously (Green & Ward, 2004). This was especially the case in Sudan's second civil war (Aldehaib, 2010; Hutchinson, 2004; Hale, 2012; Jok, 1999; 2006; Pinaud, 2014; Sellers, 2014). During the conflict, various ethnic militias within the south acted with impunity and without any moral or physical restraint (Hutchinson, 2004) in the abuse of women's human rights. Women were especially targeted as the mainstay of family and community life. Families were targeted with the express purpose of destroying southern Sudanese cultures. Women maintained cultural life and their absence could lead to community life collapsing altogether. Additionally, women were also regarded as the main supporters and organisers of the rebel army, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, (SPLA). Without their practical and domestic support, the rebels would not have been able to function (Jok, 1991; 2006). Raids were well planned and coordinated to coincide with the times that women and girls would most likely be at or near the home. Other social infrastructure that women and children were likely to attend, like markets, churches, hospitals and schools were also attacked by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and related militia (Jok, 2004).

Destroying family structures destroyed support for the rebels but could also weaken entire communities—potentially for generations (Kaplan & Webster, 2003, p. 107). Initially this project was designed as an exploratory study of the after effects of the enslavement of African ethnic women, during Sudan's second civil. It was to focus on three borderlands Dinka communities in the counties of Aweil, Twic & the disputed territory of Abyei. However, during the earliest fieldwork interviews women spoke of slavery *and other ways* in which the war was both genocidal and gendered. Consequently, the project evolved into a broader exploration which encompassed these other elements. The method remained the same, but the questions were redesigned. Two open-ended questions were designed to give women

space to raise any aspect of how their lives were affected during the war and after migration. Questions will be discussed further in Chapter Four on the methodology of the project.

Participants spoke of war-related violence and violation. They addressed this as their individual and family experiences but also as an experience of their communities. Participants described the violence as gendered; of the killing of women and children by both Government and rebel forces. They spoke of witnessing the enslavement and sexual violation of women and children and offered personal accounts of these events. This is addressed further in Chapter Five.

Of the 42 participants in this study, six arrived with their husbands and children. One arrived as a teenager, accompanying her older female cousin and her children. The thirty-four others arrived as single mothers with between three and seven children. Of that number, one arrived with her young children, and a young cousin as part of her family group. Two other women had husbands who had elected to stay behind. The husband of one woman joined her a year after her arrival. His whereabouts had not been known at the time of migration; he was located post arrival in Holland. Another had lost her husband to illness prior to the war. For the remaining 32, status as a single mother was due to either widowhood, ambiguous loss, or war related separation which had not been resolved, or had been unresolvable prior to migration.

The literature on the displacement faced by southern Sudanese addresses a range of different contexts and locations (Beswick, 2001b; Crisp, 2000; Gladden, 2013; Hutchinson, 2004; Moro, 2002). This scholarship points to the extraordinary number of civilians forced into cross-border migration by the war. The ways in which these mass movements were sustained over significant periods of time is also analysed. The effect of this on the structure and functioning of family and cultural life is discussed in Chapter Six. The following section provides the background to that discussion, highlighting the scale of cross-border asylum seeking and internal displacement during Sudan's second war.

Kakuma Refugee camp in northern Kenya became the largest refugee camp in the Horn of Africa. By the late 1990s, three-quarters of the women in Kakuma camp were widows (Beswick, 2001b, p. 47) and of the 110,000 residents of the camp, the majority were Sudanese (Crisp, 2000). A later study showed consistency in women in the camp being solely responsible for the care of their families (Gladden, 2013). Meanwhile in Cairo, Moro (2002) reported that by late 2000, just under 3,000 Sudanese refugees were registered with the United Nations

High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). However, 15,000 applications had been rejected in the previous three years and those applicants continued to live in Cairo. Another 10,000 were waiting to be interviewed to determine their status (Moro, 2002, p. 5). Edward (2007) reported a disputed figure of 20,000 southern Sudanese refugees in Cairo in 2001. Coker (2004) indicated between 20,000 and 30,000. Of the nearly 4,000 southern Sudanese files being managed by the UNHCR staff in Cairo, (those who had been granted refugee status and those still waiting claim determination), 1,705 were female and 2,249 were male (Edward, 2007, p. 8). In southern Sudan itself, by the early 2000s, women had become head of two out of every five households and every family had 'lost at least one family member, usually a husband or older brother' (Kaplan & Webster, 2003). This was also the case for those internally displaced in the capital of Khartoum (Hutchinson, 2004).

Women were represented in international and national forced migration flows during Sudan's second conflict in significant numbers and varying locations. The ways in which they accessed an application form for migration to Australia indicate both agency, creativity and the support of family, often already settled in other countries. This micro engagement in forced migration procedures is addressed further in Chapter Six. Also in Chapter Six is the discussion of settlement as an embodying process for these women. Having survived war, displacement and asylum, during settlement an avowed sense of safety and security gave participants, through settlement, an embodied sense of inclusion and belonging.

Theoretical frameworks that are used to frame these understandings are provided by the work of Elaine Scarry (1985) and Sara Ahmed (2004). Scarry's work on the way in which pain resists language and how pain can be objectified connects with Ahmed's (2004) notion of how pain works, or what it does. In this chapter, narratives of war and loss and the ways in which they have been navigated will be analysed through the work of Elaine Scarry (1985) and Sara Ahmed (2004). Scarry's conceptualisations of the injured body and how pain is made visible will frame the analysis of embodiment and subjectivity and thematically link the three analysis chapters. Scarry wrote that the felt attributes of pain are made visible through verbal objectification and:

*...if the referent for these now objectified attributes is understood to be the human body,<sup>11</sup> then the sentient fact of a person's suffering becomes knowable to a second person.*  
(Scarry, 1985, p. 13)

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<sup>11</sup> Scarry's italics



Scarry goes on to suggest that pain has a dual purpose. Subjectively pain can disassemble, but through language it can also re-create, can make anew. In this project, Sara Ahmed's (2004) notion of pain's transformative potential through feeling is mobilised by extending Scarry's idea of the subject emerging or re-emerging through language.

The sensation of pain or pleasure mediates the relationship between internal and external worlds. Sensations create surfaces and bring the skin to consciousness (Ahmed, 2004 p. 24). Pain shapes the body, mediating what is both inside and outside; it establishes a border, another world. Prior to that sensation the border was not known (Ahmed, 2004, p. 27). Scarry's and Ahmed's ideas of the transformative nature of pain, the ways it can create new subjectivities through both language and sensation, intersect here. These women have established new boundaries through these narratives. They have become visible—within their diaspora communities—and within the wider community. South Sudanese women embodied the violence of war, and their narratives suggest that in objectifying that violence and the sensation of pain, through their use of language, the internal and the external have been connected. That connection has created a world, a subjectivity that in Australia incorporates and accommodates pain and damage to the body.

This is the 'referent other than that body' that Scarry describes below in her definition of analogical verification:

It is also possible however, for the felt attributes of pain to be lifted into the visible world but now attached to a *referent other than the human body*.<sup>12</sup> That is, the felt-characteristics of pain - one of which is its compelling vibrancy or its incontestable reality or simply its "certainty"- can be appropriated away from the body and presented as the attributes of something else (something which by itself lack those attributes, something which does not in itself appear vibrant, real or certain).

(Scarry, 1985, p. 13)

Analogical verification frames the new subjectivities that emerge in this chapter and the following two. In Chapter Six, Scarry's notion of 'something else' is theorised as defiance. Women speak of the lived experience of sexual violence – a subject which is taboo. Breaking taboos is a way of reclaiming subjectivity and resisting essentialised images of themselves as victimised. In Chapter Seven, the referent other than the body, the 'something else', is the interplay between themselves as carers (past, during war past, and present) and now being

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<sup>12</sup> Scarry's italics

cared for by Australian health and welfare systems. Data in this chapter shows the women experience the care that their bodies receive in diaspora as a form of inclusion and belonging in Australia.

Additional to concepts of embodiment and subjectivity is the understanding that relational affiliations were fundamental to surviving and escaping war. Resilience and agency were grounded in networks of family and community. These relationships were resources which women employed in their daily negotiations of survival. Creativity in this context is the ways in which these women were able to maintain degrees of agency in their survival strategies. Strategic creativity is theorised here through Carol Nordstrom's (1997) notion that experiences of war are connected to the 'processes of self-identity and the politics of personhood' (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 4). Nordstrom adds that 'resistance to violence is coded in re-creating culture and identity against the vicissitudes of violence and oppression' (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 4). Nordstrom's suggestion is reflected in this data. Culture and identity were re-created and maintained by constructs of family and community. Family and community provided more than identity, they also provided hope. It was through these networks that these women could migrate and rebuild other lives in Australia. Nordstrom described this code 'as the most potent response to war' (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 4).

Chapters Six and Seven consider the embodiment during the post-settlement phase. Settlement has been posited here as paradoxical in nature, however, this does not emerge fully until the post-settlement period. In the initial settlement period, all women valued the security they found in Australia. However, difficulties in learning the English language undermine acculturation and education and employment opportunities, especially for older women (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003; Hatoss & Huijser, 2010; Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2009). For those women, in post-settlement, the security they had established initially becomes ambiguous. On arrival in Australia, participants received fortnightly payments from the Australian Government's Department of Human Services agency, Centrelink. Payments were dependent on age and family circumstances and participants were unfamiliar with an income of this type prior to migration, and this income became foundational to their sense of security. Those who were not able to move beyond semi-literacy but were deemed to be eligible for employment, had to meet the requirements attached to that income. Providing fortnightly proof that they were actively seeking work borders on the impossible. The security government payments initially gave them has been

eroded. Women described this position as highly stressful, causing anxiety, worry and depression. Depending on their age, participants may face many years of this type of stress. It is only when they became eligible for the aged pension that their situations will improve.

Those who do receive the aged-care pension are in an entirely different position. Being *cared for* by government institutions, i.e. aged benefit and public health care, allows for a sense of inclusion in Australia society. They talked of being looked after, being treated well by doctors and receiving no-cost health care. These women bore none of the stress and anxiety of those younger than themselves who received unemployment benefits. Participants were grateful for the support aged benefits and other forms of care gave them and considered this to be evidence of acceptance and belonging in Australia. In this sense, post-settlement for them was an embodied experience.

Embodiment was also mediated through the objectification of pain (Scarry, 1985). Women spoke of militarised sexual violence and did so of their own volition. Breaking cultural and social taboos attached to speaking of sexual violence also points to a sense of inclusion and belonging.

The overarching theme of Chapter Seven is post-settlement. Translocality, emotional labour and cross border circuits are other identifiers of this phase of the forced migration experience. Diaspora women provide care for their communities here and abroad, both individually, as families and as ethnically identified groups. Transnational emotional labour has increased significantly since the civil war began in South Sudan in December 2013. Concern for absent family and community is part of daily existence.

The second war in Sudan saw state and non-state actors attempt the eradication of ethnic, African cultures through the destruction of family (Jok, 2006, p. 71). Raids conducted by those actors were designed to destroy and disrupt family life. The construct that binds this research is the concept of family. Family, in its various forms, has been for these women a code of survival during war, during asylum, in settlement and post-settlement. The concept of family here is one of a complex network of relatedness that is synonymous with African notions of a collective existence. Amongst the South Sudanese, family may extend 'beyond bloodlines to include in-laws, relatives of relatives and neighbours' (Lim, 2009, p. 1032).

For any refugee the experience of separation of family is common; intact families are more likely to be an exception than a norm (Williams, 1995, as cited in Wilmsen, 2013, p. 242). Separation from family is a defining aspect of the experience of refugees in Australia

(McMichael & Ahmed, 2003, p. 131; Wilmsen, 2013, p. 257).

Historically social relations within Sudan's southern societies tended to be both patriarchal (Aldehaib, 2010) and polygynous (Beswick, 2001b). A man could marry as many wives as he could pay a dowry for. Even poor rural farmers were likely to have more than one wife (Duany & Duany, 2001). This type of marital society created large, extended families that operated communally and defined the roles of women and girls around motherhood and the maintenance of the household. Marriage for girls between the ages of 14 and 18 years were arranged through a process of negotiation with the father of the girl and the potential suitor's family (Duany & Duany, 2001; Stern, 2011). Bride prices, paid in cattle, varied across ethnicities. In Dinka society, the suitor that offered the most cattle, usually won the bride (Beswick, 2001b). Marriage rituals including bride prices were affected by the second war (Beswick, 2001b; Jok, 2006; Stern, 2011), so too was the position of women in the household.

By the end of the 1990s, so many men had died that women in the south of the country were head of two out of every five households (Duany & Duany, 2001, p. 63). As the mainstay of communities, women became a 'major battlefield for the Sudanese government's war machinery' (Jok, 2006, p. 60). Rape of women and girls was widespread and designed to humiliate and subjugate but also to 'reconfigure cultural identity' (Jok, 2004, p. 29) and weaken the identity of the southern ethnicities. Slavery was another mechanism used by northern forces to undermine identity and moral. Communities who lost women and girls to slavery understood that sexual servitude and forced pregnancy would likely be their fate. Under certain interpretations of Islamic law, a child conceived by an Arab father with an African slave is Arab, and can be claimed by the father. If a woman was released, the father of her children did not permit the children to live with her (Fegley, 2008).

When villages were attacked, those who were not killed or taken into slavery were scattered into the surrounding bush. Some kept running, others returned to try and rebuild their communities (Maher, 2014), but rarely were the extended groups that constitute a South Sudanese family entirely reunited. Those who were internally or externally displaced had no way of tracing family members. After the war ended in 2005, an almost total lack of infrastructure across the country meant that locating internally displaced family continued to be a very difficult task. It was also the case for those externally displaced. Several women spoke of locating family members through community networks in resettlement countries.

Women described migrating in family configurations that represented the loss of family members in the war *and* the polygamous nature of their culture. There is no data that indicates the arrival of polygamous families in Australia. However, Edward (2007) addressed this subject in the context of migration from Egypt. Edward wrote that the mandate of UNHCR in Cairo was 'about maintaining family unity, protecting refugees and considering the best interests of minors', so did not refer polygamous families to countries where polygamy was not permitted (Edward, 2007, p. 100). The main settlement countries at the time, including Australia however, did not allow polygamy. This meant that polygamous families were faced with having to decide how to present their family members in a manner that might make their application acceptable. Edward (2007) reports that that families opted to reconfigure family groups, i.e. a husband would apply with the second wife and children and the first wife would apply as a widow or as the sister of the husband. These decisions created risks though. Successful applicants could be settled in separate countries and cases of collusion could be exposed (Edward, 2007, p. 101).

To better understand the difficulties faced by family groups through war and migration, Chapter Two addresses the historical precepts of oppression and violence faced by the African ethnicities in Sudan. It will address slavery as a gendered mechanism of that oppression and follow the trajectory of that oppression from pre-colonial and colonial eras to the second war in Sudan (1983). The enslaved body is conceptualised in this chapter as systemically vulnerable. But this is understood as vulnerability of a type that can be remedied by bonds of solidarity, security and cooperation (Misztal, 2011).

The literature review in Chapter Three considers the scholarship on interdisciplinary feminist approaches to gender-based research in Africa and the interconnected themes of embodiment, settlement, transnationalism and family. Chapter Four provides the methodology and theoretical frameworks of the thesis and discusses methodological and ethical questions around working with women of the Global South in relation to relevant theoretical traditions of Western feminism. Chapter Five frames constructs of family and community survival codes. Genocide is conceptualised as displacement, slavery and sexual violence, and analysed as a profound form of disembodiment. The analysis points to these disembodiment events as managed through the safety and security found during settlement. These women were creative in the ways they found to survive displacement. Key to this was maintaining connection with family and community in a range of ways. Chapter Six examines

pre-arrival, how women negotiated the migration process, gained access to or support in applying to Australia. It moves on to the embodied experience of settlement. Embodiment for these women encompasses safety and creates a sense of belonging and inclusion through being cared for, and objectifying the pain of war and militarised sexual violence. Chapter Seven focuses on translocality, transnationalism and emotional labour. This includes mothering in Australia and providing transnational care during conflict in their homeland.

In conclusion, Chapter Eight summarises the key findings of the thesis, addresses the overarching themes of how belonging is experienced by former refugee migrant women and concludes with future research suggestions.

## 1.4. Conclusion

The collective nature of African culture maintains connection through contributing to and participating in community. Australia's largest former refugee community attempts to maintain family life that reflect this collectivism. South Sudanese Australian women provide care to family and community in Australia, and transnationally. To fail to do so would be to suffer a loss of purpose and identity. Amongst Sudanese refugees in America the loss of connection to family was described as a 'death' (Lim, 2009, p. 1028). South Sudanese refugees in Australia, (Schweitzer, Melville, Steel & Lacherez, 2006) and Canada, (Simich, Este & Hamilton, 2010), found the most significant challenge during the first year of settlement was the worry about family who were resident elsewhere. McMichael and Ahmed (2003) described the distress that Somali women, resident in Melbourne, felt due to separation from family as 'one of the most pervasive sources of emotional distress' (McMichael & Ahmed, 2003, p. 132). This distress can manifest as loneliness in the absence of close family connections, as well as worry about family members not resident in Australia. This study shows that beyond the initial settlement phase, concern for family continues. In post-settlement, family is cared for in multiple, transnational locations. South Sudanese Australian women are unique in that their contemporary performances of emotional labour occur in the context of war in their homeland.

This chapter has framed the narratives of South Sudanese Australian women as integral to understandings of the gendered and interconnected dimensions of war, asylum,

forced migration, and resettlement. It has pointed to systemic, political, organised violence that had been part of the everyday lives of these women prior to migration. To better understand how systemic violence has been part of these women's lives, the following chapter locates a historic trajectory of violence and oppression. Through the prism of slavery, Chapter Two examines Sudan's history of enslaving African ethnicities during pre-colonial and colonial eras. The chapter interrogates the intersections between British anti-slavery interests, the historic and religious practices that had driven slavery in Sudan and the ambiguous response by Britain during its colonial administration of Sudan to that slavery. Precedents of the gendered violence experienced by southern Sudanese women during the country's second civil war are found in this history.

## Chapter Two: The gendered legacies of slavery

### 2.1. Introduction

The precedents of enslaving African ethnicities during the Sudan's second war are to be found in the country's pre-colonial and colonial histories (Collins, 1992; Jok, 2001; Johnson, 2003; Lobban, 2001; Lovejoy, 2000; Lovejoy, 2004; Mahmud & Baldo, 1987; Makris, 1996; Miers & Klein, 1999; Miers & Roberts, 1988; Moszynski, 2007). These histories also background other forms of gendered and genocidal violence seen in that war. These complex oppressions are located in participants' narratives of war and slavery.

Discourse amongst scholars about slavery in Sudan varies greatly. Troutt Powell (2010) viewed historic slavery as a benign system of economic exchange, with slaves integrated into family and society and accepting of the role they were given. Sharkey (1994) contests this, claiming the evidence of widespread internal demand for slaves prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> was not available. After that period, Sharkey writes that internal slave-ownership occurred on a minor scale. Slave-ownership did not become widespread until after 1820 (Sharkey, 1994, p. 188). Sikainga (1995) writes that from the 1850s to the 1870s, thousands were captured from the southern Sudan and neighbouring areas and either sold into the north or exported to the Middle East (Sikainga, 1995, p. 3). Ayers (2010) acknowledges the 'renewed slaving' in the second war but does not refer to Sudan's history of slavery. Instead Ayers describes workers in the pastoral economies of the Red Sea region as 'peasants, labourers and (ubiquitous) unfree labour' (Ayers, 2010, p. 159). This chapter does not attempt to address these disparities, but to highlight them as indicators of the difficulties scholars face in analysing complex and historic systems of human bondage. This chapter seeks to provide an overview of slavery in Africa and Sudan. This overview leads to an analysis of the legacy of slavery in the lives of South Sudanese women whose family and communities were enslaved during war. Relationship between those histories and contemporary violence are explored in Section 2.3.

Slavery is conceptualised in this thesis as an historic and structural mechanism of genocidal oppression. Understanding these mechanisms as the foundation of politicised, gendered violence contextualises the narratives in this study. Women were specifically



targeted by Government forces and militias backed by the GoS. Thematic analysis of these narratives indicate wartime violations of the female body that include slavery, the sexual violence inherent in female slavery and other forms of sexual violence such as systematic mass rape, and forms of sexual slavery, including forced marriage and conception.

The gendered violence that occurred in wartime Sudan is examined in this chapter through an analysis of the intersectional tensions of race, religion and colonialism. It will broadly address slavery in Africa, mostly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and specifically look at the Islamic systems of slavery in Sudan—in historic and contemporary contexts. British colonial ambivalence towards slavery in Sudan, in an era when British anti-slavery groups were pushing to end slavery across the world, will be addressed here. Britain's colonial administrators struggled with abolition and emancipation, given the enormous economic gains slave labour provided (Lovejoy, 2000). Historical analysis of slavery in Sudan shows a codification of gendered violence. That codification foregrounds women's narratives of survival in the country's 20<sup>th</sup> century wars. It reveals the intersections between gendered violence and forced migration.

The second section in this chapter looks to the gendered legacy of historical and contemporary ethno-religious violence toward women. Wartime slavery and sexual violence will be framed here as genocide. Scholarship on the status of the second civil war in Sudan (1983-2005) as a site of genocide is largely ambiguous. Systematic and organised violence that occurred in Rwanda, over a three-month period in 1994, was clearly defined as genocide (Burnett, 2012; Des Forges, 1999; Mamdani, 2014). The mass killings of Tutsis have also received considerable scholarly attention. So too has the 1995 massacre at Srebrenica of Bosnian Muslims by Bosnian Serbian militia during the war in the former Yugoslavia (Gutman, 1993; Straus, 2005). Events in Darfur, western Sudan, from 2003 onward have also been acknowledged as genocide (Hagan & Raymond-Richmond, 2008; Millio, 2006; Prunier, 2005; Straus, 2005). Yet the second war in Sudan is generally not described in this way. Scholars who do address this war in terms of genocide are Eibner (2005), Green & Ward (2004),<sup>13</sup> Johnson (2003), Jok (2001) and Reeves (2012).

A legal definition of genocide defined by the United Nations' Office of the Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide (OSAPG) is as follows:

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<sup>13</sup> Ward and Green (2004) describe the war in southern Sudan as both genocide and politicide. Jok (2004) has also described it as 'ethnocide'; to both physically eliminate and reconfigure cultural identity, in order to achieve a national unity (Jok, 2004, p. 29)

“Genocide is defined in Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) ‘as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.’”  
(United Nations, n.d.)

The second war in Sudan was genocidal according to the above definition. Narrative accounts from survivors reflect the different elements of the UN’s definition (Eibner, 2005; Hutchinson, 2004; Jok, 2001; 2006; Maher, 2014). Sexual violence, including mass rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery were the gendered elements of that genocide. However, rape was not legally constituted as genocide until 1998. The widespread rape of civilians during war was declared both an element of genocide and a crime against humanity by the International Criminal Court Tribunal for Rwanda<sup>14</sup> (Green & Ward, 2004, p. 159). In 2001, Bosnian-Serb soldiers were convicted by the International Criminal Court for the former Yugoslavia for the rape and sexual slavery of Bosnian Muslim girls and women. These events were also described as crimes against humanity (Bergoffen, 2013, p. 1).

The genocide against African ethnicities in Sudan was sustained over a 22-year period (1983-2005). Mass killings, displacement, and destruction of homes and livelihoods occurred during extensive campaigns of cross-border raiding by GoS forces and proxy militias (Daly & Sikainga, 1993; Finnegan, 1999). When Omar el-Bashir disposed of the Niemeri government in 1989, the war was declared a *jihad* and abductions during raids surged (Jok, 2001; Lobban, 2001). Non-Muslims were considered *infidels* and their eradication and capture was justifiable in *jihad*. For the first time in country’s long history of slavery, the practice was state sanctioned. Slavery was a means to not only Arabise and Islamise the enslaved, but to destroy the morale of the remaining community while wresting control of their land, rich with cattle, water and oil (Jok, 2001; Johnson, 2006). Oil, discovered in the border regions in the 1970s, came into production in 1999 (Hutchinson, 2004). This led to an increased level of attacks on civilians. Between 1998 and 2001, approximately 300,000 Dinka and Nuer civilians were displaced from their homeland in provinces of Bahr el-Ghazal and Upper Nile by new military

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<sup>14</sup> Prosecutor vs. Akayesa paragraph 731-2 (Green and Ward, 2004, p. 159)

hardware. Helicopter gunships and fighter jets used against civilians, including chemical and other bombs (Reeves, 2012, Maher, 2014<sup>15</sup>), were purchased with the considerable revenue provided by oil exports (Hutchinson, 2004).

Politicalised sexual violence is defined by Green (2004) as 'a pattern of sexual violence perpetrated on civilians by agents of the state, political group and/or politicised ethnic groups' (Green, 2004, p. 4), which occur in the context of internal wars. Green (2004) described perpetrators typically as agents of the state, and victims as discriminated against minority groups. Wartime sexual violence is described as a human rights abuse which occurs most often during war (Alison, 2007, p. 75) and which is intimately connected to other significant human rights abuses (Green, 2004). Wood (2006) discusses how sexual violence has been widespread in some wars and limited in others. Wood also addresses the different forms of wartime sexual violence, including sexual slavery and torture (Wood, 2006, p. 307). Mass rape as a tool of war has been utilised in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with horrifying frequency. During the genocide in Rwanda (1994), between 100 and 250 thousand women were raped. Since 1998 in DRC Congo, the figure is 200,000; Liberia, (1989-2003), over 40,000; Sierra Leone (1991-2002) more than 60,000; the former Yugoslavia (1992-1995) up to 60,000 (Peltola, 2012, p. 3). Figures for the second war in Sudan are not available, although mass rape has been acknowledged in that war (Milillo, 2006) and the war in Darfur (de Waal, 2004; Farr, 2009). Neither Green, Wood nor Alison list Sudan as a site of wartime sexual exploitation of women.

There are precedents of wartime female sexual slavery as a phenomenon of wars in the twentieth century. These include the Japanese 'comfort woman' of World War Two, Bosnian women during the Balkans wars and women during the Sierra Leone civil war (Sellers, 2011). Legal recognition of this type of slavery has not been established. International Criminal Court (ICC) hearings in these jurisdictions all involved cases of the 'abductions, rapes, forced conjugal relationships, domestic tasks and other duties imposed on females by male soldiers. None of these acts were charged as the crime of enslavement (Sellers, 2011, p. 143). Sellers goes on to suggest that the failure to acknowledge female wartime slavery not only warrants further analysis but is due to an inability to hold the gaze of the female slave. This point will be addressed further in the second section of this chapter.

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<sup>15</sup> Interviews no 6, 11, 13, 23

The sexual violence inherent in slavery is designed to further humiliate those in bondage. Enslavement and rape are designed to control and damage each individual, their families and communities. Not only are the mothers shamed, but children born of slavery and rape are then stigmatised (Carpenter, 2007). Describing these children as 'war babies', Carpenter suggests the stigmatisation as illegitimate children of the 'enemy' leads to war babies being neglected, abused or rejected by family and/or community. In patriarchal societies in particular war babies become 'other' and are denied access to resources and the legitimacy of citizenship (Carpenter, 2007, p. 3). Carpenter estimated that between 1992 and 2002 'tens of thousands of children had been born of mass rape campaigns, sexual slavery and sexual exploitation during conflicts (Carpenter, 2007, p. 1). The Grieg Report estimated in 2001 the then number of total (living) war babies to have been 500,000 (Grieg, 2001, p. 7 in Carpenter, 2007).

Mass rape was a feature of the second war in Sudan (Milillo, 2006) as was sexual exploitation of displaced, refugee women in rural and urban settings including refugee camps (Beswick 2001a; Gladden, 2013; Jok, 1999, 2006) Jok (2006) describes the range of ways in which women were exploited:

*'They became concubines, sex servants or "wives" whose potential children were to be raised "Arab" and Muslim and therefore injecting Arab genes and culture into the southern populations. Women were also feared by the army as the "secret organisers" and spies without whom southern opposition forces would lack the support services necessary for their military success. Finally, women in many Sudanese communities are regarded as the care-givers and when the men joined the opposition forces, they could count on their women folk to sustain the society'* (Jok, 2006, p. 64)

The sole study on how South Sudanese diaspora women cope in the aftermath of militarised sexual violence was conducted in the Netherlands (Tankink & Richters, 2007). This study will be discussed further in this chapter and in Chapter Six.

To better understand the precedents of the enslavement and sexual exploitation of South Sudanese women during war, the following section will look broadly to the intersections of colonialism, religion and ethnicity in Africa. It will also address these themes in the historical context of Sudan. The impact of these histories is contextualised here through first understanding of the female body as a site of vulnerability especially in historic colonial

settings. An exploration of the recurring exploitation of that vulnerability during Sudan's second civil war is discussed further in this chapter.

## 2.2. A history of the enslaved body in Sudan

Concepts of slavery in pre-colonial and colonial eras can be addressed generally, through ethnic, cultural and regional variations, but also broadly through African notions of kinship (Lovejoy, 2000; Miers & Crowder, 1988; Miers & Roberts, 1988; Roberts & Klein, 1980). The dominant legal and social group in Africa is the kin group wherein the collective function and needs of family is privileged over individual need.

A full spectrum of slavery existed on the African continent in both pre-colonial and colonial times. Slavery in African societies was never a static institution; 'slaves were bound up in complex, ever-shifting webs of social relations, fashioned by political and economic conditions' (Roberts & Miers, 1988, p. 7). Kopytoff (1988) wrote that 'at best, the term *slavery* [his italics] can serve as a pointer to a certain kind of phenomena' (Kopytoff, 1988, p. 490). Embedded in African societies in many forms, slaves played significant roles in agricultural and domestic production and military endeavours. While cultural concepts of kinship and belonging could appear to outsiders to be a slave and master dynamic, within the phenomena suggested by Kopytoff (1988), this dynamic allowed for a social identity or network to be established for slaves. Scholarship suggests internal African slavery systems, slavery that existed in the Americas at a similar time and the Islamic systems of slavery to be fundamentally different (Lovejoy, 2000, 2004; Miers & Kopytoff, 1977; Miers & Roberts, 1988; Troutt Powell, 2012). Lovejoy (2000) conceptualises slavery as a system, rather than an institution. Slavery systems existed in a range of different cultural, ethnic and regional contexts. However, Kopytoff (1988) challenges scholarship that supports the notion that all African slavery was related to kinship systems and therefore benign in the way Westerners believe kin relations to be. A slave being acquired into a new kinship group did not mean all African slavery could be defined as kinship based, or always benign (Kopytoff, 1988, p. 490).

While individual members of societies, regardless of size, could acquire slaves it was expanding nation states that were the largest suppliers and users of slaves (Lovejoy, 2000). Political formations of those states contributed to the maintenance and development of slave

systems and forms, which changed as political economies did. When trade operated in a formal structure, slave use for various modes of production intensified which saw an institutionalising of enslavement and ‘the codification of slavery in law and custom’ (Lovejoy, 2000, p. xxi). In imperial settings, the space between these definitions gave rise to double standards. Economic imperatives in colonial settings influenced how slavery was defined and the degrees to which it was considered benign or otherwise (Lovejoy, 2000, 2004; Miers & Roberts, 1988; McLoughlin, 1962).

Across the African continent, slavery existed along a continuum; chattel, inter-ethnic slavery at one end; benign and relational kin-based at the other. Chattel slavery existed within kin groups, although they would be at one end of a spectrum of the ‘belonging’ that is the basis for integrating slaves into a kinship group (Kopytoff, 1988). Slaves in this more benign formation would be more deeply integrated into a kinship group than a chattel slave. Degrees to which a newly acquired slave belonged to a kinship group varied according to the position they were assigned by the members of the kin group.

An example of the slaveries within a regional African group is provided by Ohadike (1988) who gives accounts of different types of slavery in Igboland (now Nigeria). Ohadike describes three separate classes of the slaves or the ‘unfree’. The term *osu* could loosely refer to a slave in general but the term also meant a cult slave, specifically, those dedicated to the service of a deity. Once dedicated to a deity the *osu* could not be bought or sold and although they moved around freely they could never obtain freedom (Ohadike, 1988, p. 439). Another class of slave was the *nvunvu ego*—a person in debt. Their unpaid labour ended when their debt was paid. However, another form of *nvunvu ego* existed. Parents could pawn their children as guarantee for a loan and the child would live at the home of the creditor and work for them until the loan was discharged. If the loan was not discharged the *nvunvu ego* was not released and if they were female it was highly likely they would marry the creditor (Ohadike, 1988, p. 440) and hence come to belong to his kinship group. The third class of slave was the *ohu*, the chattel slave. *Ohus* were purchased and remained without rights, in a marginal state until they were sold again (or sacrificed). If the *ohu* was not sold, the owner was required to assimilate and acculturate the *ohu* into his family (Ohadike, 1988, p. 441). Other regional accounts of slavery systems can be found, including chattel slaves in Bechuanaland (now South Africa) (Miers & Crowder, 1988) and chattel and debt slaves amongst the Ovimbundu (Angola highlands) (Heywood, 1988).

The major questions of this thesis address women's experience of gendered wartime slavery and sexual violence. To understand this better, the role of women slave needs further analysis.

From the early 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to Robertson and Klein, (1983), most slaves in sub-Saharan Africa were women (Robertson & Klein, 1983, p. 3) and 95 percent of Africans enslaved during the Atlantic slave trade and kept in Africa were female (Klein, 1983, p. 71). The majority of slave owners on the African continent were men or kinship groups controlled by men. Discourses on the value of female slaves focus on reproduction and labour (Klein, 1983; Roberts & Miers, 1988; Lovejoy, 2000). Of the three major slave markets in Africa at the time, the internal African market (the largest) absorbed mostly women and children. The European export market purchased twice as many male slaves as female slaves. The Muslim Arab market, the smallest of the three, primarily purchased female slaves (Robertson & Klein, 1983, p. 4).

Until the close of the Atlantic slave trade, African slave systems were most interested in the integration of women and children—which Klein suggested is the reason why up to a third higher price was paid for women than for men (Klein, 1983, p. 73). Klein argues that the higher price was not due to higher productivity or re-productivity, but their capacity to 'create domestic units that integrated and motivated male slaves' (Klein, 1983, p. 77). Strobel (1983) writes that women slaves engaged in reproductive work were more likely to be integrated into a kin group and therefore the culture of their owner (Strobel, 1983, p. 112). Klein (1983) adds to this picture by arguing the value of female slaves was based not only on the ease with which they could be integrated into social units but also their ability to form their own. Male slaves in a relationship with a slave woman were more motivated to work and less likely to escape (Klein, 1983). Nevertheless, while female slaves may have been more highly valued for these reasons, within Muslim society they only accrued rights if they were concubines—depending on the piety of their owner (Klein, 1983; Lovejoy, 2000).

In western Sudan prior to 1870, surplus female slaves captured in the savannah were exported north. Klein (1983) speculated that this was designed to provide wives to male slaves. Due to the growth in production and slave armies, single male slaves were so numerous they threatened the social order. Women were also provided as concubines for the rich, placed in harems, undertook domestic duties and provided agricultural labour for the army (Klein, 1983, p. 84). Boys could be trained in the army or be made eunuchs. Castration of boy

slaves was not found in non-Muslim sub-Saharan Africa slave systems—only Muslim societies practiced this (Lovejoy, 2000, p. 17). Men and non-harem women were allocated the hardest and most menial labour and it was these slaves that had to be constantly replenished by new imports. However, there was some division of labour. In the cotton industry, women harvested the crop while men planted; they spun the fibre and men wove it. In one hour, a man wove the thread a woman spent eight hours carding, another possible reason women slaves were commanding a higher price than male (Klein, 1983, p. 85). Even older women, no longer fit for the manual labour of the fields could still card cotton. Women also maintained childcare duties as well as all the usual mundane requirements of the house, such as cooking and cleaning.

There are few written accounts of women slaves in Africa in this era. One that does exist is the story of Swema a young, female slave child. Written down by a Roman Catholic missionary the story was published in Paris in 1870 (Alpers, 1983). Swema was born into Yao society in east central Africa, likely in the 1850s. Her mother had lost her husband and other children through a series of calamities, including a famine-inducing locust plague. Unable to support herself and her surviving child, she took a loan out from a local creditor that she could not repay. The creditor took Swema from her mother, without negotiation, and offered her to a passing slaver, as way of reclaiming his loan. Swema's mother then offered herself to the slaver as well. Voluntary enslavement was the only means of protection for the weak and vulnerable at the time (Alpers, 1983, p. 192). Swema and her mother were both vulnerable to slavery once the male protector of their family was no longer available. There were very limited roles for a lone Yao woman in her society and it is likely she would have been abducted into slavery had she not offered herself to be enslaved with her daughter (Alpers, 1983, p. 191).

The story of Swema and her mother is a story of the vulnerability of the female body in a patriarchal society. In historical and contemporary settings, such vulnerability increases in a time of crisis and duress. Politicised, gendered violence during war seeks to emphasis this vulnerability to assert dominance over women and the marginal communities from which they often come. Bergoffen (2012) addresses the assault on women's bodies as a loss of dignity. Bergoffen suggests that the abstract of dignity becomes concrete through the concept of the sensate and sensual: the "I can" body (Bergoffen, 2012, p. 31). We can identify



the ways that the human rights crimes of slavery, torture and war-time rape alienate us from our humanity by transforming human dignities into exploitable vulnerabilities:

*Noting the ways that the institution of slavery targets the integrity of the “I can” body, that the practices of torture assail the dignity of the sensate body and the strategy of war time rape attacks the worth of the sensual body, we understand why these assaults constitute crimes against humanity.* (Bergoffen, 2012, p. 31)

The exploitation of these vulnerabilities during 20<sup>th</sup> century conflict in Sudan can be located in the country's deeply entrenched beliefs on religion and race. Within Islam, slavery was perceived as 'obedience to the will of God' (Cooper, 1977, p. 42). Prior to the 1500s in Islam, 'slavery was conceived of as a form of religious apprenticeship for pagans' (Lovejoy, 2000, p. 17). In the holy wars that spread Islam from Arabia to North Africa, Africans were enslaved as war bounty. Not all slaves were black but the majority were likely to be (Lovejoy, 2000, p. 16). Those enslaved became chattels, i.e. property, dependent and socially subordinate. Religious law governed slave/master relationships and a slave captor or purchaser was required to convert the infidel to Islam (Cooper, 1977; Gray, 1961). This forcible integration into the Muslim world reinforced Islam on its frontiers (Lovejoy, 2004).

The region now known as Sudan has one of the longest known histories of slavery (Fegley, 2008). Thomas (2009) has described the country's slavery as existing 'as long as recorded history' (Thomas, 2009, p. 23). In part Sudan's geographical location helped create this position. Its northern region was:

*one of the most active slave-dealing regions in Africa, a natural trans-continental highway which permitted violation by nomadic peoples (mostly but not all Moslem) of the sedentary populations in the heavier rainfall areas to its south and the mountain kingdoms across its width (mostly Negroid and Sudanic pagans).*  
(McLoughlin, 1962, p. 357).

According to Trout Powell (2012), Egypt's 'grand monuments' stand as testimony to the labour of Sudan's slaves, the trade of which, between the two countries, 'originated in antiquity' (Trout Powell, 2012, p. 25). Sudan provided slaves to successive Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, early Islamic Mamluk, Ottoman and Turco-Egyptian empires of Egypt

(Sharkey, 1994, p. 187; Lobban, 2001). Johnson has written that the Nilotic<sup>16</sup> tribes of the Nile Valley, in the southern hinterland of Sudan, have been a source of slaves for probably longer than 'sources allow us to trace' (Johnson, 2003, p. 3). As the outer frontiers of the Islamic world in North Africa, the Nilotic regions of the Nile valley were likely the first source of black slaves. Intersections of race and religion created in antiquity have maintained Sudan's slavery systems. Multiple races and ethnicities populated Sudan's northern and southern regions. Cattle and camel nomads could be loosely distinguished into three racial groups: Arab, mixed-Arab and non-Arab (including Nubians). Despite differing economic endeavours these groups were unified by Islam (McLoughlin, 1962, p. 358). The races and ethnicities of the southern region of the country were neither Arab nor Muslim. As cattle nomads and cultivators, the Hamitic, Nilotic, Sudanic and Negroid races were, prior to the arrival of Christian missionaries, pagan (McLoughlin, 1962, p. 358). Superiority over groups of the southern region were assumed by northerners. Even the poorest Arab groups positioned themselves as ethnically and religiously superior to the non-Muslims in the southern regions of Sudan (McLoughlin, 1962, p. 359). These beliefs allowed for the enslavement of southern Sudanese groups in huge numbers across the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Troutt Powell, 2012).

As Britain's navy patrols were slowing the trans-Atlantic slave trade, a route was discovered through the vast swamplands of Sudan's borderland (known as the Sudd)—which had, at least in part, protected the southern districts (Moszynski, 2007). The route through the Sudd led to Sudan's northern port and consequently the Middle Eastern slave markets (Moszynski, 2007), triggering a growth in demand for east African slaves.

While Sudanese slaves commonly worked as domestics in Egypt and Turkey from the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Troutt Powell, 2012), during the period of the Turkiyah rule (1821-1885) the trade flourished. In the 1820s the slave markets in Khartoum were burgeoning (Jok, 2005). The year Britain fully outlawed slavery in 1833, the British Anti-Slavery Society reported Turko-Egyptian troops taking 20,000 slaves out of Sudan (Fluer-Lobbans, 1991). However, Gray (1961) states that between 1817 and 1838, 10 to 12 thousand slaves were annually imported into Egypt from Sudan (Gray, 1961, p. 6). From 1834, Muslim merchants set up forts in the Bahr el-Ghazal district near the border to the north. Known as *zaribas* these were bases to raid for ivory and slaves in that area and Dar Fur, further west (La Rue, 2004). By 1836

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<sup>16</sup> Nilotic ethnicities include Dinka, Nuer, Collo, Murle and Anuak.

between ten and 12 thousand Sudanese slaves were being traded into Egypt each year, men for military service and women for domestic service (Thomas, 2009). Thomas (2009) also writes that of every ten slaves that did arrive, 50 died en route.

The economy of Sudan had rested on slave labour for thousands of years (McLoughlin, 1962). Slave armies were large and agricultural production was reliant on the work of the enslaved (Lobban, 2001). In 1869, 15,000 men in the southern province of Upper Nile were estimated to be engaged in the trade (Thomas, 2009). According to Johnson (2003) it was in this period in Sudan that southerners or 'blacks' became synonymous with the word 'slave' (Johnson, 2003, p. 5).

Slave hunts in the Bahr el-Ghazal province of southern Sudan increased after 1865 (Fluer-Lobbans, 1991), and raiding in the south generally 'reached a peak in 1870' (Johnson, 2003, p. 6). Miers and Roberts (1988) note that by signing treaties with Zanzibar, Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, the British reduced the east African 'slave traffic to the Muslim world to a minor flow by the 1880s' (Miers and Roberts, 1988, p. 16). British forces, led by General Charles Gordon, were effective in reducing the *zaribas* in Dar Fur and Bahr el-Ghazal by the late 1870s (La Rue, 2004) but slavery was not stopped. Between 1874 and 1879 an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 slaves were exported north from the Bahr el-Ghazal (Gray, 1961, p. 126). In fact, the downturn in both the trans-Atlantic and sub-Saharan trades expanded the market within the country itself (Roberts & Miers, 1988). Domestic slaves became commonplace in northern Sudanese households, (Johnson, 2003) while Khartoum's slave-based economy was booming (Jok, 2001). By the 1880s slaves constituted two-thirds of the city's population (Thomas, 2009) and slaves were so cheap, 'almost every household could own at least one' (Troutt Powell, 2012, p. 28). All of Sudan's commercial cities in 1899 were surrounded by slave camps. These settlements on the edges of society, kept distance from it and exploited for their labour by a ruling class. (Roberts & Klein, 1980). Sudan was not alone as a slave society. The nine countries that shared its borders, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Eritrea, also shared long and complex histories of colonial and indigenous slavery (Klein, 2008).

Although there was no guarantee, slave conversion to Islam could lead to emancipation, even if the slave did become assimilated into the owner's culture. Emancipation in kinship-based slavery, in sub-Saharan Africa, came in the form of full integration and belonging to the group—through marriage and childbirth over generations

(Lovejoy, 2000, p. 17). While Islamic law limits a man to four wives, in reality men in African societies, Muslim or not, could have as many wives or concubines as they could afford and support (Cooper, 1977). Many wives or concubines were a sign of wealth and status. A female slave in Muslim society who became a concubine could gain a form of emancipation if she bore her masters' children. Under Koranic law neither she nor her children could be sold. Children born to the master were considered legitimate and equal to the children of his free wives and were assimilated into society (Lovejoy, 2000; Spaulding, 1982; Strobel, 1983). However, during the Turko-Egyptian reign of Sudan, there is documentary evidence of slaves born into Sudanese households being sold and social pressure preventing assimilation through marriage or the marriage of the children of slaves (Spaulding, 1982, p. 12). Evidence of manumission is extremely rare. This suggests that over time interpretations of Koranic law changed, even to the extent that Islamic law was violated and Muslims enslaved other Muslims (Eibner, 1999). Slavery practices appear to have become contradictory with Koranic law:

*Islamic history provides enough examples to demonstrate that the Koranic emphasis on the social position of slaves and its insistence on their spiritual equality was no guarantee against economic exploitation or ethnic antagonism.*

(Cooper, 1977, p. 26)

Accounts by female slaves repatriated during the Sudanese civil war show that Koranic law was upheld in only that most negligible way (Eibner, 1999; Jok, 2001; Aguer, 2006).

The push by British abolitionists to legally end the business of enslaving Africans began in the opening years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Denmark and Norway abolition occurred in 1803. Four years later the British Slave Trade Act of 1807 sought to impact on the most bountiful aspect of the commerce in humans: the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Kaye, 2007) and plantation slavery in the Caribbean and North America (Grant, 2005). Scholars have conflicting views as to Britain's motives. At one end of the spectrum is Ellis (2008) who states; 'Britain established itself as the moral leader of the nineteenth century world and set an example that is being followed in the twenty-first century...' (Ellis, 2008, p. 1). Lucie-Smith (2007) adds to this in saying that contemporary understandings of British attempts to abolish the slave trade out of Africa are largely misunderstood. Lucie-Smith suggests that the trade in slaves from Africa to the Americas was an enlarged and redirected version of what already existed on the

continent and not the organisation of colonial and imperial interests. He adds that the push to end slavery came from Evangelical Christian groups: essentially, slavery was brought to an end by altruistic impulses within British society, sustained against bitter opposition (Lucie-Smith, 2007, p. 48). The bitter opposition described by Lucie-Smith (2007) was the political and economic interests, particularly in colonial settings, that wanted to maintain slavery. These were not solely British interests. Sherwood (2004) wrote that internationally, slave trading was largely illegal by 1831, nonetheless there was little change. The trade of slaves from Africa to the Americas peaked between 1831 and 1867 at 1.5 million. Of that number approximately 400,000 went to Cuba (Sherwood, 2004, p. 55). British business interests were deeply implicated. Substantial British capital bankrolled the trade from Africa into Cuba and Britain manufactured one-third of all goods used in that trade, including shackles, chains and firearms (Sherwood, 2004, p. 56).

African scholar, Kwaku (2008), writing in response to the 2007 English commemorations of the 1807 Act that abolished trading in slaves, challenged the basis of these celebrations. He suggests that the 1807 legislation passed by the British government was designed to end the slave trade and enshrine race discrimination in law. Kwaku offers the example of African soldiers discharged from British armies who were not entitled to the same pensions their white counterparts received (Kwaku, 2008, p. 80). An act to end the enslavement of Africans was not introduced until 1833; however, emancipation was available only to those six years and younger. Those above that age had to work another four years to gain their freedom (Kwaku, 2008, p. 81). Kwaku (2008) believes the British never had an intention to abolish enslavement. Lucie-Smith's (2007) notion, that it was the interests of Christian groups that were behind both sets of legislation, seems to support, at least in part, Kwaku's stance. His main point is, however, that Africans should be involved in and challenge the way history is presented. Kwaku (2008) also pointed to the trajectory from slavery to colonialism and neo-colonialism in Africa and its diasporas. Sealy (2007) also points to how histories of slavery and colonialism touch down in global 'economic conditions and world market forces that create the conditions for slavery,' (Sealy, 2007, p. 52) seen in contemporary slavery, trafficking, bonded labour, forced marriage and child soldiers

The following section will detail Britain's involvement in ending the slave trade and the emancipation of slaves in Muslim and non-Muslim settings across Africa. This will help to understand the ambiguous relationship colonial Britain maintained with Islamic slave systems

in Sudan during the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium period of 1899 to 1955. That ambiguity will foreground the practice of slavery which occurred in Sudan's second internal war (1983-2005).

The 1807 legislation did allow for the British Navy's patrolling of the Atlantic, and by the 1820s this had slowed the trade down (Moszynski, 2007). An estimated two hundred thousand slaves freed by patrols in the Atlantic represented just ten per-cent of slave cargoes from 1807 to 1867 (Ellis, 2005). Clearly the Navy itself could not stop the trade and little was being done at the source. The colonies were a long way from the legislators, churches and activists who formed the loose coalition of abolitionists. Ending slavery in the farther reaches of their empire would prove to be far more difficult than intercepting human cargo.

Meanwhile colonial administrations were, directly and indirectly, implicated not only in the economies of slavery, but also the power and prestige slaves represented (Cooper, 1977). It could be argued that the master/slave paradigm symbolically reinforced the status, power and control of colonialists as well as bringing economic benefit. Slave labour provided massive profits and supported booming economies in the home country. As an example, in one year alone, 1805-1806, British West Indian sugar equaled four percent of Britain's national income (Kaufman & Pape, 1999). Slaves entering the Zanzibar market for export in the 1860s were worth 100 to 270 thousand dollars per annum (Cooper, 1977). Recognition of the moral corruption of trading in humans was one thing. Turning away from the profits it generated was another altogether. Greed, and the power such money generated prevented real and substantive changes. Legislation in the early years of reform left plenty of room for enslavement to continue and while the ongoing involvement of British merchants in the illegal trade was well documented at the time, it was largely denied (Sherwood, 2004). Agents of change continued to push and their opposition continued to resist. This conflict of interest prevailed for much of the remaining century.

Slaves themselves had been fighting for change long before legislative changes were introduced. An uprising of African slaves in Haiti in 1791 is considered the beginning of slave resistance (Kwaku, 2008). During the 1800s, rebellions increased; Barbados in 1816, Guyana in 1823 (Kaye, 2007), Brazil in the 1830s, five separate uprisings amongst Muslim slaves in Bahia between 1808 and 1835 (Klein, 1998) and a major Jamaican rebellion in 1831 to 1832, which took British troops two weeks to put down. The Jamaican uprising was a turning point. Britain's abolitionists maintained the pressure for change and their colonial rulers in

Jamaica—worried by the rebellion—began to recognise emancipation as necessary to avoid out and out war in the colonies (Kaye, 2007).

The Slavery Abolition Act came into effect on August 1, 1834; people could no longer be owned, bought or sold. All slaves of the British Empire, including the colonies, were to be emancipated after a six-year apprenticeship system was enforced—with the promise of freedom on completion. Abolitionists brought the apprenticeship system to end in 1838, but forced labour continued (Kaye, 2007). Caribbean plantation owners received compensation for the loss of their slaves to the amount of twenty million pounds (Sealy, 2007). Grant (2005) has written that after the four-year apprenticeship system, ‘new slaveries’ began to appear. Taxes imposed on released slaves could be paid in labour (Grant, 2005, p. 21). Other ways of maintaining forced labour were found and circumstances for ex-slaves changed very little. Life continued in much the way it had.

Anti-slavery groups in Britain sought to influence slavery in Islamic and non-Islamic colonial worlds as well. The Turkish regime bowed to international anti-slavery groups, abolishing slavery in 1858—although little actually changed. Political appointments in Turkey by Britain, in 1862 and 1869, designed to follow through on abolition also failed. In attempts to relieve the moral pressure to enact emancipation, colonialists portrayed African slavery as benign by Western standards. The slavery that existed in kinship relations was benign when compared to chattel slavery. Yet, colonialists themselves feared the chattel form existed in enough numbers to cause mass desertions if emancipation laws were enacted. Kopytoff (1988) highlighted these concerns using French Soudan (now Mali), as an example:

*the consensus among scholars is that the overall proportion of “slaves” (a category whose precise boundaries are usually unclear to all concerned) was somewhere between 25 and 40 per cent in a population that, at the time of abolition early this century, was between 5 and 6 million...* (Kopytoff, 198, p. 486)

In the face of such large numbers, colonial officials believed emancipation would see the collapse of the labour force and economy. Yet the desertion rate was calculated as being between 10 and 25 percent (Kopytoff, 1988). Kopytoff and Miers suggested the number should have been higher if the assumption that chattel slaves yearned for their freedom was correct (Kopytoff & Miers, 1977, p. 73).

For many African slaves, emancipation did not mean freedom; it meant not belonging to a group, of becoming an outsider and living in a form of statelessness. An emancipated African slave would seek to alter their relationship with their group, not end the relationship as Westerners imagined a slave would. This accounts for why desertion rates were so low and why colonialist fears of emancipation leading to social disorder and economic ruin did not come to pass. Those who did leave their group were the 'most marginal of affiliates – the chattel slaves' (Kopytoff, 1988, p. 501; Kopytoff & Miers, 1977). Troutt Powell (2012) perceived Britain's ambiguous policies as a lack of action as based on racist ideology, including that a freed slave would not be accustomed to work outside of bondage, a freed slave is lazy and emancipation would result in vagrancy and prostitution—leading to social upheaval (Troutt Powell, 2012).

The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium rule of Sudan formally ran from 1899 to 1956, however British control of Egypt and therefore Sudan effectively began in 1882. Britain put down the Orabi revolt in Cairo and re-established the monarchical authority of Tewfik Pasha (Deng & Daly, 1989). However, the Mahdist revolts from 1882 de-stabilised British authority and 1883 saw the Mahdist state established. There are differing views as to the occurrence of slave raiding during the Mahdi's reign. Moszynski (2007) wrote; 'slave hunting was greatly intensified with profound consequences on the civil population, especially in southern Sudan where whole tribes were completely devastated' (Moszynski, 2007, p. 56). However, other scholars offer a contrasting view:

*Slave-raiding and slave trading declined during the Mahdiyya, but this was very largely a result of the contraction of state power during that period. Incursions into the South extended to be almost exclusively for plunder: for food during the great famine of 1888-92, or for more slaves to add to the dwindling supply of domestic labour and military recruitment.*  
(Johnson, 2003, p. 7)

Despite opposing scholarship, ownership of, and the trade in slaves did not abate.

A combined Egyptian-British force defeated the Mahdi in 1898 and Britain outlawed slavery that same year. In 1899, Britain formalised their role as colonial rulers of Sudan (Johnson, 2003). Southern and northern Sudan were ruled as separate colonial states; Arab Muslims in the north with an orientation toward Egypt, and the Arab north and an African Christian orientation to sub-Saharan Africa in the south (Moszynski, 2007).



The long-established slave-based economy of Sudan, provided a conundrum for British rulers: how to address the scale of a practice so deeply embedded in the culture? At various phases in their near 60-year reign, Britain attempted to both abolish and accommodate Sudanic slavery (Lovejoy, 2000, p. 267), but that did not stop or change the religious beliefs or ethnic assumptions of the northern, Arab society. Sudanese colleagues of the ruling class, who maintained slaves in their households and had probably done so for generations, reinforced these beliefs (Idris, 2005). The slave systems in Islamic Sudan were deeply entrenched. Prior to colonial rule, slave buying in northern Sudan was co-ordinated through markets in the cities of Khartoum and Omdurman. In the 50 years preceding Anglo-Egyptian administration, the southern region of the country as far as the Ugandan border, was allotted to slave hunters engaged by slave merchants at these markets (McLoughlin, 1962, p. 373). At the beginning of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in 1899 a rough calculation of domestic and agricultural slaves was at between 20 and 30 percent of the population. Cattle nomads had the largest number slaves at around 40 percent; the majority of those were female household slaves (McLoughlin, 1962, p. 361). Britain opted for a policy that looked to gradually replace slaver-labouring with wage-labouring. However, the speed at which this was to occur had to interact with three main categories of risk: alienating Sudanese leadership, reductions in agricultural work that would undermine the economy and social problems that may result in large numbers of released slaves. McLoughlin (1962) described British administrators attempt to deal with this conundrum by enacting two policies at the same time:

*Any slave was allowed to leave his master if he chose, and the master had no legal recourse to force his return. [] Simultaneously, through its regulations and day-to-day performance, the administrators attempted to induce as many slaves as possible to remain with their masters, providing they were content and not ill-treated. The other policy was to prevent further enslavement and cut off the supply of new slaves. The Anti-slavery Department was established for this purpose [].*

(McLoughlin, 1962, p. 362).

Islamic leaders' resistance to abolition and emancipation was based on both religious belief and culture and the social status slave ownership gave them. Slaves were not only used for household or agricultural production but were also indicative of affluence. Mundane work was considered 'slave work' and to engage in this type of work was to lose a sense of personal honour (Sharkey, 1994, p. 194 & 198). However, there were some attempts to defeat the

internal slave trade by the British. Colonial administrators strove to protect the southern region from the spread of Islam and Arab slaver/traders access to southerners in the 1920s (Lovejoy, 2000). The Closed Districts Ordinance allowed Arab traders to enter the southern region only under licence. Christian traders and missionaries were given preferential access (Johnson, 2003).

In 1947 Britain dissolved the Closed Districts policy, deciding to rule the country as one entity and the south lost the semblance of protection the policy had provided. Christian missionary schools had been the sole providers of education in the southern region. After the end of British rule, the Khartoum government nationalised education. All Christian schools were closed and missionaries deported, as they were seen to be preventing the spread of Islam and encouraging dissent amongst the population. While they eventually returned, they were forbidden to proselytise (O'Ballance, 2000).

British colonial rule of Sudan has been described as divisive. Deng and Daly (1989) wrote of the British habit of playing north and south off one another: first, accusing northerners of treating southerners like slaves, then in turn accusing southerners of being 'lazy and impervious to progress' (Deng & Daly, 1989, p. 126). There were mixed feelings amongst southerners when their rule formally ended on January 1, 1956 and in the months before the formal departure of the British, rebellion had begun. Britain effectively institutionalised a lack of ethnic entitlements, rights and privileges by failing to involve southern leadership in their own governance. Consequently, unequal forms of citizenship became effective when they handed control of the country to a Muslim elite in Khartoum, who insisted Sudanese identity could only be Arab and Muslim (Deng & Daly, 1989; Deng, 1993; Idris, 2005; McLoughlin, 1962; Jok, 2001).

Abolition and emancipation of slavery in other colonies in Africa was problematic for the British, as Sudan had been. Policies reflected the Muslim and non-Muslim contexts in various regional settings. Within Tanzania, slave owners in the Tanzanian islands of Zanzibar and Pemba were Arab-Swahili Muslims. Britain abolished slavery in 1897, and slave owners were compensated for the loss of labour on their agricultural plantations (mainly clove). To prevent endangering production in Muslim areas, new laws were enacted, including unpaid labour and taxing former slaves in a manner that forced them to work for their former owners in order to pay the taxes. Those who wanted to leave had to apply to a court. Concubines were excluded from the abolition decrees (Roberts & Miers, 1988, p. 23). It was not until

1909 that all slaves, including concubines were declared free. Non-Muslim slave owners in other areas of Kenya, who were not involved in large-scale production were not compensated for the loss of slaves. However, when independence came to Kenya in 1963, it was through President Jomo Kenyatta's insistence on an African, Christian authority. Coastal Kenyan Muslims were overlooked, regarded as 'less Kenyan' and made to feel as outsiders, due to their Swahili, Arab, South Asian, or Persian descent. Political tensions and questions of national identity, between Kenya's Christian and Muslim communities are ongoing (Kresse, 2009, p. 77).

Similarly, in Nigeria, policies for abolition and emancipation varied in Muslim and non-Muslim areas of the country. In 1901, British rulers declared the end of slavery, prohibited new enslavement and declared all children born after 1901 free. However, they allowed for a Muslim system of emancipation to operate, in order to avoid a downturn in production. The system allowed slaves to buy their freedom from their owner by working for them for designated periods of time. Administrators encouraged slaves into this system by making it difficult to gain work anywhere else if they simply left (Roberts & Miers, 1988, p. 24). In southern Nigeria, British officials decreed all slaves free in 1901; however, fearful of the impact on the economy, they forbade ex-slaves from leaving the area. This system remained in place until 1914 (Roberts & Miers, 1988, p. 24). Post-colonial ethno-religious identity conflicts have also been ongoing in Nigeria since independence from British rule in 1960. As in Kenya, Christianity was privileged over Islam. Post-colonially, Christian elites rule politically and economically, while historic conflicts between Christian and Islamic regions continue to exist (Falola, 1998, p. 27).

In Sudan, after the departure of the British in 1956, anger and resentment at the continuing political domination by the north ignited a smouldering guerrilla war,<sup>17</sup> which intensified in 1963 (Fleur-Lobbans, 1991). The conflict ended in 1972 when the Addis Ababa Agreement brought it to an end (Johnson, 2003). The next 11 years however could hardly be described as peaceful. During this inter-war period, when it became evident that little was going to change for southerners, Ananya 1<sup>18</sup> rebels set up a base in Ethiopia and continued

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<sup>17</sup> In South Sudan, the first war is known as Any-nya 1. There is disagreement as to dates Any-nya 2 started. Some believe it to be 1973, when Any-nya 1 (largely Nuer) rebels disgruntled with lack of change post the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement, continued a degree of insurgency from a base camp in Ethiopia. Others say Any-nya 2 began in 1983 when the 105 Battalion rebelled in Bor, forming the base for the SPLA and igniting the second war.

<sup>18</sup> Any-nya is Dinka for snake venom or bite

the insurgency from there. When Niemer, President of Sudan, decreed Sharia law in 1983, the country tipped back into full-scale war.

As has been documented here, this was a conflict over race, religion and self-governance, however it was also a conflict over resources. Africa has suffered the 'resource curse' for hundreds of years. Colonial era resources included slaves, ivory and gold. From the 1970s other resources included wood, land, diamonds, minerals and oil. Sudan is far from alone in its internal conflict over resources and the use of violence to gain control of such resources. The resource curse syndrome includes high levels of corruption, poor planning, and neglect of long-term planning, is likely to lead to poor internal governance in and strong political grievances (de Waal, 2016, p. 3). As with resource scarcity, an abundance of resources can increase the likelihood of war. Terrorising civilians will make them give up their resources (Ember, Adem & Skoggard, 2013). Research has found abundant natural resources to be the cause of civil wars; greed wins out over grievance, in particular reference to Angola, Liberia, DRC Congo and Sierra Leone in their struggles for control of oil and diamonds (de Soysa, 2000). These resources serve a dual purpose. Armed groups form with the intention of claiming ownership of such resources—which are also needed by them to sustain their activities. Countries with large populations of poorly educated young men and consequently high levels of poverty are at high risk of resource conflicts. Those struggling to control the country tend to focus on non-renewable resources such as minerals, as opposed to renewables like water and agriculture, as the profit margins are far higher.

The promise of access to or ownership of resources can be used by leaders of rebellions to motivate followers (de Soysa, 2000). Internal warfare, between combatants of the same country or community, is almost entirely for the purposes of claiming resources, even when it would appear at a glance that the conflict is based on ethnicity and or religion (Pinaud, 2014). Borders that were established by colonial powers cut through ethnic groups and reformed territories into shapes not previously known. Cross border conflicts spill from one country to another. Darfur,<sup>19</sup> in western Sudan has been the base for rebel activity within Chad and the Central African Republic (Giroux, Lanz, & Sguaitamatti, 2009). The Sudanese government has shipped weapons to Chad via Darfur (Ayers, 2010). Ethiopia was the base for Any-nya 1 rebels in the period between wars in Sudan. The Sudanese People's Liberation

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<sup>19</sup> Darfur is spelt as one word in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Army, formed from a rebellious, mainly Dinka army battalion, was also initially based in Ethiopia (Johnson, 2003). Cross regional alliances were also supported by previous colonial rulers and neighbouring foreign powers, seeking to strengthen territories by bank rolling the conflicts with arms and manpower (Giroux, Lanz & Sguaitamatti, 2009).

Similar cross borders conflicts occurred on the west coast of Africa, in particular Sierra Leone and Liberia. As along the east coast conflicts, in wars that began as attempts to gain control of the state, it quickly became apparent that resources were the main agenda. In Sierra Leone diamond mines funded the conflict in that country (Keen, 2000). In Sudan's case slaves were also considered resources (Jok, 2001).

Keen (2000) differentiates between 'top-down' violence and 'bottom-up' violence. Power brokers can mobilise from the top and use organised coercion to create large-scale violence. Bottom-up violence can be a mix of ordinary people looking for an opportunity to improve their situation—by acting for the power brokers—as was the case with the Baggara militias in Sudan.

Those who win in the race for resources are not likely to manage them for the benefit of the country. Apter (1996) documents the political and economic changes a post-civil war oil boom brought to Nigeria. The failure of the country's leadership to equitably manage the wealth moved the country from economic boom to bust (Apter, 1996). Gyampo (2010) raises similar questions around the management of oil resources and the threat resources can be to democracy in Ghana. Patey (2010) discussed the difficulties that faced Sudan and southern Sudan in their plans to share oil wealth when the south gained independence in 2011. Patey's (2010) concerns that mismanagement may lead to further conflict between the two countries appear well justified.

After nearly 50 years of violence in Sudan, the longest post-colonial conflict in Africa ended in 2005. Prior to the end of the war, international Christian organisations became involved in the repatriation of slaves taken mainly from the Bahr el-Ghazal. John Eibner, head of the CSI, claims that from 1985 onward, CSI worked to free 7,725 Dinka slaves taken from the Bahr el-Ghazal (Eibner, 1999, 2005). CSI was roundly criticised by multiple agencies for paying \$50 USD per head to repatriate slaves. The criticism claimed that paid repatriation increased slavery. There is some suggestion that slavery peaked in 1988 when CSI's paid repatriations were most in evidence (Lobban, 2001, p. 35).

The issues of slavery during the war and the repatriation of slaves in the north were excluded from the CPA negotiations. Moszynski (2007) suggests that this happened to achieve the agreement. Post CPA, CSI claimed ‘tens of thousands’ continued to be enslaved and called for the Bush administration to assist the Kirr government to set up mechanisms to locate, liberate and repatriate slaves in the north (Ireland, 2005)—which did not occur. Any hopes that further action would occur after the Republic of South Sudan was established in 2011 have not been sustained. Corruption, mismanagement and conflict with Sudan over oil revenues gave little opportunity for the country to emerge from a post-conflict state. No peace or reconciliation processes that may have acknowledged the degrees and consequences of wartime slavery were undertaken. The country was consumed by war again in 2013, and at the time of writing, is a failed state which faces a very real chance of becoming entirely anarchic. Before the 2013 conflict began, however, there was little acknowledgement of wartime slavery by international and national actors. It is unlikely, any time in the foreseeable future that wartime repatriation of slaves will be given the attention it deserves. The following sections will address the impact of slavery, by further discussing the vulnerability of the female body and ways in which female slaves in contemporary Sudan were exploited.

### 2.3. The legacy of slavery in Sudan

Slavery reduces a person to being a mere instrument of another person (Bergoffen, 2015, p. 355), but wartime female slavery can be described as arcane (Sellers, 2011, p. 43). The war-time slavery of African women during the second Sudanese war (1983-2005) is largely unknown. Scholars views of slavery on the African continent and especially in Islamic settings range from benign to chattel. It is clear from women’s narratives and the limited literature on the subject that during Sudan’s second war women were abducted into a chattel form of slavery. Women and children were taken during militia raids. Men were also taken but during this conflict were more likely to be killed then enslaved (Lobban, 2001; Jok, 2001). Slaves were treated like property, they were traded, sold and trafficked into other countries, away from their homeland and cultural identity. Slaves were forced to convert to Islam, to speak Arabic and were given Arab names. They were forced into domestic and

agricultural labour, subject to physical and sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, genital mutilation and sexual slavery in the form of forced 'marriage' and conception (Eibner, 2005; Jok, 2001, 2004, Lobban, 2001; Maher, 2014). Bergoffen (2015) suggests the female body, raped during wartime, 'becomes the signature of her people's degradation – the loss of their world' (Bergoffen, 2015, p. 356). The combination of slavery and rape is an intensely powerful disembodiment. Slaves taken during war in Sudan have been described as 'being taken to the ends of the earth'<sup>20</sup>. The life of slaves is beyond the boundaries of the known world.

Mass sexual violence, including the rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery experienced by slaves have been deemed crimes against humanity in other 20<sup>th</sup> century conflicts including the former Yugoslavia, (Bergoffen, 2012), Rwanda (Green & Ward, 2004) and Sierra Leone (Sellers, 2011). Acknowledging these as crimes against humanity is acknowledging all bodies as vulnerable, female or male. Crimes against humanity assault human dignity. The disembodiment suffered by South Sudanese women can be conceptualised not only as loss of dignity and the recurring exploitation of the vulnerable body, but, in recognition of that vulnerability, has been systemically created (Bergoffen, 2013; Misztal, 2011; Sellers, 2011). Gilson (2013) defines vulnerability as an experience that roots us in the corporeality of our existence (Gilson, 2013, p. 4). Misztal (2011) writes that comprehending vulnerability matters because it allows questions about equality and justice to be asked (Misztal, 2011). Those questions can be asked in the context of vulnerabilities, intimate connection to violence and narratives of sexual violence during war. Tankink and Richters (2007) addressed how South Sudanese diaspora women in the Netherlands coped with wartime sexual violence. They address coping mechanisms through the context of the life history of one woman who had not disclosed to her community that she had been raped and conceived a child to avoid the associated shame that could destroy her family's honour. Her silence was also designed to avoid gossip within her community, as gossip has the power to destroy a reputation. Milillo (2009) has written that a major consequence of rape is the social control of its survivors, social control that functions to collectively and interpersonally silence survivors (Milillo, 2009, p. 202). Building on the Tankink & Richter (2007) study, Tankink (2013) described silence as a key strategy in coping with the created

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<sup>20</sup> unrecorded comment from South Sudanese former Lost Boy

vulnerability of sexual violence. Life in the Netherlands, for most of the women in the Tankink study, was 'as traumatic as war experiences' (Tankink, 2013, p. 395). Due to the arduous and protracted process required to gain permanent residency for asylum seekers and the negative atmosphere toward refugees generally, those women were fearful of the future. The silence of South Sudanese women in Netherlands was a response to the social control of their own community; acknowledgment of rape could bring shame and humiliation to the survivor and their family and risk a loss of support. Shame and dishonour is the dominant paradigm for sexual assault survivors and their families (Pittaway, et al, 2009) and South Sudanese women who speak about rape risked reinforcing stereotypes that already define them as victims (Tankink, 2013). There is also the fear amongst former refugee women of simply being believed (Henry, 2010) and of being rejected or ostracised (Mezey & Thachil, 2010) if they were to break the silence which keeps this subject invisible.

Pittaway et al., (2009) also reported this to be the case for former refugee women in Australia (Pittaway et al, 2009, p. 52). The Pittaway et al. study looked at refugee women who resettled in Australia, with a specific focus on holders of the Women at Risk (WaR) visa which was created by the UNHCR, in 1992, specifically for refugee women who were, due to their vulnerability to human rights abuses including sexual violence, in desperate need of resettlement<sup>21</sup> (Pittaway, et al, 2009). The study linked with a number of other studies undertaken between 2003 and 2013, by the Centre for Refugee Research in Sydney. Over 500 women and 100 service providers in the states of New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria were interviewed. The findings confirmed that former refugee women had experienced high degrees of pre-migration torture and trauma. Participants reported 'systemic rape, sexual torture, forced witness of the rape of family including children, forced engagement in survival sex, birth of one or more children of rape and consequently, rejection, violence and isolation from their own communities' from their homeland and in countries of asylum, including refugee camps and urban refugee settings (Pittaway, et al, 2009, p. 48). Findings also included that despite the challenges of settlement many WaR arrivals settled successfully, but others experienced ongoing risks and human rights abuses connected to their pre-arrival experiences. Women talked of how past experiences shamed their families, and how pre-migration risks had followed them to Australia. This was 'a major barrier to their ability to feel

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<sup>21</sup> In 2009, Australian government allocated 780 204 visas, in 2014, 1000 204 visa were made available of the annual resettlement intake (Pittaway, et al, 2009)



safe and secure and to settle successfully into their new country' (Pittaway, et al, 2009, p. 49). The Pittaway, et al, study found that, 'despite the stigma that is often associated with this trauma, throughout this research it is the women themselves who have most actively sought recognition of these experiences' (Pittaway, et al, 2009, p. 53). In that sense the women in this study appear to be resisting potential shaming or victimisation, by loosening social controls of shame and silence that may come with the acknowledgement of this type of abuse. In doing so they are again showing, both their resilience and agency. Additionally, as was the case in the Pittaway, et al, study, these women have sought recognition. They took the opportunity to speak of the gendered, human rights abuse that is sexual violence during war and they did so in the spectre of unprecedented levels of sexual violence in the current conflict in their homeland which broke out in 2013. As stated in Chapter One, the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura, reported in 2014, that women and children of South Sudan were the victims of the worst sexual violence she had ever seen in her 30 years of experience in conflict zones across the African continent (Wudu, 2014, para 1).<sup>22</sup> The situation had not seen any change when Bangura visited the country for a second time in May 2016 (UN News Centre, 2016). Given the connections between the Australian diaspora and South Sudan, it is clear that this would be known to the participants.

Altınay and Petö (2016) have framed our understandings about violence and sexual violence in four separate frames. The first is that sexual violence during war is 'normal'. The second frame comes from international laws which defined sexual violence as a lack of institutional mechanisms and legal actions. The third is a feminist framework which sees sexual violence as a conscious policy of actors used in war to manifest power. The fourth is the human rights framework which views sexual violence as a form of torture. Altınay and Petö (2016) describe these four frameworks as having three different vocabularies, agendas and audiences (Altınay & Petö, 2016, p. 37). Misztal (2011) has defined vulnerability as having three main forms. The third is most useful in this discussion. Misztal (2011) discusses a form of vulnerability created by the 'irreversibility of past actions and experience. The predictability of irreversibility burdens a common life with past pains and suffering and therefore limits our capacity for self-protection and cooperation with others' (Misztal, 2011,

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<sup>22</sup> Chapter One, page 22 & 28.

p. 8). Misztal (2011) suggests that the remedy for this type of vulnerability is to establish new relationships of trust, or bonds of solidarity, security and cooperation. This as an understanding to the vulnerability of former refugee women and a resolution to that vulnerability is discussed in Chapter Six.

This study uses feminist frameworks to understand the experience of wartime slavery and sexual violence of South Sudanese women and the silences and narrations that surround it. Rather than focus on the dichotomy of silence and telling, Altınay and Petö (2016) suggest attention must be paid to how 'silences are coded differently depending on who has the power to decide who is an honourable or dishonourable victim' (Altınay & Petö, 2016, p. 37). They add that there are two traps when attempting to understand the power relations that silence: 'connecting sexual violence with the intention of certain governments and emphasising agency as a central category of analysis' (Altınay & Petö, 2016, p. 37). In this study however, the slavery and sexual violence women endured during war was the intention of the Sudanese government. The country's long history of enslaving African women is clearly the driver for recurring violence toward women. As women in this study have chosen to speak about violence during war, in its many different forms, agency is the central category of the analysis.

## 2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has addressed slavery in Africa generally and in pre-colonial and colonial era Sudan. It has been established that institutionalised slavery has existed in Sudan since antiquity (Jok, 2001; McLoughlin, 1962; Troutt Powell, 2012). Discourses regarding forms of slavery in Islamic societies vary. There is no agreement as to the degrees in which slavery was either chattel or benign. It would seem likely that both forms existed, dependent on economic and cultural imperatives of the time. Female slaves fulfilled roles as concubines and reproductive labour. Slave mothers had no claim on children born of a union with her owner. Those children were absorbed into the household as future labour. Children born of a union between slaves belonged to the female slave's owner. Female slaves were also the majority in domestic and agricultural settings (Sikainga, 1995, p. 5). Late in the colonial period, policies began to change and slaves applied for manumission. Female slaves

however, did this far less than male. A woman had little employment options outside of her owner's jurisdiction and sharia courts controlled custody of children. In the Merowe district, until the mid-1920s, 70 per cent of female slaves remained with their owners, compared to 45 per cent of male slaves (Sikainga, 1995, p. 22). It is not clear in Sikainga's material if the slaves of whom he writes are African women from the southern region in Sudan.

The British colonial administration during the Condominium rule of Sudan (1899-1956) remained largely ambivalent regarding the abolition and emancipation of slaves. The failure to entirely end slave-raiding in the southern region and or to emancipate slaves in the north was due to a combination of factors. Colonial rulers were reluctant to intervene in Islamic cultural practices at the risk of destabilising power-sharing relationships with the ruling Arab elite. Colonial officials argued that slavery within Sudan was benign or denied its existence altogether (Sikainga, 1995, p. 10). During the war the GoS maintained this denial although it 1999 in response to a number of international actors formed its own committee to investigate allegations.

Post-colonial, wartime slavery has been documented through NGOs, activists and scholars (Anti-slavery, 2001; Eibner, 2005; Jok, 2001, 2006; Lobban, 2001) and that material includes personalised accounts from women who were enslaved. This thesis includes personalised narratives on the enslavement of family, their communities' members and of participants themselves. Slave raiding and trading by Arab societies in northeast Africa has been given less attention by scholars, (Leopold, 2003) than is warranted and there has been very little focus on the impact of slavery on state formation in modern African societies. Nor is there an inclusion of slavery in discourse analyses on contemporary political conflict (Idris, 2005). Gendered analyses are also lacking, which appears as a major oversight in academic literature given the gendered nature of slavery and the significance of wartime slavery in contemporary times.

While there is considerable literature on gendered, structural and political violence in the post-colonial African states, and some acknowledgement of how colonialism and slavery have impacted on the women of Africa (Osunyikanmi, 2011), there is little understanding of how wartime slavery has affected forced migrant women.

Investigating how the enslavement of African women's bodies created systemic vulnerability deepens understandings of contemporary, gendered slavery during war. It also points to bodies as a recurring site of exploitation *and agency*. There are significant ethical

questions in how we respond to vulnerability and the loss of dignity. Recognising the vulnerability of the female body as systemic *and* created is central to this chapter's discussion. The implications of how historic and contemporary trajectories of exploitation and disembodiment touch down in the lives of forced migrant women is a major theme of this thesis.

## Chapter Three: Affective solidarity, social connectedness and emotion

### 3.1. Introduction

The central focus of this research is the gendered violence that recurred in Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005) and its after effects in the processes of forced migration and settlement for former refugee women. This chapter situates the study of women who survive war within the literature on gender and militarised violence, forced migration and re-settlement in Western countries. It traces major themes of pre-migration disembodiment, the paradoxical nature of settlement and the potential for new subjectivities in post-settlement.

This thesis is responding to the institutional requirements of a university, and its readers will understand key concepts according to who they are. It engages a feminist, cross-cultural perspective, based on de-colonised knowledge and methodology. While the project is focused on African women in Australia, African feminist scholarship is emphasised here. A continent the size of Africa, with such complex levels of diversity, experiences few collectivising forces. Imperialism is one, and therefore research on the continent requires an in-depth understanding of the far-reaching consequences of imperialism on all aspects of cultural, political and community life. Contemporary gendered violence and the structures of imperial violence are linked. Those linkages explored by a range of African feminist scholars help to provide a framework for this research. An emphasis on African feminist scholarship connects African cultural traditions to the theoretical, methodological and ethical frameworks used in research with African women. The feminist lens through which these narratives have been analysed is informed by both African and Western epistemologies and locates this thesis at the intersections of African and Western feminist theoretical traditions. The intersubjective elements of both traditions contribute to this work. Before addressing the key literatures engaged in the project, it is necessary to position myself within the project itself by asking ethical and ontological questions about white women from the Global North doing research with black women of the Global South. This is best done by examining the inter-subjectivity of the researcher and the researched through the feminist construct of intersectionality. I have relied on the work of Hemmings

(2012), Pillow, (2003) and Walby, Armstrong and Strid (2012) to define a model of intersectionality that best provides a framework for this work.

Within academe there are varying approaches to intersectionality. Walby et al. wrote that the work of three scholars were central to understanding development and debates around intersectionality and gender, namely Crenshaw (1991) McCall (2005) and Hancock (2007). Crenshaw's work is significant to the intersections of gender, race/ethnicity and identity politics. Separately, McCall and Hancock reviewed studies of intersectionality that built a typology of the concept. McCall identified multiple concepts of intersectionality which she organised into three categories; 'intra-categorical, anti-categorical and inter-categorical' (McCall, 2005, p. 1773-4, as cited in Walby et al., 2012, p. 227). Hancock suggested that studies of race, gender, class and other categories of difference, could be grouped into three 'categories of difference: unitary, multiple and intersectional' (Hancock, 2007, as cited in Walby, et al., 2012, p. 227). The unitary concept has a primary and stable category in contrast to the multiple categories which are equivalent and maintained in a stable relationship with each other. Hancock's third category is deemed the intersectional approach and uses more than one category; 'the categories are fluid, not stable and mutually constitute each other. Within this category, Hancock puts considerable emphasis on the issue of fluidity' (Walby, et al., 2012, p. 227). Walby et al. take Hancock's construct of intersectionality but reject the concept of mutual constitution in favour of a concept of a mutual shaping of equalities and projects. Drawing on ideas of critical realism and complexity theory, Walby et al. (2012) suggest that at the intersections of complex adaptive systems, such systems mutually adapt, changing each other while remaining visible. The application of this form of intersectionality allows for multiple intersecting categories in the lives of participants to be acknowledged as both static and dynamic. The intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and created vulnerability, with war, violence, oppression and migration are mutually adaptive. Recognising that these categories exchange and adapt fluidly avoids essentialising, or placing women into rigid categories. Seeing categories as fluid and adaptive gives space to both the similarities and differences between the individual and collective narratives analysed in this thesis. Intersectionality is an analytic disposition, a way of thinking about the problem of sameness, difference and its relations to power (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013, p. 12) and for that reason an analysis that treats intersections as complex, adaptive and fluid is utilised here.

Mama states that the ethics of feminist research premised on solidarity, (especially between African and Western feminist scholars) require high degrees of reflexivity and self-awareness (Mama, 2011, p. e14). To add to this, Hume wrote that feminist research on violence and gender needs to be explicit about the relational and emotional dynamics of social research (Hume, 2007, p. 147). Through the course of this project, reflexivity repeatedly raised issues around vulnerability and emotionality, my own, and my perceptions of participant vulnerability. Those perceptions were constants that needed to be managed throughout the various stages of the project.

Vulnerability is narrated here as I have suggested above—as an intersectionality which is complex, adaptive and fluid. Intersectionality is a useful way in which to address my own subjectivity in relation to the research. My personal and political engagement with this work has its foundation in lived experience, both private and professional. The ability or desire to publicly narrate my personal story of family dysfunction is based on how people may react to a story which is complex, complicated and in many ways extreme. Privacy and silence offer protection from possible assumptions of victimhood and vulnerability. Sharing aspects of that story in the context of this research amplifies fears of potential accusations of self-absorption or a failure to remain detached from the subject (Hume, 2007; Liebling & Stanko, 2001; Pickering, 2001). However, not acknowledging my own experience of violence and loss, given the locus of the research, also risks reinforcing the power differential that already exists between a white researcher and black participants.

Hereditary, long-term, debilitating disease, poverty, mental illness, sexual and physical violence created an environment of severe dysfunction in my family and caused many early deaths including by suicides and murder. Of a family of eight, only I and one sibling remain. The trauma of loss, intra-familial violence and abuse meant that I grew up without a sense of safety and belonging. The feeling of being an outsider prevailed in my homeland and the country I came to live in exile. Paradoxically, home was a dangerous place but I yearned for it. In her work on belonging, bell hooks described her family's dysfunction as causing her to be 'endlessly running' away from home. She wanted to stay but she needed to leave (hooks, 2009, p. 17). For hooks, the broken heartedness of exile was a type of madness. For me it was a place of vast emptiness. Over time however exile has been redefined. As a dual citizen, I have the privilege of moving freely between two countries. Australia offers far greater opportunities economically and professionally, but my

identity is not located here. As the trauma lessened over the years, despite continuing to live in another country, I do now have a sense of belonging—in the cold winds and huge skies of deep south New Zealand.

The circumstances of my earlier life however also made me a feminist. The level of affective dissonance in my home between family members was very high. Put simply, as a young child I could not express what I knew to be wrong in the ways family members behaved and interacted with each other. I was often scared. If I could mark a time when I became conscious of injustice and the environment it could create, it might well have been then. The main strategy used to avoid such an environment or lessen its impact was to retreat into reading. Books were my saviours. Nonetheless, the sense of powerlessness, a lack of safety and intersubjective care created emotions that in many ways directed and controlled my adult life. Childhood mistreatment prevents a positive sense of self from developing. For adult survivors of extreme abuse, the loss of safety, the aloneness and feelings that there is nowhere you belong can be powerfully destructive. In the right conditions however these affects can also be transformative.

There has been a series of transformative points in my adult life, each one building on the other to create a stronger internal sense of strength and of the world as a benevolent place. However, in certain circumstances vulnerabilities can return. Vulnerability as personal, professional and political is a critical understanding of my personal position in the world and professionally as researcher. The concept of vulnerability is also addressed as core to not only ethical or political questions but also to subjectivity itself (Gilson, 2013, p. 128). Invulnerability is prized in Western societies (Gilson, 2013), but vulnerabilities can also be prized, especially if they can be conceptualised beyond the dualities of weakness and agency and be recognised as created. The female body is made systemically vulnerable. Vulnerability is not in and of itself inherent within the female body.

Emotionality seems to be rarely addressed in discourses on feminist ethics and methodologies. Pickering (2001) does not separate emotionality of the researcher from the work. Based on research with women in Northern Ireland, Pickering suggests that if emotionality is rendered superfluous or inappropriate in the production of knowledge then so too is the experience of struggle. Pickering proposes that the study of struggle is not just understanding the experiences of those who struggle, but also to understanding the emotions of that struggle and the emotionality of recording struggle (Pickering, 2001, p.



487). Hume (2007) described researching violence in El Salvador, as a non-local woman, as mediated by both the researched and the researcher. The relational multi-layered subjectivities between the two, deepens understanding of violence. In asking what role her emotions played in in her research on violence in South Africa,<sup>23</sup> Diphoorn argues emotions influence the way researchers act in the field (Diphoorn, 2013, p. 2013). The work of Pickering (2001), Hume (2007) and Diphoorn (2013) exemplify emotionality as necessary and essential for researchers addressing gender and violence.

Emotionality and vulnerability also intersect with other markers, including class and race. Growing up in isolated, rural, working-class poverty, I am the first in my family to go to university. I am not familiar with the privileges of a middle-class upbringing, but I recognise them. However, as a Pakeha<sup>24</sup> I also recognise the privileges inherent in having a white, settler heritage and the ways settlers disrupted and destroyed Maori cultural and spiritual relationships to their land. Being white, and whiteness as a majority category, have been largely unmarked in social science methodologies. I address these and other markers in response to questions of how my class and race might impact on the study.

Whiteness is a phenomenon, an ongoing and unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up space' (Ahmed, 2007, p. 150). Ahmed draws on her own experiences of inhabiting a white world as a non-white body. Whiteness loses its invisibility when the arrival of some bodies is more noticeable than the arrival of others. It is in that experience that whiteness is 'real, material and lived' (Ahmed, 2007, p. 150). Ahmed reifies whiteness through a series of steps starting with marking orientation as a starting point; where bodies are placed, where they dwell and how they are shaped by the contact they have with objects in that same space. In the colonial world, non-white bodies were shaped by what they were in contact with and what they were not. Bodies remember the histories that shape them. When colonialism made the world white, bodies became shaped by that whiteness (Ahmed, 2007, p. 152). If whiteness is an orientation that permits and allows contact with that which is within reach, then race can be defined in the same way. White bodies are privileged in ways that non-white bodies are not and that privilege remains largely unacknowledged in research strategies that address race.

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<sup>23</sup> Diphoorn was researching private security firms in Durban, South Africa

<sup>24</sup> Maori for white person

The majority position can privilege the white researcher to remain silent about such a position—or do nothing more than acknowledge it. The unmarked majority position of whiteness should be investigated in an attempt to disengage from the silence it privileges, which allows subjectivity to be interpreted in a range of unspecified ways.

In the context of this research, stories are interpreted from women who have been shaped by colonialism and war, an experience remembered by their cultural bodies. If white bodies do not have to face their whiteness, if their whiteness goes unnoticed in a white world, what happens when it enters a black world shaped by colonialism? If research puts the white body in an uncomfortable place, how does this influence interpretations of the data? In studies involving violence (Hume, 2007) and cross-cultural research (Shope, 2006), these questions are raised as critical to the process of reflexivity and analysis. In this study these questions have remained within the methodological space, in a state of constant asking. When answers have not always been clear they have been raised in supervisory sessions, with colleagues, and members of South Sudanese communities.

Examining representations of whiteness (in the black imagination) reveals how little white hegemony ‘understands the profound psychological impact of white racist domination’ (hooks, 2009, p. 104). Ahmed addresses whiteness as an ‘ongoing and unfinished history which orientates bodies in a specific direction, affecting how they take-up space’ (Ahmed, 2007, p. 150). Ahmed discusses the risk of reifying whiteness as a category. Berg suggests ‘whiteness as a majority category is an unmarked category which often remains silent because of its seeming self-evident naturalness’ (Berg, 2008, p. 214). The question of how to articulate whiteness has remained mostly unanswered, but it is critical, given the way we position ourselves in our research as directly connected to the research outcome. Berg (2008) defines positioning as a way to practice feminist epistemologies. However, she contests the frequently practiced listing of a researcher’s personal identity markers as an effective or appropriate way to do this. Berg says this keeps the focus on the individual researcher, rather than the production of knowledge.

The presentation of self, through personal identity markers, may blur boundaries between the personal and the private, especially when these markers are presented as statements of fact and there is no further explanation as to how those facts might interact with the subject. Berg describes reworking whiteness from an identity marker to a relational phenomenon—although she acknowledges that in the context of post-colonial studies,

investigating racialisation as a relational phenomenon is not easy to translate to praxis as 'intersectional analysis attempts to catch the intertwined character of various categories by listening to several voices *simultaneously*' (Berg, 2008, p. 212). Nonetheless, repositioning of this kind also has the power to not only deconstruct racism and but also the hegemonic discourses they uphold it.

While it is perhaps inevitable that researchers do blur boundaries during research, the question is how this is to be managed? If boundary incursions remain hidden due to fears of professional condemnation, or from being too uncomfortable for the researcher to address, this impacts on the findings of the research. Mama (2011) writes of feminist researchers needing to be carefully cognisant of their own subjectivity. However, Mama also writes that feminist research demands that the academic canon be defied by not maintaining distance, instead, urging active engagement and relations to and with 'subjects'. (Mama, 2011, p. e14). How to do this in a way that recognises the dominance of whiteness? How do researchers achieve that cognisance? How do they manage inter-subjectivity and closeness and knowledge of how the facts of their own lives touch down in the research? These questions are relevant to all researchers, but in the context of this research are addressed further in the following chapter.

The most common tool available to feminist scholars appears to be the practice of reflexivity. In the way that Berg (2008) believes stating identity markers as fact without further exploration is insufficient, simply stating that reflexivity has been engaged during the course of the research is similarly insufficient. Pillow (2003) addressed how reflexivity as a methodological tool intersects with questions of representing and legitimising qualitative research. Pillow drew attention to researcher subjectivity as a distinctive trend and points to reflexivity's widespread use in qualitative research. Reflexivity is accepted as a necessary method in which to represent difference, establish authority and explore and expose the politics of representation (Pillow, 2003, p. 176). Pillow (2003) also writes that researchers use reflexivity without defining how they use it and summarises critiques of the trend by referencing Patai (1994). Patai pertinently asks 'does all this self-reflexivity produce better research?' (Patai, 1994, as cited in Pillow, 2003). Pillow agrees with Patai's statement that we do not escape from the consequences of our positions by talking about them (Patai, 1994, as cited in Pillow, 2003, p. 177), but goes on to suggest that we use reflexivity to be aware of *how* we talk about them, rather than *not* talk about them. A critical use of

reflexivity, one which is described as *uncomfortable* (her italics) is suggested by Pillow (2003). Uncomfortable reflexivity asks how we can be accountable to the struggle for self-representation of both the subjects and the researchers.

Hemmings' (2012) reconceptualization of feminist reflexivity and standpoint theory critiques the privileging of identity and marginality. Hemmings also critiques prioritising empathy as 'the primary affect through which affective connection with others might be achieved ...' (Hemmings, 2012, p. 149). Hemmings (2012) proposes a concept of *affective solidarity* (her italics) suggesting a broader range of affects, including 'rage, frustration and the desire for connection as necessary to a sustainable feminist construct of transformation that is not grounded in identity or other group characteristics' (Hemmings, 2012, p. 148). Hemmings (2012) notes that knowledge production based on inter-subjectivity and relationality also offers a critique of autonomous subjectivity. Instead relational inter-subjectivity values ways of knowing that give priority of dialogue and collectivity.

Transforming ourselves and others means affect is a way of understanding both our sense of being and our relationship with knowledge production. Hemmings (2012) suggests that in order to know differently we must feel differently. By visiting pre-independence Sudan and speaking with women elders, I came to know of a profound injustice that occurred in the context of a lengthy and devastating war. I did not realise it at the time, but a sense of affective solidarity was established in those conversations. Shocked by stories of enslavement, and bewildered by the lack of knowledge about it, their stories pushed me onto this path. They became the driving force of the research. Hearing stories of that injustice, and the extent of it, created a sense of outrage. The affective moment was however, the realisation that I had known women from that country in my work in Australia for around six years, but knew nothing about that history, one which had profoundly and systematically disembodied those women. Pickering (2001) has described outrage in terms of emotionality for researchers addressing violence toward women. Ahmed (2004b) has asserted rage as a primary force behind feminist perceptions and actions.

Outrage is related to empathy and can be best framed through concepts of relationality and inter-subjectivity. For Hemmings the ability for affect to politicise can be the 'productive basis from which to seek solidarity with others, not based in a shared identity or a presumption of how the other feels but on a desire for transformation out of the experience of discomfort, and against the odds' (Hemmings, 2012, p. 15).

Resistance to acknowledging vulnerability and the ways it may effect relational dynamics makes positioning yourself as a researcher in academia difficult. Reflecting on how vulnerability has helped me locate myself in this research has been uncomfortable. But that discomfort has been eased by recognising it as adaptive in relation to other markers. Ironically, an early understanding of feminist reflexivity, described by Hemming (2012) is useful: 'Probyn insists that reflection on the lack of fit between our own sense of being and the world's judgement upon us constitutes a kind of feminist reflexivity, *a negotiation of the difference between who one feels oneself to be and the condition of possibility for a liveable life*' (Probyn's italics) (Probyn, 1993, as cited in Hemming, 2012, p. 149).

### 3.2. African feminist scholarship and gender-based research in Africa

The ethics of this research, its methodology, concepts, theories and analysis, is guided by feminist principles of social justice for women. Agency is a key concept within feminism, in its many forms and manifestations which respond to the dynamic and shifting nature of the world we live in. In this research the concept of agency, as a form in which to facilitate justice, is the power to make choices. Kabeer defines women's agency as a process of decision-making, to define goals and act on them (Kabeer, 1999, p. 435). Kabeer points out that within social science literature agency tends to be described as decision-making, but she adds other forms including bargaining, negotiation, deception, manipulation, subversion and resistance as well as less tangible cognitive processes of reflection and analysis. Agency of these kinds can be exercised by individuals and collectives (Kabeer, 1999, p. 438). The combination of resources and agency suggests capabilities – for living and achieving.

In addressing the differences in African and Western feminist scholarship, it should be stated that African feminism cannot be homogenised any more than Western feminism can. Amina Mama wrote that feminism in Africa is 'extremely heterogeneous' influenced by diverse colonial, religious, social and political contexts (Mama, 2011, p. e7). Additionally, African feminist scholars 'challenge the contemporary manifestations of historically rooted patterns of subordination and oppressions across the region' (Mama, 2011, p. e6). As this project also addressed, amongst other things, historical patterns of gendered oppression in Sudan, it is pertinent to include the work of African feminist scholars. Thematically, their

writings ground this research in African context and conditions. Mama (2011) points out that African feminist researchers bring to the traditions of qualitative social science research a nuance that reflects their understanding around gender, class, age, as they pertain to certain localities. Research conventions presume conditions for research in Africa that are often not the case in terms of stability and infrastructure. 'More complex scenarios arise in context of insecurity and past or incipient violence and may require engaging the perhaps previously hidden experience of trauma in the lives of both the researcher and the researched' (Mama, 2011, p. e13). Mama does not describe these as markers or as a form of intersectionality for African feminist researchers, but clearly they could be framed in that way. Intersectionality of this kind creates opportunities for African feminist scholars to access previously unavailable narratives (Mama, 2011, p. e13). Referencing African feminist scholarship also responds to Mama's call to US academics (which I took as a call to any non-Africa based scholar) to engage with and acknowledge the work of Africa's female intellectuals (Mama, 2007, p. 4).

African feminist scholarship is clear that African women and their perspectives have been silenced in colonial and post-colonial systems of knowledge gathering (Oyěwùmí, 2005; Nzegwu, 2006; Ampofo, 2010). Ampofo urges Western feminists to remain conscious of this and not globalise issues, especially in post-colonial settings (Ampofo, 2010). African feminist frameworks have the capacity to transform research by changing the dynamic between researcher and subject 'to a "mesh" of interactions that gradually uncover "new" information and facilitates fresh and unexpected inquiry' (Ezumah, 2011, p. 56). Critical to this is the centring the subjects voice as authorial. This allows the power that is exercised in these discourse, to shift from the privileged to the disenfranchised. Assuming the authority of subject and setting allows power between researcher and the researched to be shared, which will prevent the defining and confining of African subjects and contexts as 'other' (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Ezumah, 2011; Mama, 1997; 2011; Nnaemeka, 2005; Ngezwo, 2006; Osunyikanmi, 2011).

The decolonisation of research processes allows for relationships between indigenous and western feminists to be built in an ethical space that includes trust and respect and transformation for researchers and the researched (Ampofo, 2010; Mama, 1997; Nnaemeka, 2011; Nzegwu, 2006). Feminists in the post-colonial world do experience a shared space. Despite tensions that exist within that space, common ground can be found (Ampofo, 2010; Ezumah, 2011) and the differences become the basis for solidarity. Such solidarities are

fundamental to feminist, cross-cultural work (Mohanty, 2003), especially the power differentials that exists between academic institutes within the Global South and the Global North. Power operates both in terms of resources available to fund gender studies and the academic and political freedom to develop such studies (Mama, 2011). Coupling solidarity with de-colonised knowledge is the most principled epistemological approach to western feminist work with African women.

Decolonised theory may place the subject as centre to the research question. Methodological processes must be based on the contextual realities of the research participants, especially in work that seeks to interpret highly traumatic events (Mama, 2011).

African scholars advocate for deconstruction of universalisation within gender theory and 'othering' ideologies that negatively impact on how non-Western subjects are both seen and written about. This reinforces the necessity to understand cultural differences of the notion of gender. Oyěwùmí suggests the starting point for the study of gender in Africa is to interrogate foundational assumptions that underpin hegemonic intellectual tools and recover local epistemologies at the same time (Oyěwùmí, 2005, p. xiv). By pointing to the ways feminism has shown Western societies to be gendered and male dominated, Oyěwùmí states that gender as a social construction became a 'cornerstone of much feminist discourse' and was universalised, through imperialism, into other cultures (Oyěwùmí, 2005, p. 9). She posits that gender must be mutable if they are to avoid the biological determinism that is dominant in Western theories of the body. If gender is a universal, social construction then the components of the construction needs to be examined. Oyěwùmí suggests that if gender is socially constructed it would be mutable and it would be logical to assume that in some societies such constructions would not have occurred. Oyěwùmí describes the major principle of pre-19th century social organisation in Yorùbá culture as based on seniority, not gendered hierarchies, (Oyěwùmí, 2005. p. 14). Nzegwu writes that gender subordination in African can be traced back to European colonial practices (Nzegwu, 2006, p. 2). Ntseane (2011), also writes that gender continues to be defined by legacies of colonialism. A multitude of external forces, from slavery to ethnic cleansing, 'wrenched family relationships grotesquely out of shape' (Nzegwu, 2006, p. 5). What remains is nothing like the family structure prior to colonialism. African families have received little attention and deserve more research. There is a tendency amongst contemporary Africanist social scientists to focus on groups rather than social structures (Oyěwùmí, 2005). Attention to these structures may add to the

understanding of violence toward women. Understanding how women contribute to both their households and their society economically also needs attention. Cultural and social norms which limited women's access in decision making processes in Sudanese society changed during its second civil war. This is particularly salient in understanding expressions of gender in the context of this research.

Western gender theories that reduce African women's and girls' experiences to the roles of victims is also challenged by African feminist scholars. Failure to recognise context-specific knowledge of African women's power stops women's and girls' agency, and resistance to oppression, from being seen (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Mama, 1997; Ngezwe, 2006). White, middle-class discourses do not easily cross over cultural and racial lines as they have not understood the power indigenous women have within their own relational worlds (Nnaemeka, 2011). African scholars write that those discourses do not recognise and examine the intersectionality of the multiple statuses experienced by African subjects in diverse contexts (Ampofo, 2010; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; de Lange, Mitchell & Bhana, 2012; Ezumah, 2011; Mama, 1997, 2011; Nnaemeka, 2005; Nzegwu, 2006; Oyěwùmí, 2005).

The other way in which this research has sought to decolonise its methodology is by keeping the voices of its participants central and authorial (Ezumah, 2011). African scholarship acknowledges that 'epistemological journeys guided by orality are bound to theorise differently from literary traditions' (Nnaemeka, 2003, as cited in Ampofo and Arnfred, 2010, p. 8).

African societies continue with the oral tradition of circulating information by word of mouth, regardless of education or technology (Dennis & Ntsimane, 2008, p. 2). Western scholar Chanfrault-Duchet (1991) argues that women's oral histories are a feminist methodology. Hale (1991) does not agree with this assertion; instead she describes the imposition of a '*feminist process*' (her italics) in a cross-cultural interview as 'another kind of cultural imperialism' (Hale, 1991, p. 121). Hale does not make the distinction that women she interviewed in Sudan between 1960 and 1988 practiced an oral culture. This may be because the 1988 interview Hale references is with a leading female political figure—a highly educated Muslim woman from northern Sudan.

South Sudanese cultures are oral cultures. Until very recently, there has been no tradition of a written culture amongst its multiple ethnicities. The vast majority of women in South Sudan did not have access to education (Nakimangole, 2013, p. 26). Little has changed



for women in the post-war, post-independence period. Voice is the tool for communication and familial, social and cultural histories are conveyed through story telling (Beswick, 2004; Deng, 1980).

The method and methodology of the research is designed to work with women who practice orality. Through the course of this project the narratives of interviews with women participants are acknowledged as oral in the context of their cultural traditions. Beswick states the use of oral evidence in scholarship on South Sudan is critical for scholars, while acknowledging questions around the reliability and accuracy of oral evidence reducing over time when stories are retold and remembered. Beswick states that historical accuracy may well come into question, however, the literary expression does not (Beswick, 2004, p. 3).

This section has sought to address epistemological concerns of African feminist scholars. These include fundamental questions of how feminist theories, grounded in Western social structures, relate to African structures. Is Western feminism applicable and relevant to African social structures, ones which were changed by colonial practices? Do Western feminist scholars address the multiple statuses of African subjects and can those subjects be analysed appropriately through a Western lens? In the context of this research, are Western theoretical concepts of race and gender applicable to understanding the dynamics of abduction and enslavement of women during war in Sudan? Does analysis grounded in Western theoretical traditions enable a full understanding of how those wartime events have come to impact on South Sudanese Australian women and their families? Are the boundaries between cultures and states permeable? Is the female body permeable, having a boundary which can be crossed, regardless of status, race, class or any other marker? Western feminists, (such as Agustin, 2007; Berg, 2008; Lorber, 2005; Walby, 2013) suggest that these boundaries can be crossed—through methodology and reflexivity. I would add that a reflexivity that registers inter-subjectivity, relationality *and* a conscious subjective awareness of African women, viewed through the dominant paradigm of whiteness (Berg, 2008), can facilitate the ethical crossings of race, gender and cultural boundaries. The permeability of the female body and how it crosses boundaries, and is a boundary to be crossed, is addressed through the work of Scarry (1985) and Ahmed (2004) in Chapter Four.

This research recognises the intersections of complex systems as mutually adaptive and fluid (Walby et al., 2012), and its methodological and theoretical foundation have sought to operate from positions of affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012) and emotionality

(Diphoorn, 2013, Hume, 2007; Pickering, 2001). It utilises African and Western feminist theories that recognise the organising principles of these two distinct social worlds. African sociality is recognised in this research through two key concepts, firstly is the ways in which gender is viewed or conceptualised differentially in Western hegemonic feminism. Orality, and the emphasis on voice in African cultural traditions, is the second way.

Context-specific research that centres women's voices builds on networks of both broad and specific understandings. As a focused, localised study this work does not seek to universalise the war-time experiences of South Sudanese women, but nor will it limit the development of knowledge by assuming their experiences are situated solely to a location.

### 3.3. Gendered change and new subjectivities

The harming of bodies is 'a complex culture that specifies who can and should be targeted for torture, how, for what reasons and to what end' (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 5). Nordstrom's study of living in a warzone during the post-colonial war in Mozambique (1977-1992) described war as having threads that lead her into the centre of civilian society - where most wars are fought. The study addresses the nature and culture of frontline conflicts and challenges the fiction of 'local wars' and the ways they can be consigned as inconsequential, to the peripheries of world events. Nordstrom points to global linkages, of how wars connect through politics, business, military and media engagements. The study interrogates the notion of what violence is and gives an account of this through a woman called Anna who was displaced by a raid on her village. With only one of her children, she ran from the violence, becoming disconnected from her family, her home and homeland. Captured by rebel militia, she was raped, beaten and forced to provide service to them, labouring, cooking etc. Anna escaped with her child at night and walked for days until she found others like her. They walked together until they came to a town where other displaced people had gathered. While facing the challenges of daily survival, including staying safe and finding enough food, Anna thought constantly about her home. She had seen one of her children killed during the raid and as she had not been able to give him an appropriate ceremony and burial she worried for his spirit (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 121). Nordstrom analyses Anna's story in terms of the way the violence of war affected her daily life. This includes the disorientation of losing her family and not

knowing where they were. It includes seeing her son killed in the raid and struggling to feed the child who was with her and the knowledge that her children would no longer experience safety and security and the ordinary functioning of a family life, including playing with other children and hearing the stories of their grandparents. She experiences a loss of what Nordstrom calls a 'normal destiny' (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 122) for her children. As a displaced person, Anna lost her sense of self and self-worth which was located in her homeland. She felt unsafe amongst other displaced people, having to compete for survival and resources when, prior to war, cooperation was the rule that orientated their communal lives. To mediate that safety, she came to live with a man—who beat her regularly.

Spiritual dimensions of the violence included the loss of ancestral rights and the safety ancestors provided. Anna also carried feelings of shame and trepidation about the response to her rape, should her family come to know of it. She yearned for her family and had nightmares of her village burning. For Anna, the violence of war inflected every aspect of her daily physical, emotional and spiritual life. The violence of war injured family stability, community sustainability, cultural viability, the continuity of the historical present, the dismantling of traditions and values, psychological peace and emotional security (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 123). Nordstrom estimates that eight million people were directly affected by the war in Mozambique, half of the entire population. Adelhaib described all South Sudanese women whether they were internally or externally displaced as being affected by the second Sudanese civil war (Adelhaib, 2010, p. 3).

Wartime violence as manifold in the lives of civilian populations in Mozambique, is resonant in the stories of women survivors of the second war in Sudan. Anna's story could well be the story of many of the participants in this study, if not all. Nordstrom's work suggests that there are many commonalities in the way women experience violence during war. Other scholars who have addressed these commonalities in the specific conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century conflicts and their aftermaths include Annan & Brier (2010, Northern Uganda), Burnett (2012, Rwanda), Green (2010, Guatemala), Jok (1999, 2006, South Sudan), Nikolić-Ristanović (2000, Balkans), O'Gorman (2011, Zimbabwe), Sideris (2003, Mozambique) Usta et al. (2008, Lebanon). Many of the conflicts that these scholars address involve rural populations.

Duany and Duany (2001) write that research with rural African women has been either inadequate or incomplete and data is both lacking and misrepresentative. Federici

(2008) argues that feminists have been successful in forcing both government and non-government organisations to make space for women, but have done little to empower women in rural areas (Federici, 2008). The majority of women in this study were from rural areas.

Scholarship on war and gender offers contextual analysis of how violence affects women during and after war. Literature argues that the effects of violence on the lives of women during war is pervasive. It also shows that defined gender roles change and distort during conflict and in post-conflict periods (D'Awol, 2011; El-Bushra, 2000; 2003, Horn, 2013; Jacob, Jacobson & Marchbank, 2000; Meintjes, 2001; Sideris, 2003; Turshen & Twagiramariya, 1998). The scholarship on the ways in which this occurred amongst southern Sudanese women, during internal and external displacement, in camps and in sites of urban asylum, are considered below.

Edward suggests 'the impact of exile on the lives and identities of people occurs in the interplay between historical, political and socio-cultural backgrounds and factors and the context of each refugee population' (Edward, 2001, p. 3). The Sudanese war was conducted on the site of women's bodies, which became both 'trophies and targets' for all oppositional forces involved (Jok, 2006, p. 65). Intent on disrupting familial and cultural life those forces targeted women and children. Destroying all means of survival for its rural African ethnic civilian populations was a key military strategy of the GoS. These strategies changed ways in which communities functioned and consequently gendered norms for women also changed. Southern Sudanese societies operated on strictly gendered social roles and relations. Women's positions were subordinate to men, they were required to obey male relatives and involvement in political or public activities was largely discouraged (Edward, 2001, p. 4). In the post-conflict environment, the adaptations of women survivors could also be resisted. This has been seen in the replication of the practices of war amongst family and community (Jok, 2006, p. 65; D'Awol, 2011; Stern, 2011). Increases in domestic violence and sole female vulnerability to male violence after conflict has been documented (Anan & Brier, 2010; D'Awol, 2011; Liebling-Kalifani et al., 2011; Usta et al., 2008).

Jok Madut Jok (1999; 2001; 2004; 2006; 2011), an indigenous Dinka scholar, has written specifically about the lives of southern Sudanese women during the civil war and the gendered differentials it produced. Dinka society is patrilineal and men are responsible for their own children, as well as the children of their brothers. Polygyny is the basis of marriage

customs and bride wealth is paid in cattle. Traditionally, potential husbands offer cows for a woman and her father or brother accepts the highest bid spread over time. Bride wealth is shared amongst family members over time (Beswick, 2004; Deng, 1980; Duany & Duany, 2001; Leinhardt, 1954; Stern, 2011). Women can choose a husband and engage in a 'love' marriage, but this is rare. Dinka custom, particularly in rural areas, also includes levirate marriage, whereby a woman of childbearing age marries a brother-in-law if her husband passes away. To maintain the patrilineal line, the children of the new union are named as the offspring of the deceased man (Beswick, 1994; Maher, 2014; Stern, 2011).

Jok's (1999) localised study of Dinka women, militarisation and gender violence addressed ways in which violence was socially reproduced in families and communities during the period of war. Using female research assistants, this study addressed the reconfiguration of normative behaviours which oversaw sexuality and reproduction. Women in this study talked of the intersections of family traditions and war which had increased demands for sexual services outside the boundaries of reproductive traditions. The war had also increased procreative demands. The study showed that women looked for ways to manage changes to normative traditions around sex and reproduction brought on by the war. They did so by exercising agency in attempts to reduce risks to their reproductive and personal well-being, which included procuring or self-inducing abortions (Jok, 1999).

Due to the length and the violence of the war, all levels of Dinka society saw a change in gender relations.<sup>25</sup> The number of men killed during the conflict meant that by the late 1990s women were head of two out of every five households (Duany & Duany, 2001, p. 63). Women struggled to provide for their families and were often reliant solely on food relief. In the absence of a male head, women's leadership became key to their family's survival. Food relief however was unreliable. Agencies allocated insufficient amounts and often overlooked female sole providers as household heads. Duany and Duany described women exercising 'mutual assistance'. Through gender-based networks and kin connections women looked for ways to support their families.

Another study with Dinka women during the war revealed traditional practices of polygyny and levirate marriage had become the basis of growing resentment amongst Dinka women (Beswick, 2001b). Women began to refuse levirate marriage if they no longer saw it

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<sup>25</sup> There are twenty-six Dinka sub-groups (Beswick, 2004)

as beneficial to their children. Other women who did look to levirate marriage as a means of support found their husband's family either unwilling or no longer able to provide another husband due to high rates of male mortality (Beswick, 2001b; Hutchinson, 2004). Beswick wrote that these women felt abandoned by their husbands' families (Beswick, 2001b, p. 54). Rural women were left to fend for themselves and their children; there was little or no other means of support. In rural areas this was extremely difficult as agricultural production was unreliable due to unpredictable seasons and the widespread insecurity. In towns and cities there were more opportunities for women to find alternative incomes, such as domestic work and the production of small household items, food and alcohol (brewing beer) (Duany & Duany, 2001). Edward also documents women forced into prostitution (Edward, 2001, p. 11). In intact households, income generation by women brought economic independence and therefore a say in how the income could be used over the running of the household in general.

Education had precipitated changes in gender relations prior to the second war amongst upper-class women who had access to it. But amongst the lower classes fathers were concerned that education might devalue their daughters and risk a loss of bride wealth. During the war those fears increased. Beswick wrote that in Kakuma camp these beliefs were evident amongst Dinka and Nuer male refugees. Men believed education would bring about social change. Women would stop complying with society norms and could no longer be controlled (Beswick, 2001b, p. 54). Contact with international non-government organisations (NGO) and their foreign aid workers also introduced new ideas and offered support in the development of new roles for women

The experience of displacement allowed women to question societal structures and meanings that in the past had prevented their participation in decision making, both personally and politically. Despite the extreme difficulty of displacement, women found degrees of freedom or liberation from cultural restraints. Edward points out, however, that it was the cultural attitudes or traditions that women found discriminatory or oppressive that were rejected (Edward, 2001, p. 3). Women had been traditionally considered the caretakers of the family and the men the protectors and providers. For many women during and after the war all three roles had to be adopted. As managers of their family affairs women exercised agency and independence not known prior to the war.

The split that occurred within the rebel army, the SPLA, in 1991, pitted Dinka and Nuer ethnic factions against each other and greatly exacerbated the struggles women faced in keeping their families alive. This internal conflict also significantly increased mortality in the Dinka-Nuer border area in Upper Nile state and atrocities were committed by both sides (Moro, 2002). Of civilian deaths 59 percent were children, women and the elderly (Hutchinson, 2004). Hutchinson (2004, p. 139) writes that Nuer women who lived through this period of intensified instability and insecurity (the factional split lasted until 2001) came under pressure to 'conceive and procreate in situation that potentially threatened their own physical well-being and their ability to care for their children'. This is reminiscent of Jok's (1999) study of western Dinka (from 1993-1995), which documented a similar phenomenon not directly linked to the inter-ethnic conflict, but to the rise in militarism generally.

Literature has documented how mainly rural women exercised agency during the conflict. They took on new roles as heads of their households, working with gender-based and kinship networks to sustain their families. Women tried controlling their reproductive duties in the face of increased sexual demands from men during the conflict. The longer the war went on the more critical women became of militarisation. Their assertiveness grew. Dinka women were beginning to see themselves as unequal citizens within their own communities as the war changed societal norms around marriage, levirate marriage and reproductive rights. In Kakuma refugee camp, women began to take advantage of education and training which gave them small incomes to support their children and were making individual decisions about their lives and their children's, a situation unheard of before the war.

Studies and reports on the post-conflict situation for these women have largely found that these war-time adaptations have not translated into permanent changes. Scholarship on the effects of wartime shows violence in the lives of women as pervasive and all encompassing. The loss and distortion of traditional gender roles for women during the war and the emergence of women in leadership saw an allocated quota of 25 percent women's representation in the governance system in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that brought the war to an end (Aldehaib, 2010). Jok (2011) describes poor governance in South Sudan, including corruption, nepotism and exclusions along both family and ethnic lines. Aldehaib (2010) has examined the post-war political landscape of those gender changes, noting that the institutionalised and highly patriarchal customary law has not allowed for an adaptation of gender inclusive of political engagement for South Sudanese women. Western

scholars, Jennifer Erickson and Caroline Faria, (2011) call for the development of African transnational feminism in relation to South Sudan, highlighting how South Sudanese women, resident within the diaspora, are both marginalized and privileged by that experience. Like Mohanty (2003) they urge the development of women's community groups on 'micro political' levels and call for more research with women in diasporas, arguing that strengthening their capacity will strengthen relationships with their counterparts in South Sudan. Erickson and Faria's (2011) study documents the political activism of these women in a return visit to South Sudan and the tensions this raised between themselves and women resident in the country. Local women appeared to see American South Sudanese women as educated and therefore arrogant. Diaspora women raised matters related to women and family, at a conference, that they believed needed redressing in their homeland. These concerns included early marriage, bride wealth, polygamy, rights to divorce and domestic violence. Diaspora women linked these practices to their own lives in America. One of the American delegates pointed out that leaving the country did not mean they left these problems behind. She described the early marriage of her niece in Australia as an example (Erickson & Faria, 2011). The study concluded that diaspora women believed they needed to engage an activism on gender-based issues in their homeland that was informal and 'feminised' in order for these matters to be listened to. A public march in the city of Juba to protest violence against women was conducted in what they thought would be considered a respectful way. Diaspora women believed that if they conveyed deference rather than defiance their march would be more effective with both women and men of the local population. Mostly the march was conducted in silence (Erickson & Faria, 2011, p. 646).

Other studies of post-conflict South Sudan have addressed factors preventing the development of new dimensions in gender roles. These included excessive alcohol intake amongst men, a prevalence of small arms and a lingering hyper-masculinity which the war had created in combatants (Aldehaib, 2010; Edward, 2007, 2014). Edward has written on numerous other impediments to post-conflict development of women's roles in South Sudanese society. High illiteracy, and the devaluing of education for girls prevents participation in political and civic affairs. Poverty, food insecurity and poor health care also limit women's participation. So too does the gendered division of labour, early marriage and wide-spread gender-based violence (Edward, 2014). During and after the war there was a reported increase in polygyny as the military elites formed themselves into a 'new aristocracy



through wartime predations and cemented its power through lavishing resources (captured during periods of war and post-war)' (Pinaud, 2014, p. 201). These new elites used their wealth to increase their status by acquiring more wives or by providing bride wealth payments for their soldiers, which also guaranteed their loyalty in the unstable post-conflict period. Pinaud writes of the social and political implications of war and post-war resource capture in South Sudan. The creation of a new and dominant class, 'a military aristocracy' (in post-war) has seen the 'formation of social classes through gifts of bride wealth and wives' and illustrates how corruption binds the system of political and class domination (2014, p. 193; 2015).

The ways in which gender roles for women changed during and after the war adds an additional layer of understanding of the multi-dimensional effects of wartime violence. It also foregrounds the agency in which women in this study drew on in their negotiations of survival, asylum and migration. Due to the disruption and destruction of traditional cultural and family lives, delineated gender roles changed and distorted (Adelhaib, 2010; Duany & Duany, 2001; Edward, 2001, 2007, 2014; Jok, 1991, 2001, 2006; Pinaud, 2013, 2014, 2015; Stern, 2011). The work of Adelhaib (2010), Edward, (2007, 2007, 2014), Erickson and Faria, (2011), Jok (2011) and Pinaud (2013, 2014, 2015) suggests that South Sudan had largely failed to consolidate gains from the liberation struggle or engage women in any meaningful way in post-conflict development. From the end of the war in 2005 to independence in 2011, little changed for women politically or socially.

In addressing the effects of war on the lives of diaspora women, a major theme that recurred in this study was the way in which women spoke about sexual violence during the conflict. This finding is theorised as unique to this group of diaspora women and is examined alongside the findings of two other related studies (Tankink & Richter, 2007; Tankink, 2013). In stark contrast to the experience of South Sudanese women in the Netherlands, while settlement in Australia is also complex and stressful, the data shows very few negative experiences, including public or political hostility towards themselves as new arrivals. The social controls that restrained South Sudanese women in the Netherlands, (see page 62) do not appear to be operating in the same way amongst South Sudanese women in Australia. They have broken the taboos that often prevent survivors of sexual violence from speaking out publicly, taboos which had restrained South Sudanese women in Netherlands diaspora from doing so (Tankink & Richters, 2007). That women in this study divulged details of sexual

violence, in public, i.e. in front of their peers, clan, family members, the interpreter and the author, suggests that are not constrained by these concerns.

Women seemed to utilise the interviews in this research project as an opportunity to speak—possibly for the first time. This research shows that former refugee women who spoke about sexual violence of their own volition are continuing to enact the change in gender roles that began during the war and periods of asylum. The desire of participants to raise this subject is suggestive of a re-organising of culture and identity in diaspora (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 4). The agency involved in breaking taboos is a continuation of the agency exercised in periods of war and asylum. Women made decisions at that time to protect and provide for their families. As sole heads of household's women developed necessary leadership roles and relied on gender-based and kinship networks as a means of survival. I theorise that women who break the silence assumed of victims of sexual violence are able to speak because of this agency. Speaking further evidences changes in gender roles that have been developed in the settlement and post-settlement in Australia. It also strongly suggests the experience of settlement in Australia has been an embodied one. The establishment of safety and security has also contributed to these women raising sexual violence during war and asylum and indicates its effects as not only complex but also potentially transformative.

In their report on sexual violence during conflict, Bastick, Grimm and Kunz (2007) have described it in the following war:

*An act of domination, grounded in a complex web of cultural preconceptions, in particular as regards gender roles. It is used to torture and humiliate people, and to punish or humiliate an enemy group or community. Sexual violence may be encouraged or tolerated within armed groups. In some conflicts, it has been used strategically to advance military objectives, such as the clearing of a civilian population from an area.* (Bastick, Grimm and Kunz, 2007, p. 9)

This definition establishes the foundation of understanding sexual violence during conflict to have multiple purposes and forms. Sexual violence includes, rape, mass rape, sexual slavery in forced marriages and enslavement, however, it is important to remember the overarching purpose of sexual violence is the violation of the body. Rape is the violation of the self but also the social body (Cahill, 2001, as cited in Zraly and Nyirazinyoye, 2010, p. 1056).

The literature on sexual violence toward women during conflict, across disciplines, is vast. The subject is addressed through its aftermath and effect on victims (D'Awol, 2011;

Leibling-Kalifani et al., 2011; Peltola, 2012; Ward & Marsh, 2006; Zraly & Nyirazinyoye, 2010), human rights (Alison, 2007; Copelon 1995; Wood, 2006), rape (including mass and collective rape) as tactics of war (Bergoffen, 2013; Farr, 2009; Green, 2004; Hagan, Rymond-Richmond, 2005; Milillo, 2006), international law and war tribunals (Asaf, 2015, Bergoffen, 2013; Henry, 2010), genocidal rape as state crime (Mullins, 2009a, 2009b) and children born of rape (Carpenter, 2007; Harris, 1993; Bartolomei, Eckert & Pittaway, 2009).

This review looks at both speech and silence in research. Ryan-Flood and Gill (2010) explored silences and secrets in research, stating that all research encounters involve both. In addressing silence, they say that the meanings of silence depend on context, power and affective relations within the research encounter (as does Ahmed, 2010, p. 1) and also ask if silence makes both resistance and healing possible. Malhotra and Carrillo Rowe (2013) seek to break with the Western tradition of privileging voice (speech) over silence. Keating (2013) addresses different modes of silence. Silence can be enforced, engaged, oppositional, a refusal, a witness or deliberate. Keating also describes the possibilities of silence as both restive and repressive (Keating, 2013, p. 16). These works foreground questions of silence in the context of this research which are addressed further in Chapter Four.

The work on women's responses to sexual violence during the genocide in Rwanda illuminate's discourses around women's voices and sexual violence. Peltola (2012) wrote of organised rape being widespread in conflicts additional to Rwanda. They included Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-1996), Guatemala (1991-1996), DRC Congo (1998-present), Sierra Leone, (1991-1995) and Liberia (1989-2003). Mullins (2009a, 2009b) adds Darfur in Sudan to this list. Estimates of the number of women raped during the genocide in Rwanda put the figure at approximately 250,000 (Green, 2004; Peltola, 2012).

The rape of civilians was declared both a crime against humanity and an act of genocide for the first time after the genocide in Rwanda. Mullins (2009b) reported that culturally, the shame attached to rape from Rwandan women meant that during the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), it was essential to maintain secrecy in order for witnesses to be willing to give evidence. Identities were hidden by the use of pseudonyms and the giving of evidence behind screens. Prior to evidence from the first witness the translators informed the prosecutions team that neither the interpreters of witness would use explicit language, i.e. penis, vagina. Explicit terms or phrases like these would only be used after the either counsel had used them and then translated. Mullins wrote that this

meant testimonies were less graphic than expected. Some witnesses used words other than the word rape to describe their experience, including 'used' or 'tortured' (Mullins, 2009b, p. 725). Those who witnessed attacks tended to give evidence that was more specific and detailed.

A study by Zraly and Nyirazinyoye (2010) sought to address the psychological damage of genocidal rape in non-western cultural contexts, by examining the resilience of survivors in southern Rwanda. The researchers interviewed members of two separate genocide survivor associations, one whose members identified as widows, the other as survivors of genocide-rape. Findings included multiple socio-economic factors involving 'ongoing social connection with others in order to make meaning, establish normalcy and endure suffering in daily life', (Zraly & Nyirazinyoye, 2010, p. 1656) were elements of resilience amongst these women. These elements were shaped by cultural-linguistic specific concepts of *kwihangana* (withstanding), *kwondera kubaho* (living again) and *gukomesa ubusima* (continuing life/health). For the survivors these concepts functioned in their everyday lives as 'a set of multiple elemental sociocultural processes that did not differ across association membership' (Zraly & Nyirazinyoye, 2010, p. 1662). The social connectedness of members made their lives manageable. The researchers state that post-conflict mental health promotion that facilitates safe social connection between survivors can provide a counterpoint to the stigma and marginalisation directed toward survivors and 'authorise, stabilise and catalyse culturally-specific resilience processes' (Zraly & Nyirazinyoye, 2010, p. 1663).

These studies have indicated the destructive value of rape and other forms of sexual violence during war, including genocidal war, and the scale at which this type of violence is directed towards women during violent conflict. These works have also shown the strength of degradation and the accompanying shame in the aftermath for victims of wartime sexual violence. In Rwanda, personal accounts of sexual violence are linguistically constrained, even in a court of law that has established this type of abuse as a crime against humanity. The lives of survivors of genocide rape are made bearable through intrapsychic concepts of resilience that are grounded in social connectedness with other survivors. Reminiscent of these findings is the work of Warin and Dennis (2008), who wrote that trauma memories do not appear in 'neat, told narratives' (Warin & Dennis, 2008, p. 113). Their work addressed the difficulties of eliciting or constructing narratives with Iranian migrant women in Australia. The researchers asked how women embody and remember traumatic social history. They wrote

that 'bodily knowledge is not discursively constructed or represent, but is actively engaged with through tacit knowledge' (Warin & Dennis, 2008, p. 101). Predominantly Baha'i who were persecuted by the Iranian regime, these diaspora women transformed the immediacy of trauma, which lives beyond speech, into social spaces. Trauma that could be muted or silenced in narrative form could find presence in and through the habits and processes of the daily activities of their lives.

Tankink (2004) raised the subject of war survivors remaining silent about highly traumatic experiences. This study was conducted in 1986, in south-west Uganda and interrogated silence about war trauma. Participants in the study believed talking was dangerous and could cause illness. However, these beliefs had emerged in the absence of the cultural and social institutions that had been destroyed during war. An absence of public space alongside the psychological, political and economic consequences of the violence had led to a community-sanctioned silence (Tankink, 2004, p. 3; D'Awol, 2011). Tankink points out that the literature on sexual violence, in Western terms, sees disclosure of the event as necessary to the well-being of the victim. Tankink goes on to point out that in mental health care of refugees diagnosed with PTSD disclosure as therapeutic is not considered to be necessary. Instead, social support and other forms of non-verbal interventions such as the person feeling in control of their life is considered therapeutic. The Tankink study is not specifically addressing sexual violence, but sexual violence was a significant feature of the conflict in Uganda which spanned from 1971-1986. Post-conflict, for the Banyankore people in the study, silence was pervasive from fears of burdening others, losing control of emotions and to avoid vulnerability and protect themselves from repercussions. However, these reasons were all compounded by the cultural practice of not expressing emotion (Tankink, 2004, p. 9). The lack of a social setting in which to share painful experiences reduced those memories to an internal, individual activity, one that was thought to be natural but for many of the participants was also a burden. Tankink (2004) adds that while the expression of emotion and sharing of war-related trauma was not culturally sanctioned, participants in the study talked with her about both their silence and their suffering. Tankink assumed that, as she was an outsider, potential risks were perceived by the women as lower.

Tankink's (2004) study provides critical value to the approach this thesis takes in theorising voice and sexual violence with South Sudanese Australian women. Situating

Tankink's study here builds a foundation on which to position findings from this research. The relationship between voice and the aftermath of sexual violence is a complex one. For Bayankore women in south-east Uganda, the intersection with local culture and the post-conflict setting did not allow for voice. Gruber's (2005) study of an organised response to women survivors of mass rape during conflict points to similar outcomes. The Saho women of Eritrea were assaulted by Ethiopian military in 2000 and a programme of health care and counselling was organised in response to a request from Saho elders. The programme failed due to resistance in the community from predominantly middle-aged men who challenged traditional structures of power in the form of seniority. The violence experienced by the community had weakened community cohesion. Gruber suggests that for elders to publicly acknowledge sexual violence, when traditionally this subject would have been taboo, did open up space for other younger men to challenge them. The study also showed the strength of denial and resistance to disclosure amongst this Muslim community. Victims talking of sex or sexuality and sexual violence could be accused of sexual permissiveness (Gruber, 2005, p. 3). Knowing that they were not supported by their community and disclosure risked stigmatisation silenced these women. Knowing that the perpetrators were immune from accountability also added to the silence.

In Jok's (2006) study of women, violence and resilience in post-conflict Sudan he stated that during focus groups conducted in the Juba, which had been held by the SAF for years, the most talked about issue was 'the rape of women, men, girls, and boys' (Jok, 2006, p. 64). This adds critical value to understanding the complexities of voice and sexual violence and the varying situations of constraint on disclosure.

Another study by Tankink and Richter (2007) does specifically address sexual violence in the lives of diaspora women in the Netherlands. This study focuses on Ajak, a Dinka woman whom she interviewed four times. Ajak's experiences during war and asylum were typical of South Sudanese women survivors. Ajak was gang raped and the child she bore as a result of this was offered for adoption to a Catholic church in Egypt. The church did not accept the child but instead offered her assistance to leave the country for the Netherlands, where she lived as an asylum seeker. Ajak had shared with other Sudanese at the centre the pain of her lost family and home but did not speak of the rape. To do so would risk being shamed by their community and her relatives being shamed. Remaining silent made Ajak feel guilty, as in the Bible, lying was a sin. Shame and fear of being blamed

for the rape kept Ajak silent, although she had shared the story with two female members of her extended family. One had been raped herself and the other Ajak believed would keep her secret. Both women told Ajak to not speak with anyone else and forget the rape. If the story was to become gossip within in the community the family would lose respect and all members would be held responsible for the perception that Ajak had done something 'wrong' (Tankink & Richters, 2007, p. 5). Ajak said that talking about past trauma meant remembering and that was painful, but forgetting was difficult as well. She felt safe in the Netherlands however and consciously worked at forgetting by being active and not being alone. Additionally, Ajak had no understanding of what a medical professional could offer her. After surviving on her own with two young children for five years, when Ajak was reunited with her husband she said she did not want to continue with traditional Dinka gender roles. After a period of constant domestic violence Ajak's family gave her permission to divorce. The gossip the divorce generated in the community caused Ajak much suffering as she was blamed for not being a good wife. Ajak spoke of silence protecting her daughter. If it was known that a child was as a result of rape the child would be judged and condemned by the community as the mother was. That child's children would also be judged. Ajak described life after her divorce as extremely difficult and in the stress of that, painful memories would flood back to her.

The social ethics and values of Dinka society appear unchanged within the diaspora in the Netherlands, even though Ajak had resisted traditional gender responsibilities. Ajak needed the support of her family and community in diaspora; to lose that would have been terrible. While she felt safe in the Netherlands, she was not secure. The asylum process was arduous and political hostility toward refugees and asylum seekers was prevalent. For Ajak remaining silent was a significant tool for survival.

Ajak's story of silence as protection is located on a 'continuum of understanding' the ways gender change during war may touch down in diaspora. The findings of this study are also located on that continuum. Diaspora women in Australia do not appear to be constrained by the same concerns as Ajak was in her locations. Safety and security has been established here. Women have faced many challenges during settlement in a foreign country and for a number of them post-settlement continues to be highly stressful. However, these women in Australia appear to have continued to adapt and develop cultural and social changes. Talking about sexual violence suggests a sense of social connectedness

with other South Sudanese women. That connectedness is a key feature of coping with trauma. It provides a platform for those who wish to speak and those who choose to remain silent.

For diaspora women in Australia, gendered adaptations and adjustments to cultural expectations that began during the war have continued into their post- settlement lives. Their reconstructed social world maintains close connections to other former refugee women and is tolerant and supportive of the subjective self.

Burnett (2012) looks at the coping mechanisms of women survivors in her work on memory and silence in the wake of Rwandan genocide. Burnett theorises that silence is a protective force utilised in a number of different contexts. Remaining silent about the past offered protection in the tense aftermath of the genocide, when any perceived threat to the power of the ruling government of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was quashed. Burnett (2012) describes the intense public silence surrounding post-genocide RPF violence as an 'amplified silence' (Burnett, 2012, p. 111). Burnett writes that the silences surrounding 'individual, familial and communal experiences of violence' is amplified by the tightly controlled (and contrived) story of genocide that is conveyed each year by politicians in national mourning ceremonies, in radio and on television (Burnett, 2012, p. 112). The ability to narrate individual stories allowed people to see beyond ethnic essentialising which underscored the prevention of any but genocide survivor stories being recounted in public.

The maintenance of that silence has its foundations in fear of reprisals should it be broken. Burnett suggests silence is a major limitation in the possibilities of reconciliation. There is also a gendered component to amplified silence. Women have been at the centre of decisions to break that silence, in private and public settings, in ways that do challenge the political hegemony of the RPF and its controls on memorial and remembering.

Silence also provides protection against the experience of violence and the memory of it. In Rwandan society silence is a culturally appropriate coping mechanism (Burnett, 2012, p. 115). Children are taught to expect that only family members will be responsive to their cries or complaints and sharing painful, tearful memories with strangers would be futile and inappropriate. After meeting with members of women's cooperatives, those women were warned to not say too much to Burnett, who became aware that women had organised their personal narratives of the genocide and its aftermath to fit with the paradigmatic story of those events established by the RPF. Silence as a protective mechanism against traumatic



memory, as a culturally appropriate copying strategy, was also a powerful method of control that was enforced through fear (Burnett, 2012, p. 117). Burnett writes that while gender roles changed significantly after the genocide as women were legally emancipated in 1994, this was largely tokenistic, in reality for most women the cultural scripts of subservience to men continued.

Burnett's work provides further understanding that women's responses to violence during conflict are contextual and the degrees to which changes in gender roles are sustained after conflict is also dependent on intersecting contextual elements. This study suggests the South Sudanese women in the Australian diaspora, who choose to speak about sexual violence during war, have maintained and developed those changes. It is evident that their narratives are clearly breaking cultural and social taboos about identifying themselves as survivors of this type of violence. I posit that a heightened sense of agency is indicative of security and safety established during settlement but based on the challenges of managing their lives during war and asylum prior to arrival. The trajectory of gender change and agency is continued in the next section which addresses the literature on women refugees during settlement and post-settlement.

Women respond to change differently depending on their ages, educational level, ethnicity and social status (Edward, 2001, p. 12). Edward wrote this in the context of southern Sudanese women still resident in their post-war homeland, but this notion is also applicable to women during settlement in diaspora. Literature on the challenges and difficulties of settlement for refugee communities in Australia and other countries of resettlement is significant. Though not a conclusive list, this scholarship addresses mental health, health and wellbeing, trauma, employment and education, language acquisition, social capital, social connectedness, parenting, mothering, youth and intergenerational conflicts (Atwell, Gifford & McDonald-Wilmsen, 2009; Kaplan & Webster, 2003; Lim, 2009; McMichael & Ahmed, 2003; Hebbani, Obijiofor & Bristed, 2009, 2013; Herrman, Kaplan & Szwarc, 2010; Deng & Marlowe, 2013; Deng, 2017; Levi, 2014; Drummond, Mizan, Brocx & Wright, 2011; Madziva & Zontoni, 2012; Marete, 2011; McMichael & Manderson, 2004; Milner & Khawaja, 2010; Ochala & wa Mungai, 2016; Pittaway, Muli & Shteir, 2009; Murray, 2010; Ramsey, 2016; Riggs et al., 2012; Rousseau, Mekki-Berrada & Moreau, 2001; Savic, Chur-Hansen, Mahmood & Moore, 2013; Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2009; Sheikh-Mohammed et al., 2006; Simich, Este & Hamilton, 2010; Tilbury & Rapley, 2004; Wilmsen, 2013).

The literature on trauma, mental health and the well-being of former refugees is perhaps the largest body of work on the refugee experience. In Chapter One I challenged assumptions around PTSD, trauma and the refugee experience. The following section explores the literature around that challenge. The work of Schweitzer, Melville, Steel and Lacherez (2006) shows that while traumatic experiences were synonymous with the refugee experience for Sudanese arrivals to Australia, less than 5 percent met the criteria of Post-Traumatic stress although 25 percent reported clinically high levels of psychological distress. Social support, especially from members of their own ethnic communities, played a significant role in mental health outcomes (Schweitzer et al., 2006, p. 179). Family and social support as well as religious faith were significant in promoting resilience in the settlement phase for new arrivals (Schweitzer, Greenslade & Kagee, 2007; Sossou, Craig, Ogren & Schnak, 2008; Niner, Kokanovic & Cuthbert, 2013). The authors argued for a psychosocial approach to well-being that includes the beliefs, perspectives and values of the individual, rather than a narrow mental health focus. Khawaja, White, Schweitzer and Greenslade (2008) write that literature on refugee adaption shows that pre-migration experiences impact significantly on psychological distress during settlement, 'there is a robust relationship between the number of traumatic events experienced and the severity of subsequent psychiatric symptoms' (Khawaja et al. 2008, p. 490; Steel, Silove, Phan & Bauman, 2002; Marlowe & Adamson, 2011). However, post-migration difficulties including loss of social and cultural support can contribute significantly to Post-Traumatic Stress symptoms especially, but not solely, for females. Khawaja et al. also suggests the frame work of PTSD may be too narrow to account for the complex psychosocial nature of war trauma. A range of cross-discipline scholarship concurs with this view (Fozdar, 2009; Marlowe, 2009, 2010; Sideris, 2003; Silove, 1999; Westoby, 2009; Westoby & Ingamells, 2009). A review of studies on Sudanese refugees from a mental health and psychosocial wellbeing perspectives revealed a lack of knowledge about appropriate interventions for the Sudanese population. It found that aspects of standard treatments provided by western-trained mental health workers were not clearly beneficial for this group (Tempany, 2009).

The literature on settlement processes addresses a range of models and requirements necessary for successful acculturation and belonging. Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003) wrote that the way in which refugees approaches to settlement could be categorised in two ways, either active, as achiever or consumers, or passive, as endurers or victims. They add that an

emphasis on social inclusion through appropriate housing, employment, language acquisition, helps to socially 'activate' refugees and create practices that constitute living an ordinary life and may well also help healing pre-migration traumas (Colic-Peisker, 2009, p. 82). Community-based approaches to recovery and resettlement that recognised the communal nature of the culture and traditions amongst new arrivals were advocated by Mitchell, Kaplan and Crowe (2006). The restoration of both meaning and purpose could build both connections and trusting relationships that could grow and strengthen social networks.

Shakespeare-Finch and Wickham (2009) found that homesickness, absent family and acculturation difficulties were a hindrance to the settlement process. Acculturation stress included difficulties in language acquisition and communication, making social connections, understanding the law, parenting and expectations of gender roles and both social isolation and having to live independently. The functioning of Australian society, as a generally peaceful country, and the financial and settlement assistance that was offered new arrivals were seen to help during settlement. So too did social support and personal resources. Making friends and feeling supported helped people feel like they belonged in the country. Friendship and support came from family members, other Africans and the Australian-born community (Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2009, p. 38). Faith in God, was also seen as a significant aiding factor.

Employment and the building of social networks were seen as key in subjective assessments of life satisfaction in Australia amongst migrants from the former Yugoslavia, black Africans and Middle Eastern refugee groups (Colic-Peisker, 2009). In the Colic-Peisker, study refugee life satisfaction was not dramatically lower than the general population. Abdelkerim and Grace (2012) write that the biggest threat to active engagement into Australian society for refugee communities is unemployment. The relief of arriving in a peaceful place is, over time, replaced by a new form of anguish, that of long-term poverty and social exclusion. Policy responses need to include innovative responses to mitigate the consequences of unemployment in refugee communities.

Hatoss and Huijser (2010) argued that women with refugee backgrounds face cultural and linguistic barriers accessing educational opportunities in Australia. 'Policies that depict refugee women as vulnerable have serious implications for these women' (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010, p. 149). The Hatoss and Huijser (2010) study suggests that education is one of the most important goals in a refugee's life. However, education opportunities for Sudanese women in

Australia are limited by cultural expectations of them as mothers and carers as well as requirements to financially support family in their homeland. Former refugee women should be given the right tools and support to shape their own space in the resettlement process that allows them to also create a sense of belonging. Doing so would create a framework that views the refugee experience as a fluid, ongoing and productive process of negotiating social and cultural value systems. Those negotiations allow women to develop a sense of belonging to and in their new home.

Belonging is defined here by the work of Atonsich (2010), who suggests that belonging is both personal and political. The personal as a sense of feeling 'at home' and the political as a feeling of inclusion. His work asks if the cultural and ethnic diversity of contemporary societies could be constructed as communities of belonging, rather than identity as a personal sense of belonging cannot be separated from its social context (Atonsich, 2010, p. 653). Hooks (2009) also describes belonging as a personal sense of home. For Hooks home is a place (hooks, 2009, p. 2), a place with specific requirements and attributes that allows it to be a home.

McPherson (2010) built on this work by showing that refugee women in Australia emphasise the role of education in helping them facilitate feelings of self-actualisation. McPherson writes that English language acquisition is benevolently designed to help refugee women conform to Australian values by 'fixing them'. This compounds representations of refugee women as victims without agency (McPherson, 2010, p. 565). Women in this study spoke of wanting to be understood in terms of their potential for self-knowledge and direction as well as a recognition of their right to self-care. Feeling a sense of belonging and being included in a cohesive society is seen as vital to a successful integration into a new culture. Loss of parental power and status and fears of youth crime, truancy and a 'relaxed morality' is addressed by Losconcz (2012). Losconcz also addressed the perceived role of Australian government authority in these matters. Findings included strong concern amongst South Sudanese parents about government authority, particularly in child protection matters. Fears of losing power over their children in Australia and the heightened freedom of young people were additional findings. Parents felt they had little option but to capitulate to the requirements of authorities, even though they did not see interventions as appropriate, desirable or of any moral value (Losconcz, 2012, p. 9). Doubts as to the moral and cognitive legitimacy of government agency interventions lead to a sense of injustice and despair.

For Sudanese refugees adhering to the dominant cultural norms of what social cohesion and belonging might be is problematic (Wille, 2013). Wille found that several factors deter or foster feelings of belonging. Belonging develops differently and independently for new arrivals, and the acknowledgement of agency and subjectivity are both starting points for that development. Wille reports that lack of language skill, employment and education limits the expression of former refugees from Sudan living in Australia. Women without employment and with limited English experienced stronger barriers in the expression of agency than men did (Wille, 2013, p. 95). Hebbani, Obijiofor and Bristed (2013) wrote that the settlement process for Sudanese women is problematic due to significant cross-cultural differences. Intergenerational conflicts occurred when children adapt from values of collectivity to individualistic values. Marital norms in Sudanese culture emphasise families remain intact regardless of marital stress or family tensions. Yet government and non-government agencies including police and child protection agencies have undermined that emphasis. Identity is adversely effected when women cannot communicate outside of their home and may rely on their children to speak English for them. Poor relationships with local community members, including neighbours, strained the settlement process for these women. Positive intergenerational, intercultural and cross-cultural relationships assisted in the process.

Walker, Koh, Wollersheim and Liamputtong (2015) looked at the way communication technologies can assist refugee women to develop social connectedness. The use of free-call mobiles and peer-support training was found to enhance ties with their own community as well as to participate and better understand the host community and improve overall feelings of social support and inclusion.

Literature on key settlement issues for former refugees illustrates that difficulties in language acquisition, education and employment undermine the settlement process for women. Settlement models that operate programmes which assume the agency of former refugee women contribute to their ability to re-establish social groups and connectedness. A sense of connectedness contributes to feelings of belongs in both personal and political ways.

The final section of this literature review examines major themes in the post-settlement period scholarship. Two key concepts frame the post-settlement period for the South Sudanese in Australia. The first is transnationalism, defined as 'how migrants economic, political and social relations create social field that cross international boundaries' (Basch et

al., 1994, as cited in Al-Ali, Black and Koser, 2001). Translocality conceptualises the movement of localised communities into transnational communities (Conradson & McKay, 2007; Halilovich, 2001). This provides a framework to understand how the forced migration of the South Sudanese has created diaspora (and refugee) communities in multiple locations. Borrowing from Sassen's concept of cross-border circuits (Sassen, 2003, 2009), diaspora women perform acts of emotional labour with family and communities transnationally, within Australia, their homeland, countries of first asylum and other resettlement countries. Key dimensions of the transnational family experience are conceptualised as migration, emotions and belonging (Skrbiš, 2008, p. 231). Acts of emotion work includes emotional gift exchanges and maintaining kin relationships across time and space (Baldassar, 2007, 2008; Svašek, 2010). A significant element of transnational emotional labour is the provision of remittances, from former refugees living in diaspora to family and communities in transnational locations. This is also true of other, non-refugee migrants (Shandy, 2003, 2006; Lim, 2009; McKay, 2007; Harris, Lyons & Marlowe, 2013; Baak, 2015). Cultural imperatives of care, *in situ* and at a distance, are maintained, despite the practical difficulties of doing so. Severe financial restrictions impact on the provision of remittances as transnational acts of emotional labour, but do not prevent women from maintaining roles as care-givers. The context of caregiving for South Sudanese Australian women has shifted during post-settlement from one of post-conflict—the aftermath of the 1983-2005 war—to the current conflict in their homeland, which began in December 2013 and is ongoing.

### 3.4. Conclusion

In this review I have located myself in the research, addressing the multiple intersections of my own subjectivity as a white women doing research with black migrant women in Australia. This section theorised emotionality and reflexivity as key to doing feminist research about violence and forced migration, but locates acknowledging vulnerabilities, in the researcher and the researched, as equally significant.

African feminist scholars have suggested that the essentialising of African women by Western feminist scholarship has been destructive, reinforcing stereotypes of both African women and Africa. These scholars point to the differences in essential concepts, such as

family, gender and power, and urge Western feminists to do work that is both context specific and centring of women's voices.

The third section of the review acknowledges the violence of war to be all pervasive in the lives of women who live through it. However, during war gender roles change, women were forced to function differently and consequently social relationships changed. Women engaged in mutual assistance with each other and through their kinship groups. Displaced women took on roles as head of households and became entirely responsible for their families. They developed agency and independence fundamental to surviving, resisting and escaping war. Resilience, agency and strategic creativity was grounded in networks of family and community. These relationships were resources which women employed in their daily negotiations of survival and speak to Nordstrom's notion that experiences of war are connected to the politics of self-identity and personhood (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 4). Family and community provided more than identity, they also provided hope. It was through these networks that women were able to escape and rebuild different lives in Australia.

I have suggested here that these women's wartime experiences laid a foundation for continued social and cultural change within settlement and post-settlement processes. Women who spoke of sexual violence represent those changes. Those who chose speech over silence are able to do so because they have found safety and security in Australia. They have, however, also found new social settings and support, despite ongoing difficulties around language and employment.

## Chapter Four: Centring voice: silence, sound and speech

### 4.1. Introduction

This project was originally designed to address the impact of slavery during Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005). Dinka territories of Twic and Abyei were at the epicentre of that conflict in its early years. The study sought to look at how the mass enslavement which occurred in that time had impacted on the functioning of these communities. Slavery, and its aftermath, was to be considered through the view of women members of those communities, in particular its elders. However, when permission to undertake fieldwork in those locations was not granted by the university, the project was re-configured to be conducted in Melbourne within the diaspora community. Community referred throughout the thesis to mean the singular, large community of South Sudanese, as well as the multiple ethnic communities that make up the diaspora. This change saw the project evolve in two significant ways. First, it became more inclusive and broadly representative of South Sudanese women in general, rather than focusing on one of the communities many ethnicities. Despite the change, 25 of the 42 participants recruited for the project were Dinka, the majority ethnic group in South Sudan. Secondly, the central question of the project also became inclusive, considering not only slavery but other acts of genocide as well and how those events touch the lives of South Sudanese Australian women in Melbourne.

This chapter addresses the methodology and methods of the research, as well as the theoretical frameworks which informed how data were analysed. It will show how the standard method of qualitative, social science inquiry involving individual and small group, semi-structured interviews were made feminist and localised in its approach.

Lengthy career experience in service provision roles in child protection, domestic violence and refugee settlement case work informs my understanding of complex inequalities for women in migrant and non-migrant communities. Engagement with these women, prior to undertaking this project, included interpersonal encounters that were both informal and professional. Conceptually, the researcher as 'outsider' or 'insider' is part of the feminist ethics of this project. My acceptance by the women who participated in this project as an 'insider' is indicative of my age, gender, and lengthy personal and professional relationships



with these communities, including visits to their homeland. However, in recognition of my whiteness as a majority status, I also recognise my status of *kawauja*<sup>26</sup>. I am recognised and referred to in this community as white, also an ‘outsider’. Recognition of both statuses acknowledges duality as intrinsic to my role in this project. Duality also acknowledges power differentials between researcher and researched; it can be managed but never mitigated.

The work of de Lange, Mitchell and Bhana (2012) provides a relevant example of contextual feminist research which addressed gender-based violence through women teachers in rural South Africa. Through project work in their area, issues of gender, race and rural locations were mediated by the long relationships they had established with these women prior to undertaking the research. Yet they acknowledge how, as a mixed-race team of female researchers, they were always both ‘insiders and outsiders’. Through project work in their area, issues of gender, race and rural locations were mediated by the long relationship they had established with these women prior to undertaking the research.

This analysis was conducted through a feminist lens and is framed theoretically by the work of Elaine Scarry (1985) and Sara Ahmed (2004). Their conceptualisations of pain, borders and affect provide a means to better understand the lives of former refugee women as porous and complex and how they have negotiated and mitigated gendered acts of genocide and forced migration into, new subjectivities and belongings.

## 4.2. Methodological considerations, recruitment and fieldwork

Feminists have sought to write histories of subordinate groups and redress the lack of agency in those deemed subordinate, recover their ‘lost’ narratives and the representations that excluded them from history (Vezzadini & Guidi, 2013, p. vii). Given that older South Sudanese women have not been able to document their experiences of war and forced migration in the way literate, voluntary migrant groups have, transcripts from this study provide data but are also a valid and necessary record of survival and migration. The oral narratives of these women, collected as fieldwork data, differs from data from literate cultures. Women from oral cultures narrate culturally specific histories and personal narratives. Oral histories,

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<sup>26</sup> Dinka for white person

narratives and story-telling are subjective and embodied, particularly in the expression of pain which is shaped by context and the history and experience of the subject (Scarry, 1985).

As a feminist project the purpose of this research was to develop understandings of the gendered nature of the genocidal second civil war in Sudan through the voices of the women who survived it. The primary research method of in-depth interviews was suited to these participants as members of oral, collectivist cultures.

The main consideration of this methodology was to centre the voices of women. Small-group interviews favoured talking over cups of tea in the company of friends and peers, in their home or other settings in which they were comfortable. Given the highly sensitive and potentially distressing subject matter, the ease of the women was paramount. Cuthbert's (2000) work on feminist methodologies suggests a relatively unstructured interview gives the interviewee/s scope to shape the interview according to what she/they think is important. This way the interviewer not only hears the stories of these women, but also the strategies and narratives used to tell them (Cuthbert, 2000, p. 2). This provides a foundation in which to interpret and analyse data in a way that does not universalise or homogenise the subject.

The disembodiment of gendered violence creates degrees of secrecy, fear and shame (Tankink, 2004, 2007; D'Awol, 2011). Research with survivors of violence requires sensitivity, tact, adaptability and high degrees of both empathy and respect (Burnett, 2012; Hume, 2007; Reilly, 2013). The ethics of contextually grounded research of this kind is paramount. Ethics are defined by who we are, as individuals and as members of groupings, be they organisations or families. Mama (2007) defines ethics as a response to location as well as a combination of various collective identities, including intellectual identities. 'The ethics that we adopt to guide our scholarly practices—are informed by our identifications with particular communities and the values they uphold' (Mama, 2007, p. 6). Ethics are also guided by the requirements of the Monash University Higher Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC). The application for ethics approval for this project was considered high risk research by MUHREC. Full consideration was given to the impact of this research on the women participants and this community. MUHREC granted ethics approval for the project on December 22, 2014. After fieldwork in Sudan was cancelled in March 2015, multiple adaptations were made to the approval in the following months as the project evolved into the form that is presented here.

Data collection occurred during June and August of 2015 and January and February of 2016. The method included semi-structured small group and individual interviews as well as unstructured conversations before and after interview, which were recorded in post-interview notes. Time was given to build a rapport by speaking and meeting with women prior to recording. A number of interviews were rescheduled when participants indicated that they were not ready to be recorded. Individual interviews occurred when it had not been possible for the participant to attend a group interview. The open-ended, loose structure of the questions were also designed to acknowledge the practice the knowledge system of orality needs time. Trying to limit a conversation to a set period of time, e.g. one hour, limits the process and can also be considered disrespectful. A conversation must take as much time as it needs.

Participants were recruited through both informal and formal snowballing processes. Twelve of the participants were known to me prior to undertaking this research. Six of these women are considered 'gatekeepers' in the community. They have status amongst other women, as leaders both formally and informally. Those women assisted in the informal snowballing process by inviting members of their women's groups to participate. Through this process I attended a number of community meetings and informal women's gatherings to introduce myself and talk about the project. To avoid the potential bias of working only through my own network and to show respect to elected officials, I also made formal contact with various associations including the Lou-Nuer Community, the Twic Mayardit Community of Melbourne, the Mading Aweil Community of South Sudan (Melbourne) and the Acholi Community Association of Victoria. A phone call was made to the person identified as representative of their group, then an email was sent detailing the subject and design of the project was sent with copies of the consent form and explanatory statements for their information. A second call was then made to follow up and I was then put in contact with the women's representative for that group. The project was then discussed by phone and a time to meet was made to discuss, in person, the project. This process established contact with Nuer and Acholi women, and additional Twic and Malual Dinka women.

All participants were born in southern Sudan, except for one, who is Ugandan-born Acholi. Acholi communities live on either side of the border dividing South Sudan and Uganda. Many southern Sudanese Acholi moved into Uganda because of the war. This participant was included in the study as she had married a southern Sudanese Acholi man, so identified

herself as South Sudanese. During the war they and their children made multiple border crossings related to which location was considered safer. Another Acholi woman was born in Nairobi, Kenya, then moved back to Sudan shortly after.

The question of which language should be used during the interview was discussed prior to it and a professional interpreter was provided on request. Other participants preferred interpreting to be provided by a member of their group, or they chose to speak in English. Interviews were conducted in the home of the women's group leader on their request. Two exceptions to that saw women gather at a church hall in Fitzroy and at a settlement agency in Werribee, which was the place of employment for the woman who facilitated the meeting. Two of the small-group interviews occurred during a pre-planned gathering of a women's group. The other small-group interviews were convened for the purposes of the interview. Locations of interviews generally reflected ethnic groups across Melbourne. Loosely, many Equatorian groups are located in western suburbs (Kuku in Werribee) and south-east (Acholi in Pakenham) and Nuer and Dinka in south east and western locations. During the course of the fieldwork I travelled over one thousand kilometres in my car.

In order to maintain a methodology that focused on narratives, women were not surveyed to establish demographic information. The information seen in this chapter was gleaned from the transcripts of consent forms, or was shared before or after the interviews. The size of families was difficult to ascertain without direct questions. Such questions were not asked to avoid any distress regarding family mortality during and after the war. Women did at times speak of family members who had passed away, but they were not asked to elaborate, unless a point of clarification was needed. It is clear however that many of the participants did not arrive in Australia with all of their children. This is for a number of reasons including: they were adults and or had families of their own by the time the visa to travel was issued; their whereabouts were unknown; their whereabouts were known, but for a range of reasons they could not join them on their visa; they had already migrated to another location; or they had passed away. The lowest number of children mentioned by participants was two, the highest was twelve. Amongst the older women, six or seven children were mentioned.

It is important to note that the second largest ethnic group in South Sudan (and Melbourne), the Nuer, are unfortunately not represented in this study. Negotiations between

me, the President of the Nuer Association, and the Women's Group President of the Association and her deputy, were conducted over a four-month period. One meeting was held with the women's president and her three deputies. A small group interview with all of them was planned. Only two attended and the interview could not be conducted as the woman who was to interpret for the other was unwell and left shortly after I arrived. A group interview was suggested at a community meeting, but I was unable to attend on that day. Four other small group interviews were planned, all of which were cancelled when I arrived at the venue when none of the potential participants arrived. There is likely a number of reasons for this. One is clearly the stress and tension the conflict that was occurring in the Nuer home territory in South Sudan was causing.<sup>27</sup> Related to this was the frequency of funerals and the attendant rituals and routines. Regardless of whether a family or community member had passed away in South Sudan or Australia funeral rites took precedence over all other engagements or events. The project was extended by three weeks to allow time to conduct interviews but after the fifth cancellation, a decision had to be made to conclude fieldwork without input from Nuer women. Their absence is significant and deeply regretted.

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<sup>27</sup> Previously Unity and Jonglei state

Table 2:1: Fieldwork Interviews: ethnicity, number and language

Interview sequence	Type	Ethnicity	Number present	Interpreter use	Interpreter type
Interview 1	group	Twic Dinka	five	yes	professional
Interview 2	group	Maluwal Dinka	five	yes	professional <sup>28</sup>
Interview 3	group	Ngok Dinka	eight	yes	professional
Interview 4	individual	Malual Dinka	one	no	
Interview 5	group	Twic Dinka	four	yes	professional
Interview 6	individual	Ngok Dinka	one	no	
Interview 7	individual	Collo	one	no	
Interview 8	individual	Collo	one	no	
Interview 9	individual	Collo	two	yes	group leader
Interview 10	individual	Collo	one	no	
Interview 11	individual	Twic Dinka	one	no	
Interview 12	group	Collo	four	yes	group leader
Interview 13	individual	Kuku	two	yes	group leader
Interview 14	group	Acholi	four	yes	group member
Interview 15	individual	Anuak	two	yes	family member
Interview 16	individual	Acholi	two	no	
Interview 17	group	Kuku	three	yes	group leader
Interview 18	individual	Bari	two	no	
Interview 19	individual	Kuku	one	no	

<sup>28</sup> Equipment failure meant recording was lost. Post interview notes were used in analysis

Table 2.2: Participants: ethnicity, location, age, years in Australia

	Pseudonym	Ethnicity/Clan	Suburb	Age	Years in Australia
1.	Helen	Twic Dinka	West	50+	-
2.	Rachael	Twic Dinka	West		-
3.	Mary	Twic Dinka	West	65	11
4.	Agnes	Twic Dinka	West	64	10
5.	Mabel	Twic Dinka	West		-
6.	Bridget	Maluwal Dinka	West	50+	11
7.	Carol	Maluwal Dinka	Inner north	?	-
8.	Della	Maluwal Dinka	Inner north	72	11
9.	Diana	Maluwal Dinka	North	63	11
10.	Eve	Maluwal Dinka	Inner north		-
11.	Clara	Ngok Dinka	Inner north	70	11
12.	Esther	Ngok Dinka	West	65?	-
13.	Erma	Ngok Dinka	South East		10
14.	Eleanor	Ngok Dinka	West	55?	-
15.	Frances	Ngok Dinka	West	60?	-
16.	Christina	Ngok Dinka	South East	51	12
17.	Genevieve	Ngok Dinka	North	47	11
18.	Hilda	Ngok Dinka	North	59	10
19.	Cecilia	Maluwal Dinka	Inner North	50+	11
20.	Katherine	Twic Dinka	Inner North	48	11
21.	Leda	Twic Dinka	Inner North	49?	6

22.	Lucy	Twic Dinka	North	54	11
23.	Margaret	Twic Dinka	North	40?	11
24.	Theresia	Collo	South East	68	12
25.	Jocelyn	Collo	South East	56	23
26.	Lana	Collo	South East	50?	13
27.	Olivia	Collo	South East		12
28.	Paulette	Collo	South East	69	10
39.	Julia	Collo	South East	55	13
30.	Lisa	Collo	South East	50	15
31.	Martha	Kuku	South West	50+	10
32.	Marta	Acholi	South East	61	7
33.	Nina	Acholi	South East	49?	11
34.	Patricia	Acholi	South East	65	10
35.	Pia	Acholi	South East	49?	
36.	Cynthia	Anuak	South East	56	10
37.	Caroline	Acholi	South East		11
38.	Stella	Kuku	West	50+	11
39.	Una	Kuku	West	40+	9
40. <sup>29</sup>	Victoria	Kuku	Rural fringe	38	4
41.	Judith	Bari	South West	50+	9
42.	Suzanne	Kuku	West	40+	10

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<sup>29</sup> moved to Australia after seven years in New Zealand



#### 4.2.1. Age

To ascertain the impact of war and forced migration on diaspora women, the study looked to women who were adults—by a Western measure—over 18 years-old during the war. Responsibility comes early in South Sudanese culture by Western standards, however, and maturity is measured by increasing levels of responsibility, rather than biological age. Commonly births, prior to the war, were not recorded so exact ages were often not known. Three participants were under 18 during the war, others considered themselves adult. The majority of these women are now of a time in their life when they are viewed by their communities as elders. A person younger than 50 years would not be accorded that status. Respect increases with seniority. A number of Dinka women in this study are formally addressed formally with the suffix *dit* added to their given name—indicating that they are a highly regarded elder and often considered leaders. However, despite the size of the Australian diaspora, women elders, Dinka or otherwise, are less than five percent of the population (Robinson, 2013). Women of seventy years and above are few. Numbers increase in descending age groups. For the purposes of this research this and the Australian standard of adulthood (between 18 and 21) were used to establish a baseline for the age of participants.

The three participants who fell below this included themselves in group interviews and their interest in participating was not discouraged. The minimum age of participants was approximately forty years, but the aim was for women over fifty. The minimum age set for the project did exclude some of the smaller ethnic groups, due to a lack of women of the required age group. Women less than 40 would have been children at the time the war was ended and the project was not seeking participants to recall experiences from childhood, especially in the context of war and forced migration. However, one participant was at around 40 years of age and did talk of her experience of displacement at a very young age.

#### 4.2.2. Consent

Consent was gained in written form, as was the requirement of approval by the MUHREC committee. The explanatory statement and consent form was read aloud by the interpreter on request. Those with proficient reading skills read the forms themselves. Signatures on the consent form, especially from the older women, suggest very limited literacy. With hindsight,

the issue to written consent could have been better negotiated with the ethics committee and oral recorded consent could have been requested. It was not known at the time that this was available. My own discomfort at asking women with limited literacy to sign a form was mitigated to some degree by an unrecorded comment by Twic Dinka woman Mary. After signing the form with great care, which I took to be awkwardness with a pen, Mary spoke to me as she handed me the form. The interpreter conveyed Mary's comment: 'She used to sign with her thumbprint but now in Australia she can sign with a pen, it is liberating'. This comment reminded me that I was making an assumption about limited literacy; Mary was very proud of the literacy she had achieved. The signing of consent forms may well have been physically awkward but it was also symbolic of both her agency and achievement.

#### 4.2.3. Interpreters

Dependent on the preferences of the participants, both professional and non-professional interpreters were used during fieldwork interviews. The leaders of the Dinka small group interviews requested a professional Dinka interpreter. Non-professional interpreters were heard to use both their indigenous language and, at times, Sudanese Arabic. Interpreting for Collo and Kuku was also provided by the leader of their group. The Acholi interpreter was the most proficient English speaker in the group. A family member interpreted for the Anuak woman, who is the head woman of her community in Melbourne. There was no professional Anuak interpreter available in Melbourne and while it was possible to use an interstate phone interpreter her preference was to speak through her nephew.

#### 4.2.4. Language

Those who arrived in Australia without literacy skills and undertook the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) programme have achieved varying degrees of literacy. For all participants, English was a third or fourth language. The *lingua franca* of their homeland during the war was Sudanese Arabic and continues to be so for most adult South Sudanese migrants in Australia. Those participants who had learned English in both South Sudan and Australia were fluent speakers. A number spoke English that could not be described as fluent but achieved effective communication outcomes. Fourteen of the 42 participants spoke in English. During

a small group interviews with Dinka and Acholi women some chose to speak English rather than use the interpreter who was present.

#### 4.2.5. Questions

Early data and discussions in supervision, September 2015, led to an amendment of the MUHREC approval in relation to the fieldwork questions. Questions changed from:

1. Has life in the community returned to how it was before the war?
2. How is it different to when the war ended in 2005?
3. Can you describe how the abductions affected you and your family?

To:

1. Can you describe your life now? 2. Can you describe how it was during the war?

This change reflected observations of how women responded to the original three questions and consequent concerns that they may be limiting their responses. A broader, more opened ended question would allow for a freer response and was shown to be better suited to the diaspora setting. Interviews with individuals and small groups were then loosely structured around the two questions.

#### 4.2.6. Names

To ensure anonymity, names of participants in this research have been kept confidential. The pseudonym given is mostly Westernised or Christian names. The use of a Western name over an African name is to pay respect to the cultures of South Sudan and the meanings attached to birth names. Names may make reference to conditions or specific experiences around a birth, e.g. the Dinka name Akec indicates the death of the father prior to the birth. Those who were baptised in Christian faiths tend to use that name first, followed by their birth (indigenous) name, and other names which record the patriarchal kinship line. To avoid any risk of offence to participants and communities, as 16 of the 42 used Christian names, for consistency's sake all pseudonyms were made Christian names.

#### 4.2.7. Quotes

/: in quotes indicates the interpreter is speaking. Square brackets [] are used where a clarifying word has been inserted, or to indicate some part of the quote that has been excluded. In quotes where the interpreter's voice changes, moving between first, second or third person, (e.g. Marta's quote p. 128) despite some possible confusion for the reader, I have included a footnote, but otherwise left it as is. This is also the case regarding spoken English.

#### 4.2.8. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for this project was based on feminist methodology that gives the interviewee/s scope to shape the interview (see Cuthbert, 2000 earlier in this chapter). In preparation for this style of individual and small group interviews, emphasis was placed on taking time before the recording began to relax and chat about other things. When visiting women's homes the offer of tea and biscuits was accepted and interviews did not begin until everyone present had finished their tea. If the interview was happening elsewhere, e.g., the Catholic church hall in Fitzroy, I provided refreshments and the same rule applied. Interviewing began after the social interactions were completed. On a number of occasions, after the interviews concluded, I was asked to stay and eat with the group or family which I accepted. However, it was not uncommon for the current war in South Sudan to be the subject of pre- and post-interview discussions, such was the strength of feeling about this. On reflection I considered how pre-interview conversations of this kind may have then directed or influenced the content of the interview.

The conversation before and after the interview were recorded in post-interview notes. These notes vary considerably from interview to interview. This was more to do with my degree of post-interview tiredness than the time spent chatting. Travel to interview settings combined with the interviews times as well as the content of the interviews meant that data collection days could be draining.

These notes were included in the analysis when useful. Post-interviews notes were critical however for the interview with the Maluwal Dinka women, which was the second group interview. Equipment malfunction meant that the interview was lost when transferring the digital file from the recording equipment to my computer. This interview had stood out as its content contained one of the most disturbing stories of wartime sexual violence told

during the course of data collection. While recording the story in the post-interview notes was necessary for my records there was no chance that this story would have been forgotten.

Before beginning the interview women either read the Explanatory Statement or the interpreter read it aloud. This was also the case for the Consent form. With these tasks complete I would explain how the interview would be conducted. This was dependent on the size of the group. In the Ngok women group interview, the seven women took turns to answer each questions I asked. The interpreter had been booked for 90 minutes, but when it became clear that the interview had not finished, the group leader and I decided I would interview her individually at another time and the session was concluded. With the Kuku women's group interview, three women were interviewed together, then another was interviewed individually as she arrived toward the end of the interview. The group leader who was also the interpreter was then individually interviewed. The whole process took three hours and 40 minutes. Of the individual interviews the shortest was 42 minutes, the longest was 59 minutes.

Prior to beginning all interviews, I asked if anyone had questions about the process and then asked permission to turn on the recording equipment. I started the interview by thanking them for their time and willingness to participate. As they spoke, clarifying questions were asked if necessary. I made the occasional note and regularly glanced at the recording equipment to check it was recording. I occasionally moved the equipment if I thought the voice was muffled by distance or by other background sounds. At the end of each interview for individual and group, I asked if there was any more that they would like to add, then turned off the recorder and said that the interview was finished.

The first 21 interviews were transcribed in September 2016. Reading through the transcripts I looked for commonalities across each interviews. Ten broad themes emerged and these were coded using the data analysis software Nvivo. Reports were generated around these themes and each report was read as a loose narrative. Notes were taken around these and matched to quotes in each report. The second batch of 21 interviews were transcribed in November 2016 using the same process. Select data was recoded in March 2017 around new themes that emerged in the analysis. The transcriptions were analysed using a feminist discourse analysis. The analysis is grounded in the work of African feminist scholars which centres the voices of women as authorial and acknowledges the intersectionality of locality, class, age and gender, as discussed in Chapter Three. Epistemological imperatives of African

women scholars include not globalising issues in post-colonial settings, or othering of African contexts and subjects (Ampofo, 2010; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Ezumah, 2011; Mama, 1997; Ngezwu, 2006; Nnaemeka, 2005. Osunyikanmi, 2011). Feminist concepts of agency as the power women have to make choices were emphasised in the analysis.

Participants were considered both narrators and exemplars of their ethnic group and of their homeland of South Sudan, as well as individuals with layered, complex identities. They have been quoted frequently in this thesis. It is paramount that research data on women of the Global South is written up with the voices of those women clearly prioritised.

Mostly women recalled events during the second war without difficulty; memories were still vivid despite the passage of time. At times narratives lacked specificity, synonymous with low literacy, especially to do with dates and times that are not the focus in oral cultures. Other inconsistencies in data, i.e. differing perspectives of events during the war, suggest opposing political and ethnic allegiances.

Thematic, or semantic features (what data says), were also emphasised. The 'mantic' features (how data say), (Van Manen, 1997, as cited in Sandelowski, 2002, p. 107) were also addressed in the form of silence. Ryan-Flood and Gill (2010) claim that all research involves secrets and silences and these both matter. Feminist social research has emphasised breaking silences and letting the voices of women be heard. But the exploration of silence in research, especially work that is to do with gender-based violence, is now acknowledged as not only necessary but a potentially rich source of knowledge (Ryan-Flood & Gill, 2010; Carrillo Rowe, 2013; Keating; 2013). Parpart (2010) also suggests silence is a survival strategy and therefore agentic. To position this silence in this research is acknowledged as having a dual purpose, and in various interviews it took different forms. Silence did not occur where it was expected. Women broke silence about the experiences of sexual violence during war as individuals and members of a community that was targeted for mass rape, forced marriage, slavery and other forms of sexualised violence. In a small group interview with Twic women, one of the elders talked of how raids had destroyed their communities. When asked if they all agreed with this, for a few moments the room was still. Nobody moved. The silence was both heavy and poignant, acknowledging a deeply distressing and disempowering event, one which had changed the course of their lives. I waited for someone else to end the silence. Women then murmured and clicked their tongues and I took this as the right place to end the interview.

Later as I drove home I thought about that silence and how powerful it was and that maybe it was a place of both memory and healing (Carillo Rowe, 2013).

A similar silence also occurred in the Malual Dinka and Collo group interviews. After a particularly distressing story was told, the group remained silent and very still. Another silence, one indicating a choice to not participate, also occurred in the first Twic women's interview. Mabel was the youngest woman and she had not offered a response to the initial questions, as the other women had. I then spoke to Mabel through the interpreter:

*S: Mabel can I ask you the same question about how you think that time has affected people?*

*I: She is saying hers would be different from everybody else. What she's mostly worried about is the hunger. She just thinks about how we can take food there to distribute to the people in South Sudan.*

Thinking I had not been specific in the question, I asked her:

*S: Mabel, the incidents of abductions during war, do you think that it affects people now?*

*I: Mabel answered that if the food can go through Abyei,<sup>30</sup> that would be good because it could reach the people.*

Agnes then spoke directly to Mabel in Dinka and the interpreter then spoke to me:

*I: And then Agnes corrected her and said you haven't answered the question. The question is about Murhal and how it has affected people today. How it is affecting the people today, that's what you need to answer.*

The women spoke amongst each other talking, in Dinka, while Mabel remained silent. Agnes spoke to the interpreter again and she then said to me:

*I: They agree with me in asking that question.*

Mabel appeared relaxed and her face was passive, but it seemed that the other women were waiting for me to repeat the question, so I asked:

*S: Mabel, do you want to add anything more in answer to that question?*

*M: I'm not going to add anything. Thank-you for coming today.*

*S: Alright, thank-you.*

This passage stands out in the transcript. When coding the data, I did not know how to approach it. I looked to my post-interview notes but had not made any reference to this exchange with Mabel. But what is clear is how powerfully Mabel was exercising her agency in

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<sup>30</sup> Due to the current war it may have been safer to come through Abyei in the north to Twic county, as Twic is also accessible by road from Khartoum. Access via road from Juba in the south may have been too dangerous

choosing not to engage with the questions, even though she was in the company of her elders and directed to do so by them. Mabel said what she thought was important for her. Her initial silence was not the disempowerment so often assumed by the absence of voice (Parpart, 2010). Mabel's silence also represented agency. She exercised her right to not answer the question, instead she repeatedly stated what mattered to her.

Feminist approaches to qualitative research come with the expectations of using self-reflexivity to address an experience like this. I have thought a lot about Mabel and what was happening in the room during that part of the interview. But using the process of self-reflexivity also made me question what reflexivity actually is and how it works. Reflexivity did not give me any further insight into this exchange with Mabel. It allowed me to speculate, as much as that was useful. It seems that the application of reflexivity is only as useful as the degree of self-knowledge or insight a researcher might have about themselves—and how can that be measured? There is no test, no way of understanding how able researchers are to be self-reflexive, or the appropriateness of the insight it may give them.

As a white researcher working with women of the Global South, it is assumed that I have the majority of power in the relationship. But Mabel showed me that she also had power, including the power to stop me asking her questions. The dynamic between the researcher and the researched is not fixed (Scharff, 2010). Each participant was unique despite my grouping of them according to age and ethnicity. Mabel used the interview process to exercise agency, to opt out of a part of the process. Other participants used the research process to exercise agency by using their voices—in a number of different ways.

In the second Twic Dinka small group interviews, of the four women present, two spoke about the research on their own volition. At the end of the interview with Katherine, I asked:

*S: Is there anything more you want to add? Anything you want to say?*

*I: She said, I am happy to be a voice toward this research, because us Twic people have really suffered from these problems, so I am really happy...so I will finish there and thank you for asking me to be part of this research and contribute my voice about what happened there.*

Leda spoke next, her transcript was nearly seven pages long. In the first three pages she spoke about the past and the deaths of family members. Other than a few clarifying questions I asked, Leda did not stop, pausing only to give the interpreter time to translate. On page four of the transcript, she began to talk about the present again, describing how difficult



life currently is for her and for her family in South Sudan, (this will be covered in more depth the next chapter). After describing the death of a small baby that she had been powerless to prevent<sup>31</sup>, she said:

*She'd like to thank-you because of what you've done to ask about this because she'd like, like the same way, Katherine said, she'd like to contribute her voice to the research, to try and paint a picture about what was happening over there, so that if the young generation grow up and they hear about what used to be, then they will know what happened to their relatives, even if they didn't see it. It's important that they have a voice in all this.*

Leda went back to detailing the stress the deaths of her family has caused her and began to cry. Two other women had become tearful during interviews and my reaction had been to offer to stop the interview and turn off the recorder. Before I could say this, Leda wiped at the tears rolling down her face and spoke:

*I: She's a little bit upset, not because you've asked her these things, because she said even if she is upset, she just wants to say this, she wants to talk, she wants to talk, she wants to talk about it. It's not because you've asked her, but it's because when she thinks about all these issues this is what is upsetting her, but not because you've asked her the question. She said, she can be emotional about it, but would like to still air her views about all these issues. So it's not something that you've done, but she wants to talk about it.*

The interview process for Leda was multi-layered. It was empowering for her to share her story and have her voice heard. She saw it as an opportunity for the story of her community to be recorded. It was also a chance to share her grief and her tears seemed to be, if not therapeutic, then at least some form of release. Leda had been living with her sister when she decided to walk from Twic County to Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, a journey that took several months. On the way she became separated from her husband and four children and was not able to find them. She arrived at the camp, not knowing her children and husband were also there. Some years later, her husband married again and migrated with the children to Australia in 2004. When the war ended in 2005 and communications improved, Leda's oldest daughter, in Australia, heard that her mother was in Kakuma camp and sent her a

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<sup>31</sup> In the current conflict.

form to apply for Australia. Their application was successful on the grounds of family reunification and Leda arrived in Australia in 2009, approximately ten years since she had last seen her family.

In this research project silence, speech and other sounds (laughter, tears, tongue clicks, murmurs) were used in contextual specific ways. Speech was used powerfully to speak of violence and loss and to break taboos around giving voice to the trauma of sexual violence. However, it would be right to assume that silence was also used to protect against the voicing of those traumas. Despite sadness and tears, women spoke of other experiences, wanting to be heard and be included. The ways in which women engaged in this research, through silence and speech and sound, adds further weight to findings which suggest settlement as an embodied experience.

#### 4.3. Theoretical frameworks

The theorisations I call upon here are found in the work of Scarry (1985) and Ahmed (2004). Their theoretical approaches to how pain is both communicated and processed provide critical value in terms of my overall approach to understanding the effect of gendered violence during war.

The original question of this thesis was how gendered violence had impacted on communities of forced migrant women who survived it. That question had evolved over years of engagement with these women. In that time, and after visits to Sudan, I found myself thinking about the significance of the female body in conflict and how it is possible to physically and emotionally survive the embodied violence of war—especially gendered violence. There is an intersection in the work of Scarry and Ahmed that illuminates these questions. Scarry suggests that pain resists language; it can only become known to another person if it can be verbally objectified (Scarry, 1985, p. 32). Ahmed (2004) however, describes what pain does and how, through the sensation of pain, internal and external worlds connect. That connection creates worlds and subjectivities. Scarry's conceptualisations of the injured body and how pain is made visible and Ahmed's idea of how pain creates new worlds will be used in this chapter to thematically link the following three chapters.

I posit here that the world these women created for themselves during war and migration has, during settlement in Australia, created new subjectivities, ones which acknowledge that while the body may have been wounded, it is now safe. Scarry's notion of analogical verification helped me to see the emergence of new subjectivities from the data analysis. Scarry wrote that the felt attributes of pain are made visible through verbal objectification:

*... if the referent for these now objectified attributes is understood to be the human body<sup>32</sup>, then the sentient fact of a person's suffering becomes knowable to a second person.* (Scarry, 1985, p. 13)

Scarry goes on to suggest that while pain can subjectively disassemble, through language it can also re-create, to make anew. This is the 'referent other than the human body' (Scarry, 1985, p.13) (as previously cited on page 21).

Augmenting Scarry's ideas of the subject as emerging or re-emerging through language is Ahmed's (2004) account of pain's transformative potential. Rather than focus, as Scarry did, on how the feeling of pain may be conveyed, Ahmed asked what effect pain had? What does pain do? She suggests borders or surfaces are realised through the experience of pain (Ahmed, 2004, p. 27). The surface of the body is dynamic, reacting to the feelings that create those surfaces. Ahmed described the surface of our skin as a boundary, or a border, and through a process she calls intensification (Ahmed, 2004, p. 27) our internal and external worlds connect. Our bodies are shaped by intensification. When we react to a sensation we judge as unpleasant, when we feel pain, that is when we sense our skin, the surface of our bodies, ourselves. However, Ahmed adds that we usually choose to move away from feelings of pain. Bodies materialise through the sensual experiences of pain. Those experiences give us a sense of our skin as a bodily surface, as something that keeps us apart from others and as something that 'mediates' the relationship between inside and outside (Ahmed, 2004, p. 24). Pain makes real the internal and external worlds when it transgresses that border; 'to say feelings are crucial to the forming of surfaces and borders is to suggest that what "makes" those borders, also unmakes them' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 24).

Scarry's and Ahmed's ideas of the transformative nature of pain, of how it can create new subjectivities through both language and sensation, intersect in this analysis. Through

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<sup>32</sup> Scarry's italics

narratives of pain and loss South Sudanese Australian women seem to be establishing new boundaries. The flow of sensation and feeling that Ahmed says makes us conscious of pleasure and pain also makes us visible. I theorise that by narrating the violence of war, especially its gendered nature, these women are making themselves visible—to each other, within their diaspora community—and within the wider community. Visibility however, raises questions of personal and political representation. Scarry addressed the political implications of pain's resistance to language. 'The relative ease or difficulty with which any given phenomenon can be *verbally represented* (her italics) also influences the ease or difficulty with which that phenomenon can to be *politically represented* (her italics) (Scarry, 1985, p. 12). Ahmed also addresses these political implications. She writes that there is a market for suffering, and telling stories of pain raises questions of who listens to such narratives and how they are listened to. How they are told or not told is a 'crucial mechanism in the distribution of power' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 32). Given the difficulty of representing sexual violence and other gendered acts of genocide, Ahmed's questions are entirely salient, nonetheless when survivors narrate stories that were previously not told it seems they are claiming political power and visibility. This is especially powerful given that the aftermath of gendered sexual violence during war is usually silence. Contextualised silence designed to isolate survivors can equal invisibility. This isolation is not entirely self-imposed. Community and family concepts of shame also create isolation. Pittaway et al. spoke of how, for refugee women, 'shame assigned to individual woman is part of the collective consciousness of many communities' unable to cope with the horror of such events, including service providers who respond in inadequate or inappropriate ways (Pittaway et al., 2009, p. 53). Scarry (1985) wrote that pain can remain invisible in part because of the ways it resists language. It is also invisible because its own powerfulness ensures its isolation, ensures that it will not be seen in the context of other events (Scarry, 1985, p. 60).

The ways in which South Sudanese Australian women spoke about sexual violence confronts Scarry's claim that pain can '*remain devastating as it falls back from its arrival in language*' (her italics), (Scarry, 1985, p. 60). Scarry's notion that breaking taboos may be a way of reclaiming subjectivity and resisting essentialised images of victimhood helps understand how former refugee women living in diaspora appear to have done this. Finding safety and belonging in Australia has been a significant mechanism in this process. Women spoke of their "love" of Australia, of the support and opportunity Australia has given them.

And when offered an opportunity to speak about their lives, they took it, and used it to materialise pain. Their claim for acknowledgement raises an additional question. What allowed women to speak in the first place? Scarry and Ahmed have described the processes of objectification, verification and intensification, however these notions do not address why women raised this subject, *publicly and of their own volition*. Given how powerfully sexual violence can shame and control survivors, what has allowed South Sudanese Australian women to verbally objectify the pain of it? Why have they not turned away from affect that indicates a new boundary on the surface of their skin, when (Ahmed said) it is our tendency to do so?

I theorise here that there is a third element necessary to utilise fully the theorisations of Scarry and Ahmed. Critical to the claiming of political power and subjectivity are feelings of safety and security. Feelings of safety, of no longer being at risk, create their own dynamic. For the women in this study, feelings of safety and security have allowed them to materialise in unexpected ways. Established during settlement this safety, including trusting a number of government institutions, lead to a cultural shift which allowed women to speak about sexual violence, which had previously been taboo. Scarry's notion of 'something else' is useful to theorise the verbal objectification of traumatic events as acts of defiance. In Chapter Five women spoke of abductions and of children never coming back. That knowledge 'just exists' within the community. These comments seem to describe Scarry's notion of the 'unshareability' of pain (Scarry, 1985, p. 38). This points to political and perceptual complications for these communities. There is a question here of how the reality of slavery is acknowledged and managed and the political implications of it not being conveyed internally or externally. If the reality of slavery 'just exists' within the community, is this the pain which Scarry described as radically private, or as unshareable? Ahmed (2004) contested this notion, describing pain as solitary over private. However, I would suggest here that this community's recent reality of enslavement is neither private nor solitary. Slavery is a reality for an entire country, its ethnicities, communities, and genders. It has remained largely unspoken of, especially in first-person, gendered accounts. Slavery was described by women elders as a 'hurting' that is shared equally across communities, as a thing that has to be coped with. In talking of this 'hurting', women have transgressed a boundary. The knowledge and the pain of slavery is no longer hidden from view. This process of intensification can also be seen in discussions of displacement, the third gendered element of the genocide these women

survived. In objectifying the pain of genocide these women are creating new boundaries, ones which allow them to be visible in both embodied and disembodied ways.

In Chapter Six and Seven, the referent other than the body, the 'something else', is also the interplay between themselves as carers (during war, past and present)—and of now being cared for—by Australian health and welfare systems. Data in this chapter shows the care that their bodies, as injured or weary, received in diaspora allowed for feelings of inclusion and belonging. However, data also shows that women experience ongoing stress and acculturation difficulties in settlement and post-settlement. Mothering, limited education, unemployment and the provision of transnational care during war, are all highly stressful in post-settlement. Ahmed asked what happens when the body is pressed on, of the impressions this causes as well as the affect, how impressions of 'things' then change 'things' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 191). The contrast of stress and creativity during settlement points to the paradoxical nature of this process and is an over-arching theme in the analysis chapters. Ahmed's notion of intensification is also a paradox: 'what separates us from others also connects us to others' (Ahmed, 2004, p. 25). The affect of pain, of how we move towards or away from it suggests ways in which to understand the paradoxes of settlement. Settlement is embodied, safe and secure, but also stressful and challenging in the face of intergenerational conflict and change.

These women are mediating the past into the present. Objectifying the pain of violation through a sense of safety and belonging. Scarry described the "radical privacy" of pain, but Ahmed contested this, suggesting instead that the experience of pain is not private but solitary. And if that is the case, then the sharing of pain, in the ways these women have done, is to move away from a solitary internal existence. These women have found a way to describe the indescribable. By allowing that pain to rise to the surface, they are materialising, are letting themselves be known as South Sudanese Australian women.

#### 4.4. Conclusion

Indigenous South Sudanese scholars, Julia Duany and Wal Duany (2001) and Jane Kani Edward (2001, 2007) called for more and better data to accurately represent the lives of rural African women in general and specifically South Sudanese women. More complete data collection will allow for an understanding of their daily realities in a way that may contribute to

improved societies (Duany & Duany, 2001, p. 64). Edward also noted in her work on South Sudanese women refugees that they are often portrayed as helpless victims and there is little understanding or acceptance of their own efforts and struggle to overcome their circumstances. Their agency is ignored, as is the great variation and diversity of their experiences (Edward, 2001, p. 4).

In her key text on civilian life during war, Nordstrom asked, how do shattered worlds get rebuilt in its aftermath? (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 9). This study contributes to understanding the aftermath in the context of forced migration and the Australian diaspora. It also gives nuance to portrayals of South Sudanese women, both as former refugees and as members of the Australian diaspora. The theoretical frameworks of Scarry (1985) and Ahmed (2004) have provided frameworks in which to illuminate how these women have formed new subjectivities, which include the verbalising and objectifying of pain. Pain is able to cross boundaries that may previously have been unknown or unrecognised. When such boundaries are crossed, bodies and worlds materialise. Bodies which have been sites of oppression and agency materialise. In an environment of safety and security bodies are no longer at risk. They can now be both agentic and vulnerable at the same time.

This study has shown that during war, these women had both power and ability to shape their lives, and the life of their communities. It is clear that in post-settlement, they continue to do so.

## Chapter Five: Family and community, a code for survival

*'... It's just something you take and you learn to cope with it'*  
(Mary, Twic Dinka)

### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the pre-migration phase of South Sudanese Australian women's lives by exploring their narratives of war and survival. The subjugation of the southern ethnicities of Sudan led to both civil wars—although the second war was distinct in its gendered nature (Jok, 2001, 2004). The older participants in this research recall the first civil war (1955-1972) clearly. All participants lived through the second (1983-2005) and the majority migrated to Australia prior to the cessation of hostilities in 2005. As diaspora women they are now experiencing, at a distance, a third war (2013 – present). War as a constant and traumatic disruption of women's familial relationships appears consistently throughout the data and links this ethnically diverse group of women. So pervasive has violent conflict been in the lives of these women, that prior to migration to Australia, safety, certainty and stability had been largely absent from their lives.

Their narratives show women experience of violent conflict, as a loss of autonomy—of control of their bodies. Their bodies absorbed the gendered violence of Sudan's second civil war. South Sudanese Australian women embodied the geo, socio, politico and religious boundary incursions that constituted that war as incursions on their own bodies. The gendered elements of those incursions diminished subjectivity and autonomy. The ways in which women navigated that loss however, ultimately led to the creation of new subjectivities (which will be addressed further in Chapters Six and Seven). Their voices bear witness to how women experience and survive war and their stories build knowledge and understanding of gendered wars.

This chapter speaks to the gendered, embodied nature of this conflict, the creativity involved in living a life in response to war and how belonging, identity and survival was grounded in family and community. All participants, bar one, described their pre-migration period in terms of extreme hardship, living long-term in states of impoverished deprivation. Recollections of traumatic events synonymous with war included the death of family, loss of home and culture, abduction, detention, physical and sexual assault, witnessing atrocities,



hunger, extreme poverty and destitute insecurity (see also Hutchinson, 2004; Ibrahim, 1990). Nonetheless, through networks of family and community these women persevered. This chapter presents the relational dynamics of family and belonging as encoded in their response to the collapse of their social worlds (Nordstrom, 1997). Family and community were their code for survival. The code represented hope, resilience and agency.

The concept of disembodiment is used here to examine three of the elements of gendered violence in this war: displacement, enslavement and sexual violence. The situation of displacement was for these participants a protracted state of long-term insecurity and unsafe deprivation. Combined with slavery and sexual violence, displacement created a profound loss of autonomy. The creative ways in which women responded to that loss and the conditions in which they found themselves are also addressed in this chapter.

While men's bodies are often on the frontlines of conflict, women's bodies have been declared the battlegrounds of those conflicts (O'Gorman, 2011). Usta et al. have described women's bodies as the frontline of militarised violence. Displacement is often synonymous with violence of this kind. There is a lack of knowledge about displacement of women during war. A study of the effects of the 2006 conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, on Lebanese women, showed that 89 percent of the 310 women interviewed left their homes due to fear or worry about safety, and 39 percent reported at least one violent encounter with soldiers (Usta, et., 2008, p. 793). Women make up half of Syria's population (Al Jazeera, 2013) and in that country's current war, approximately 12 million, half of the country's pre-war population, have been displaced from their homes (Al Jazeera, 2017). These figures suggest that significant numbers were not displaced by direct engagement with violence. Sideris (2011) wrote, of the war in Mozambique, that in conflicts 'in which the domestic sphere was a primary site of conflict, women were at the centre of the battlefield' (Sideris, 2003, p. 715). Sideris wrote of that war's wholesale destruction of homes, the personal cost to women civilians, and pointed to the scale of violence and brutality that reflected the much longer conflict in Sudan (Sideris, 2003, p. 716). Approximately four million (mainly rural) southern Sudanese were internally displaced during the war (Edward, 2007; Zapata, 2011). Around one million of those moved into shanties and IDP camps on the outskirts of Khartoum and another 1.5 million sought refuge in Ethiopia, DRC Congo, Kenya, Uganda and Egypt. A small percentage migrated to western countries including America, Canada, Australia and other westernised settlement countries (Edward, 2007, p. 2).

Displacement and the ways in which women negotiated the loss of home and the long-term instability that followed is addressed in the following section. The following stories show both creativity and resilience in how these women found ways to support themselves and their children. Creativity in this context is shown as these women were able to engage resilience and agency in strategies for survival. Strategic creativity is theorised here through Carol Nordstrom's notion that experiences of war are connected to the 'processes of self-identity and the politics of personhood' (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 4). Culture and identity was re-created and maintained by constructs of family and community, who provided networks and resources and also hope. It was through these networks that women were able to escape and rebuild other lives in Australia. Despite the destruction of their worlds, and the myriad ways in which these communities appeared lost and broken, women found ways to stay connected. They located family in other regions, countries and camps. The social organisation of African cultures prevailed against the displacement and loss. The most distant cousin was still family and members of other ethnic groups also behaved like family. Uncles, brothers-in-law, grown children, friends and neighbours supported each other in the most difficult circumstances. In the absence of communication technology, lacking phones or written documents, people communicated through word of mouth across extraordinary distances. Women described locating family or coming to know what happened to family or where they were with the expression, 'I heard'. News came to them through another person. Information was transmitted orally. Family as a sensibility or as a place in the world (Oyěwùmí, 2005, p. 14) existed as an unspoken code. Nordstrom described these types of code 'as the most potent response to war' (Nordstrom, 1997, p. 4).

Their collective realities of these women, their hope and creativity expanded that code in a way that helped them to survive.

## 5.2. A code for survival

The destruction of family is the destruction of the heart of culture, its everyday rituals and routines that give people purpose in life. Nordstrom (1997) described one of the most powerful targets of violence as the direction in people's lives and the sense of a future that it gives them. Those who survived the violence of the raids and faced life without family around

them had difficulty maintaining definition and direction in their lives. Cynthia described this time: 'Life then was really very hard, a lot of people were dead, your relatives are dead and that is really very hard, it something that is unimaginable.'

Women located themselves amongst community wherever they could. Protecting and providing for their children was their first commitment. Anuak woman Cynthia, said, 'You're not thinking about yourself, you're thinking about your kids. For their future, not because of you, for the kids only. They are still young. You are still taking care of them.'

Like Cynthia, Stella's family structure was damaged irreparably by the war. She had suffered ambiguous loss. Her husband was a commercial pilot and Stella imagined he had been shot down flying to Juba and assumed him to be deceased. Stella's brother was beaten to death by government soldiers around the same time. She was left with the care of three children, 'So it was very difficult for me, losing both my brother and my husband. So I struggled with my children as a single parent.' Like other women, Stella had to take on the roles and duties her husband would usually have provided for the family. She and her three children lived in the Adjumana refugee camp in Uganda for 13 years. The camp was situated on Madi tribal land and Stella found work as a labourer on Madi farms. She was paid in food, such as cassava, which she then sold for money to buy other items. Stella described the far-reaching effects of this change in family structure:

*I: Life was difficult, even up 'til now she is still struggling. As a single parent, she had to do everything by herself, to protect the family, to provide for the family, everything. If it means getting food, digging, you just have to work out ways of how you can get some money or something for the food for the family.*  
(Stella, Kuku)

In the chaos of a raid, people ran in different directions scattering into the bush to hide. Some risked returning to their homes, to start again. Many did not. Reunions did occur; family members were found during cross-country treks, in refugee camps and in countries of resettlement<sup>33</sup>. Post-war, when communications improved, some were able to establish the whereabouts of family or if they were still alive. However, family members were also permanently lost, never found or heard of again.

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<sup>33</sup> See Lana's story of reunion with her husband in footnote on p. 146.

The villages of Acholi, Bari and Kuku women, from the southern province of Equatoria, were attacked by both government troops and rebel soldiers. Caroline described life in a conflict zone in the Magi area of Equatoria around 1990/91:

*It was everywhere, the war was everywhere ... [] the war is everywhere because the government it can send a plane to shoot people and to see people running up and down. Some people are going towards Uganda for the refugee camp, and some are going to the Kenya refugee camp. So it was really bad.*

*S: So civilians were attacked by rebels and by government?*

*C: Yeah. The government normally send their troops too. So they are fighting the rebels. And the rebels too, they can also fight the civilians, especially women.*

*C: Yeah. So, by that time a lot of women they lost their life. Yeah, a lot of things happened, like raping, forced marriage, somebody just take you to be their wife at that time.*  
(Caroline, Acholi)

Caroline's story shows how women were targeted during war. They were not safe from any of the multiple armed factions operating at that time. Caroline said her husband was killed by the government and in attempt to avoid more contact with government soldiers, Caroline and other Acholi women moved into rebel held areas. It was that time that her three children were 'scattered away from her'. Rebels then accused them of spying for the government. She and other women were held by the rebels in their camp for around a year. On release she could not find her children and stayed in the warzone, hoping her children would return. 'I managed to survive because of my children, it was burning me. I thought if I stayed on that side, maybe, I'm here where my kids are.' Caroline stayed for five years but she did not find them. In 1995, she and a group of women decided to 'disappear', walking for over a month to get to Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. When she arrived there, 'I was not very good, ahhh, depression [] ... and I entered counselling'.

Caroline was later recruited by an NGO to be train as a counsellor herself. She worked with women of all ethnicities across the camp for five years. It was workers from that NGO that told her of Australia's policy of accepting single mothers and urged her to apply for resettlement,<sup>34</sup> but Caroline resisted, 'I was supposed to do their form but I couldn't do it. I was thinking, I'm not going without my children.' It was only after she registered her children with the Red Cross Tracing Service, that in 2000, she agreed to make an application to

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<sup>34</sup> In 2009 Australia allocated 12 percent of its refugee intake for women at risk and their families (204 WaR visa). Each year after, 780 women and their children were settled in Australia. In 2014, this was increased to 1000 per year (Bartolomei et al, 2009, p. 47).

Australia. In 2004, after nine years in the camp, Caroline left for Australia with her young daughter. Her other children were found in Uganda in 2005, and two of them arrived in Australia in 2006. Nearly fifteen years had passed since they had seen each other. Caroline had remained in the warzone, in the hope of being reunited with her children. She never gave up believing her children were alive and could be found, a desire so strong she described it as ‘burning’ her—that ‘burning’ kept her alive.

The narratives of survival offered by Cynthia, Stella and Caroline are typical of the complex, fraught and highly stressful situations women found themselves forced to manage. The degree of loss these women experienced – husband, children, and home – is profound. But these stories also illustrate resistance. Their narratives also suggest that the African social systems and concepts of family were not wholly destroyed by the violence (Osunyikanmi, 2011).

Women described their contact with militarised violence as destructive of their personal, familial and communal lives. Predominantly, participants had been rural, subsistence farmers and cattle herders. Raiders burned their homes and food supplies, stole cattle, killed and abducted people. Rural Kuku woman, Una described displacement as a process of constant movement and negotiation, when the Equatoria region became a battleground of government and rebel forces:

*I: During the war we were just running from one place to another one, hiding in the bushes. When we see they're coming from this direction, you run in the other direction. And you just keep hiding, throughout the war, that's how they<sup>35</sup> were living.*  
(Una, Kuku)

IDPs from the Bahr el-Ghazal began the trek east to Ethiopia in the mid-1980s, a journey which took around three months. IDPs from other areas of the country also took routes to Ethiopia. By 1990, over three hundred thousand Sudanese refugees resided in the camps of Dima, Pinyudo and Itang in the Gambela District (Forced Migration Online, n.d.). A number of SPLA training camps were also in that region. After the death of her husband, Cynthia also decided Ethiopia was a safer location. Her journey from the Anuak town of

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<sup>35</sup> Interpreted changed to third person here.

Pochalla was relatively short. With help from her brother, she and her seven children made the five-day journey on foot:

*It's really very hard. People are travelling a long distance, there's no water, there is no food also on the way, even for the kids. You don't know whether you will be alive or not. That is the thing that is in the hands of God. If it is your time not yet, then you will survive.* (Cynthia, Anuak)

In 1991 the Ethiopian government was ousted by rebel forces who alongside SAF military attacked the Gambela camps, forcing refugees across the border back into Sudan. Attempting to cross the border at the Gilo River was catastrophic; unknown numbers, potentially thousands died from drowning, crocodiles and military attack. So dire was the situation back in Sudan, (Marks, 1991) over the following months, the SPLA commander John Garang negotiated the reopening of a camp in Ethiopia, which some went back to. More significant, was the building of new camp in Kenya. Named Kakuma, this camp became the main camp in the Horn of Africa for southern Sudanese. By the late 1990s, three-quarters of the women in Kakuma camp were widows (Beswick, 2001b, p. 47).

All of the participants described epic journeys made largely on foot. These women crossed national and international borders in search of safety. Their journeys were high risk; they faced disease, hunger, armed militias and wild animals as well as ground and air attacks from government forces. However, the data also shows attempts to resist displacement and remain connected to family and country. Twic woman Leda, was one of those who tried.

Despite being displaced from her village of Turalei, Leda stayed in Twic county and wanted to help her sister, whose four children and husband had been killed in a raid, to do the same:

*I: In 1988, I went to take my sister, because she was left with no husband, she's very depressed from the death of four children, and left with another three children which she can't even look after. So I went in 1988 to her place of marriage where this happened and tried to tell her to come with me and she said no, I don't want to come with you, I wanna live here.*  
(Leda, Twic Dinka)

Leda stayed with her but they were raided again shortly after. They set up home two more times, an aunty giving them a few cows and some land to cultivate, but after the fourth raid, Leda decided it was time to leave for Kakuma camp. Her sister did not join her.

On the way Leda became separated from her husband and children. She made her way to the camp alone, not knowing that her husband and children arrived days before her. Despite being in the same camp they never found each other. In the intervening years her husband remarried and migrated to Australia with their children and his new wife. From Melbourne, Leda's daughter learned that her mother was in Kakuma camp and had been all along. She sponsored Leda to join the family in Melbourne and Leda arrived in 2006. It had been ten years since the family's separation.

Leda's story is one of commitment, loss and reconnection with family. Margaret's story, as a lost child at a later stage of the war, contains similar themes of surviving loss through reconnection with family. Margaret described running from her village of Aweng, in Twic County, when it was attacked by militias:

*M: [] I was eleven. When I was young [] in Aweng, in 1994, I left my family there, we separate but I don't know. I run by myself, and my father and my mum, I don't know where are they and I ran with some people.*

*S: So what happened to make the family separate?*

*A: Militia was attacking village and everyone confused what to do, and then I ran with people. And my parents, I don't know where they gone til now. I didn't find them.*

*(Margaret, Twic Dinka)*

Margaret found other displaced people and joined them. They walked toward the Kenyan border, to the Kakuma refugee camp, approximately a thousand kilometres away. Other IDPs would join the group as they walked and after about a month of walking, Margaret discovered a much younger male cousin had joined the group. He had also lost his parents and did not know where they were. When Margaret met him:

*M: I told him, 'Can we go together' and then he say, 'Ok' and then we sit together and we live together and we walk with some people. Different people told us 'just come, follow us' and then we eat together, they give us food, yeah.*

*(Margaret, Twic Dinka)*

When the group reached the border, UN workers transported Margaret and her cousin, as unaccompanied minors, to Kakuma camp. Approximately ten years later, Margaret, with her cousin and her three young children, was sponsored to migrate to Australia through

an older cousin. Survival and migration for Margaret was also encoded in familial relationships.

Both Leda and Margaret became externally displaced when they crossed the border to Kenya. As refugees registered with the UNHCR, they had their most basic of needs met. The camp was organised into areas for unaccompanied minors, widows and their children and families. A few years after her arrival there, Margaret began living with a man she met there. Together they had three sons. One day he did not return to their tent; she never saw him again or ever heard what happened to him.<sup>36</sup>

As the camp grew and NGOs other than the UN became involved, so too did services including basic health care, school and sports groups. However, the camp itself was not entirely safe. Caroline described attacks from the tribe indigenous to the area, the Turkana. The camp was built on the homelands of the Turkana, who not only suffered a loss of their land but also other resources such as water that was used to supply the camp. Turkana resentment took the form of armed attacks. Food they believed should also be provided to them was looted. Deaths occurred during these attacks. Inter-ethnic tensions within the camp saw regular violence and killings (Crisp, 2000). However, the camps also posed other risks. Female refugees of all ages were vulnerable to sexual violence, especially when leaving the camp in search of resources, such as water and firewood (Bastick, Grimm & Kunz, 2007). Caroline described having a child while in the camp *'the conception of which was not good'*. Whether in camps or other locations, refugees at most risk of sexual violence are unaccompanied women and children<sup>37</sup> (Mezey & Thachil, 2010, p. 243).

For IDPs who remained in Sudan, Khartoum was, at least initially, thought to be a place of safety, an alternative to insecurity and violence in the southern region and the risks of crossing international borders—there was no war in the north. Over one million internally displaced southerners migrated to the outskirts of the northern capital (Hutchinson, 2004; Ibrahim, 1990). But Khartoum was far from safe. IDPs lived in near destitute conditions. At different periods, IDPs were moved on from areas they had congregated, their shanties broken up. Camps were built on the desert fringe and IDPs were relocated there behind barbed wire, without shade, with limited provisions and no services. Conditions were so harsh

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<sup>36</sup> More of Margaret's story on pages 144, 146, and 147



there were many deaths amongst residents (Edward, 2007; Hutchinson, 2004; Ibrahim, 1990; Maher, 2014).

Collo woman Jocelyn moved to Khartoum in 1983, shortly after the war began. She said for her family, life there had not been too bad, but after the Islamist coup that brought Omar el-Bashir to power the pre-dominantly Christian southerners who lived in Khartoum were given no choice but to adjust to Islamic social, political and religious practice. Schools were converted from an English language curriculum to Arabic and a declaration was made, stating that all 13-year-old boys were to be recruited into religious and military training for periods between three to six months. Some would then be released to attend senior school; others would be sent to fight in the war in the south. Jocelyn became concerned for her 13 and 14 year-old sons, worrying that they could be taken from the street or her house. Her husband had gone to Libya to find work and was not able to protect them. Houses were being marked to indicate the residence of males 13 years and older. Her sons also faced having to undertake senior school in Arabic, a language they did not know. When Jocelyn found a mark on her door she decided to leave Khartoum, 'I decide straight away. Maybe I am the first women get out from Sudan, from my nation.' Jocelyn gained passports and visas to travel, but as her husband was in Libya, officials granted travel to Libya only. Transport was on an open-aired lorry through the desert, a journey that could take over a week. Jocelyn had no one to help her with her seven children and was worried that they could not survive such a trip. Instead, a male family member bribed the official on her behalf and instead she went to Egypt with the children. After a short time in Egypt, she and her children moved again to Libya, to join her husband. However, the political situation in Libya had become unstable under the Gaddafi regime and Jocelyn again decided to move. Leaving her husband in Libya, she was able to get to Malta.<sup>38</sup>

Others who found themselves in highly vulnerable positions looked to assistance from Christian churches and faith-based NGOs, such as the Sudan Council of Churches, which operated in Khartoum. But their activities were monitored by the GoS and women gave accounts of GoS interventions that prevented support being offered to IDPs. Food was confiscated and NGO workers arrested. Collo elder, Paulette recalled being arrested and imprisoned for accepting food donations from a missionary group. In prison she and the other

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<sup>38</sup> More on Jocelyn's migration process on pages 142 and 143

women were blindfolded until presented in front of a court. The judge directed her to never attend church again and to return to the south where she had come from. On release Paulette's extended family helped her leave Khartoum for Cairo.

Also Collo, Lana left Malakal for Khartoum looking for a safer life. After five years, her husband went to Libya to look for work. Lana lost contact with him and spent another ten years in Khartoum. To support her children, she brewed and sold beer. Producing homemade alcohol for sale was one of the few ways women could create, at little cost, an income. But the production of alcohol made them extremely vulnerable to Islamic authorities. Lana also risked arrest:<sup>39</sup>

*I: Life in Khartoum is not easy ... [] they brew the beer and sell it ... [] and it was one of the worst [types] of activity that [led] to the imprisonment of the women. So many of the women were in danger. This is what she is trying to explain, because she was part of those people who were doing this type of job and it was dangerous. (Lana, Collo)*

Acholi woman Marta, spent 10 or 12 years externally displaced in a refugee camp in Uganda. The camp was insecure and she was without any family members. She felt vulnerable, caring for her five young children herself. When she heard her mother was in Khartoum she moved her family there:

*I: ... she meet the Mum [she] was there, living in a place like refugees too. Don't have a good home and she have nothing even to eat. She have to go to city, in the Arab area, have to work like the housewife and clean some clothes and you get something to survive. (Marta, Acholi)*

Marta<sup>40</sup> constructed a tent-like dwelling from plastic rice bags and her children remained there while she worked as a domestic servant. She worried about losing her children, describing the risk of children being taken off the street or from their shanty by police, if she was not there to prevent it. She spoke of fearing abductions of her children and into Islamic schools. Both Marta and Jocelyn said if their children had been taken there was no way they would have been able to get them back. It was for this reason that they both organised to leave for other countries. Marta had been in Khartoum for five years,

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<sup>39</sup>Between December 1993 and November 1994, 96% of women imprisoned in Khartoum were from Southern and Western Sudan (Mahmoud El Zain, Suliman, 2007 as cited in Adelhaib, 2010, p. 5)

<sup>40</sup> Marta lost one of her daughters while in Khartoum. Her daughter went off with a friend and Marta was not able to find her. See more on p. 173

when she decided to leave for Egypt, where she spent another seven years. Jocelyn eventually achieved asylum in Malta and her situation improved, but it did not for the many women, who like Marta, crossed from Sudan into Egypt:

*I: [] she said in Egypt they don't have a place for refugees. You can get the house, like renting but you have to find some work somewhere else. To pay for the rent and for the electricity. The same thing they did in Khartoum. You have to go work to somebody house, cleaning, washing clothes and then they pay you for that. And then the government give Egypt, like UN, they give a little bit of rice and beans once a month. But for the long period you have to find some work for yourself to pay for the house. Because they don't have a place or refugees to put them.*

*S: You were able to find work?*

*I: Yes, she able to find the work and then at least they do that job and the kid will get something to eat.*

*S: Was it better or worse than Khartoum?*

*I: Khartoum was the worst.*

*S: So Egypt was better?*

*I: A little bit, a little bit.*

(Marta, Acholi)

After eight years, Acholi woman Pia, also left Khartoum for Cairo for similar reasons as Marta and Jocelyn. Life had become too difficult and dangerous for her children. She worked as a servant and described little difference to the conditions in Khartoum:

*P: Very difficult too. (laughter). It was very difficult. When you are walking on the way, you will be hit, something there, they will take the stone rock to hit [] you...*

*S: ...this is the Egyptians?*

*P: Egyptians.*

*S: ... when you were on the street?*

*P: Yeah. Sometime you are walking like this someone will come to there to beat you for nothing ... []. It was very dangerous.*

Pia was able to send her children to school, but when she injured her back, her eldest daughter told her, that she too would take work as a servant to support the family:

*P: ... I'm working part-time to clean because I want to feed my kids, want to pay the rent.... [the children] going to school and my elder girl, my elder daughter, [] because I'm going to work to rent house is very hard and to feed them, and then my daughter say like that, 'Mummy' and that time I have bad pain in my back. She said 'Mummy, you can stay home, I'm going to stay in the work, if I will come back, I will come back. If I'm not coming back, [] I am lost'. Because sometimes the girls they are going to the work there [they do not come back].*

*S: How old was she?*

*P: She was 15 years. Yeah. Not 15, was 18 years. [] Yeah, she left school, [] when they are going that way, you might be detained....*

*S: So you never knew what was going to happen?*

*P: I didn't know what's going to happen (sad laughter).*

Acholi woman Nina, chose a different path. After 11 years in a Ugandan refugee camp she decided to journey to Kakuma camp in Kenya, seeking a better life for her six children. Even though she had relatives in the camp and had been able to provide some food by labouring for local farmers, she could not afford to pay the required fees for her children to attend the camp school:

*I: She say in Kenya, it's free. Refugees go free school, it's a good school.*

*S: In Uganda you have to pay?*

*I: You have to pay.*

*S: Was that a school outside of the camp or in the camp?*

*I: Yeah, inside the camp.*

*S: In the camp, so you had to pay the school inside the camp?*

*I: Yep, yep. You pay.* (Nina, Acholi)

Flight paths for the displaced led to Khartoum or a neighbouring country. The long-term hardship and deprivation of displacement was lessened by the presence of family and family was also the motivation to seek ways to improve their quality of life.

In this study the majority of the participants were widows; it is however, unknown how many women in total were widowed by the war. The loss of husbands, extended family and homes intensified the loss of the family structure that provided support to mothers and the care of their children. Women developed new roles in response to that loss. They were forced to become the main providers and protectors (Duany & Duany, 2001, p. 71). In Chapter Seven, (p. 178), Twic Dinka women Lucy, the first of seven wives, speaks of how she became responsible for the junior wives and their combined thirty-two children after the 2015 death of their husband in the current war.

War and displacement was designed to destroy southern Sudanese families, but data shows these women did all they could to resist that destruction. Leda, Jocelyn, Marta, Lana and Pia exercised agency through decisions based on caring for their children, which included protecting, feeding and educating them. Despite very different circumstance, Leda's and Pia's daughters also took on roles as caregiver for their family. Leda's daughter sponsored her mother to Australia. Pia's daughter undertook to leave school and work as a servant when her mother had injured herself, despite the risk associated with doing so.

### 5.3. Disembodiment, war and its aftermath

Mass-scale enslavement occurred routinely during militia raids in the early years of the war, (Aguer, 2006; Collins, 1992; Douglas, 2003; Eibner, 1999). Militias gained financially from abductees who were trafficked across the northern border into Khartoum and neighbouring countries. They also gained women and girls as bounty, or reward. Like mass displacement, slavery was also intended to break families and destroy communities. Malual Dinka women, Cecelia, from the borderlands in Aweil County, said, the number of people taken from the Aweil district was so high, 'we couldn't even count them'. In one year alone, 1998, 800 women and 1500 children were abducted and enslaved (Jok, 2004).

Abductees were taken into rural and urban slavery in the north of Sudan and its neighbouring countries. Testimonies of returned women and children described being forced to convert to Islam, to speak Arabic and being given Arab names. Slaves laboured in agricultural, livestock and domestic settings. For female slaves, sexually violence was routine as was being made to live in a state of forced marriage. According to Sharia law, women who conceived in these circumstances did not have rights to the child and women who escaped or were released could not take their children with them (Eibner, 2005). The birth of African/Arab child not only weakened culture and familial ties, it also re-configured cultural identity. Children born in this situation were identified and claimed as Arab (Douglas, 2003, p. 158).

Mary described the manner in which raids on her village of Mayen Abun in Twic Country were conducted to target children:<sup>41</sup>

*I: ... when Murhal used to come, they used to come at dawn so that it will impact maximum damages on people. Because then people are asleep and you will find all the children there so then what they'll do is, ... is they will take the kids and if one child runs away they shoot the child that ran away and then they take the other children.*

(Mary, Twic Dinka, 64 yrs)

Rachael detailed her own abduction in 1984 with a cousin, who was a twin. Both fifteen years old, they were taken by Murhalin to a place called Darafat, where:

*I: ...they were asked by this Mohammed man to go and fetch water. Like*

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*she was one of the people who were picked to go and fetch water. So when she went there she looked around to see if anyone was looking and she climbed the tree and stayed on top of the tree there until six am in the morning, where she came down and left and trekked to a town called Malet and this is where she met the people and said she was abducted.*

Rachael went onto describe the effect the loss of her cousin, who was never seen again, had on her cousin's parents and herself:

I: But she said that her cousin who was a twin was never found and there was no sort of whispers of where she might have been, so her parents died feeling a bit empty ...they missed their daughter very much and [as] she said before, they grew up together, they were like little girls that played together, they were cousins, ...she really missed this girl ...she was also a neighbour and she was a friend and she was age group<sup>42</sup>, so this has continued to sit with her. (Rachael, Twic Dinka)

Helen gave an account of a Twic Dinka child who escaped from enslavement and found his way to Khartoum. There, like other unaccompanied children, he was picked up from the streets and taken to the mosque where he lived and was forced into a daily routine of learning the Quran:

*I: .... he's going to the mosque cause that's where they sit these children and brain wash them and usually they would write some verses from the Quran, verses that are radical and get these verses put them in a jug of water, mix them up and get the children to drink it. So that's extreme radicalisation to say that you swear by this and this is what you got now. So they can forget about their families that were left behind. So this is what happened to this little boy. He was radicalised like that in the mosque.*  
(Helen, Twic Dinka)

The child's experience of return to his family was one of extreme dislocation. The boy resisted his family and tried to return to a mosque. The boy was restrained from leaving the house and community members came to the home, performing prayer rituals over a period of days, allowing the child to bond with his family again. This technique worked. Helen described the boy's life now: 'he's happy and he went to uni and he's good.'

The mass abduction of southerners during the war has caused South Sudanese communities ongoing grief. Not knowing if a family member is still enslaved and having no

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<sup>42</sup> Age group refers to the children who were all the same age in the village. The term age-mates is also used.

chance of finding out makes it impossible for that grief to be resolved. The implication for many families, especially from border areas, who live in Melbourne's diaspora, is that slavery will be a common, shared and largely *silent* legacy for South Sudanese families. The degree to which slavery is acknowledged in the lives of the Australian diaspora is correlated with degrees of shame, secrecy or grief.

During the first Twic Dinka group interview, three of the five women present shared memories of abductions and the effects these abductions had on themselves individually and on their communities. Agnes, 64 years-old, said, 'This is something that has happened and all the children, that were abducted as children, have completely never come back. So then it's something that just exists within the people.'

In the following section participants shared narratives of disembodiment and destroyed subjectivity in the context of war. But in the objectifying of the pain of slavery in stories that are about individuals, families and communities, these women are rebuilding. They are exercising agency in the sharing of memories of their community's past experience of subjugation and loss:

*I: Many people that this has happened to them, they think about it in the same way. It's hurting in the same way. So most people from the families from Mayen, where these people have come from, say that people that this has affected, it's just something that you take and you learn to cope with it. So she's saying they are hurting, but what can you do? You just have to let it go. She is saying for example if you have your best friend that is taken away from you, that's hurting in the same way.*

(Mary, Twic Dinka)

Sexual violence during conflict can occur in multiple locations including the home, urban and rural settings, including refugee camps. Mass rape is used as a weapon of a 'tribe, nation or region against the women of another' (Milillo, 2006, p. 196). Mass and systemic rape was a feature of conflicts in Sudan, Rwanda, Iraq and Colombia (Human Rights Watch, 2004 in Milillo, 2006, p. 196). Mass rape during Sudan's wars have been described as a government sanctioned weapon (Jok, 2006; Kristof, 2005). Inter-ethnic violence during this conflict also saw rape used as a weapon against the women and children of opposing factions (Jok, 1999).

Forced marriage during war, as a form of sexual and domestic slavery has been documented in other warzones including Yugoslavia, Myanmar, Liberia, Guatemala,

Colombia and Uganda (Chebolu, 2016). Bartolomei, Eckert and Pittaway wrote that as an abuse of the human rights of refugee women, this type of sexual violence also occurs in urban refugee sites and can take the form of forced relationships that involve having to engage in sex in order to survive (Bartolomei, et al, 2009, p. 45). The transactions may be for food, shelter or safety. Women of any age or ethnicity are at risk of sexual attack. Gladden (2013) has documented sexual violence in the Kakuma refugee camp. D'Awol (2011) has described the sexual violence during Sudan's second civil war and in the post-conflict period (2005-2013). The consequences of sexual violence are long-term. These can include both physical and psychological implications, such as physical injury, infertility, sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Psychologically survivors may face shame, trauma, stigmatisation and social exclusion. The effect on social relations is profound. Single women may not be seen as marriageable and married women may be rejected by their husbands. Of the long-lasting effect of sexual violence during conflict, impunity for perpetrators stands out as an extremely serious issue. Bastick, Grimm and Kunz (2007) suggest that this type of impunity might perpetuate an ongoing tolerance of sexual violence toward women and girls during and in post-conflict settings.

Participants in this study also described systematic rape during raids, in flight and in refugee camps and forced marriage and childbirth as a result of rape. Ngok Dinka woman Rachael recalled raids by government-backed militia, the Murahlin<sup>43</sup>, in their border district homelands: 'When the Murhal came to Abyei, it doesn't take long before they rape a village.' Also Ngok, Emma recounted her grandmother shielding her and her siblings during raids but witnessing, 'people getting killed, people getting raped.'

Acholi woman Nina described sexual attacks by rebel soldiers of the SPLA, who came into their village in Equatoria. Acholiland is near the border with Uganda. Dinka homelands are hundreds of miles to the north. Nina had not met or seen Dinka prior to the war and the SPLA was, at least initially, predominantly Dinka. For Nina, the SPLA were not a liberation army, fighting on her behalf. They were as any other armed militia in the area, dangerous and to be avoided:

*I: In 86, Dinka come, surrounded the village.*

*S: Dinka?*

*I: Yeah, Dinka.*

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<sup>43</sup> Also known as Baggara



*S: Rebels?*

*I: Yeah, the rebels come, surround the place like Pajok.*

*S: How old were you then Nina?*

*I: She was eighteen.*

*S: You were 18. Ok. Can you say what happened at that time?*

*I: Yeah, when they come, they're raping women.*

(Nina, Acholi)

Bridget, a Malual Dinka elder also spoke of the sexual violence of a militia raid. She recalled a story told to her by another Malual woman, who attempted to protect her 12-year-old granddaughter, from the raiders. Raiders responded with stunning brutality, violating the grandmother and the child. Only the grandmother survived. Previous attacks had killed all members of her large family including, her husband, siblings and children. The attack described in the following quote left this woman as the sole survivor of her large family unit:

*The raiders came and they wanted to take the child but when the woman resisted they beat her and cut her ears off, inserted branches into her body and when she woke up her granddaughter had been raped and died from the injuries.*

(Bridget, Malual Dinka)

Collo women Lisa describes the risk of attack from the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), described below as an Arab army. Lisa described in detail, an incident when an Arab soldier threatened her with rape. The town she refers to in this quote is in the state of Upper Nile:

*L: So why I get married to another man is a benefit for my life, because the life it was tough in Renk. Arab, they was in Renk - like an army Arab. They going to different village and they are attacking SPLA rebels and they [are] fighting and so what they do inside the city, they raping the women, the raping the girls, the young children, especially if you don't have husband. They see in the house, every 24 hours they come to your house, they rape you and they attack you. If you say no, they will kill you.*

(Lisa, Collo)

With the help of another male she was able to de-escalate the situation and leave safely.

Olivia, also Collo, recalled caring for three young children who had become separated from their mother when the large group of IDPs making their way toward the Ethiopian border, had been attacked by a local militia. The group reorganised and moved

on, but Olivia decided to wait, hoping the children's parents would be able to follow the direction the group had taken. She put the children to sleep and waited:

*I was just sitting, praying for the Mum to come and then suddenly I hear that the Mum come. They beat her, they rape her, yeah they took her clothes, so they have to give her some of those materials just to tie on her. And she came, she was crying, she start crying...*  
(Olivia, Collo)

In conflicts that use sexual violence as a weapon, women are at risk of attack regardless of their location. Violation occurs to women in war zones, when women are in flight, or when in and around refugee camps. Acholi woman Caroline had a child while at Kakuma, the 'conceiving of which was not good'. She chose to have the child despite the option not to. Rape in Kakuma camp was endemic (Bartolomei, Pittaway & Pittaway, 2003, p. 87; Gladden, 2013). The effects of rape during conflict include sexually transmitted infection, injury, impairment of reproductive functioning (Bastick, Grimm & Kunz, 2007), as well as psychological and emotional harm. Rape during conflict also alters social and familial relationships, due to associated shame and humiliation.

It is hypothesised here that other participants are likely to have experienced sexual violence, directly or indirectly, given that unaccompanied women and children are at most risk of this during conflict (Mezey & Thachil, 2010, p. 245). However, the subject was not within the scope of the research and ethical concerns meant that women who did speak of it were not asked to say more, to avoid the potential for re-traumatisation. Given the risks involved in talking about sexual violence, that can include shame or dishonouring of their family or the withdrawal of community support, refugee women may choose silence as a coping mechanism (Tankink, 2004, 2007). However, a significant number of participants in this study did not choose silence. The endemic nature of sexual violence during conflict, and systemic mass rape in Sudan's second war, suggest that all participants in this study were likely to have experienced this violation in some form, be it directly, by threat, family or community members, or as a witness. The implications of sexual violence as a long-term and wide reaching, gendered effect of war are clear and requires further attention in terms of post-settlement outcomes for diaspora women.

Borrowing from Tankink's studies, (2004, 2007), I suggest that the women in this study took the interview space as an opportunity to narrate sexual violence for a number of reasons.

First, through the process of settlement they gained some sense of control in their life and their body. Within their own community, they had established social supports that allowed for the subject to be broached in public settings without risking familial or community relationships. This suggests that social relationships and cultural imperatives of silence have adjusted in the post-settlement environment. That space allows for women to demonstrate agency in matters of subjectivity and well-being.

Narrating sexual violence suggests that diaspora women have been able to open up a space within social settings which allows for individual acknowledgement of past violence. Additionally, the ways in which women in this study addressed sexual violence during war suggests a mediation of the internal and external worlds (Ahmed, 2004). Addressing sexual violence is a transgression of boundaries which have previously held the subject as taboo. Those actions are agentic and suggest the reclaiming of subjectivity, in a manner that in and of itself creates an awareness of the boundary in the first place. This is suggestive of creative responses to violence which reconstitute culture and belonging (Nordstrom, 1997). It indicates that the ways in which women came to resist the most oppressive and restrictive expectations of gender roles during war, have continued and developed during settlement and post-settlement.

## 5.4. Conclusion

The chapter has documented the common themes between participants, and their shared experiences of embodied conflict and gendered violence. Participants in this study lived in extreme difficulty and hardship, surviving a prolonged conflict that was both genocidal and gendered. Nordstrom wrote that identity, self and personhood are strategic targets of wars (1997, p. 178). Women's bodies were targeted in this way during the conflict in their homeland. Participants spoke of the gendered elements of the conflict; displacement, slavery and sexual violence and in speaking can be seen to have constructed a subjectivity that acknowledges and accepts the pain and damage these experiences have caused their bodies and the social body of the community as a whole.

However, this chapter also shows these women to be extremely resilient, with the strength to endure complex suffering and respond creatively to it. They have been able to maintain meaning in their lives through family structures and the codes of support and

nurture that these structures provide. It is clear that women exercised agency in their decision making, as it related to the survival of their family, and in the welfare and education of their children.

The shared experience of war and survival was conveyed in this data through words, silences, tears, laughter, clicks and sighs. These women have layered individual and collective identities as the mainstays of their families, as survivors of war, as members of their ethnic group, as South Sudanese and as members of the Australian diaspora.

They spoke openly of painful subjects and shared deeply personal experiences. Many of them valued the research as an opportunity to speak about the past. Women discussed sexual violence in a way that suggests a shift away from culturally sanctioned silence.

In summary, I'd like to return to the first fieldwork interview, a small group interview held at the home of the elected leader of the Twic Women's Group. This was the first of three interviews with Twic women, two small group interviews and one individual interview.<sup>44</sup>

Four out of the five women were elders. Mary and Agnes had been childhood friends and were age mates in their village of Mayen-Abun. As elderly women they both now lived in the same western suburb of Melbourne. Agnes described the devastation of war on their home town of Mayen-Abun and the long-term effect of the loss of their home:

*I: It's hurting for everybody that this has happened to but, she said for us, people who lived in their own town Mayen<sup>45</sup> - we had never left that place before. We liked it, we lived there with our families, our parents, our friends, but somehow since the unrest, we all just got scattered everywhere, a man runs off, a woman runs off, kids run in this direction. So that's the reason we left that place, because of this. So yes it hurts up until now. You were made to be displaced because of them that came to attack the peace that was there.*  
(Agnes, Twic Dinka)

When I asked if the raids had destroyed their community, the women said yes, clicking their tongues and murmuring in agreement and the interpreter said, 'They all agree that this had happened'. For a few moments the room was still. Nobody moved. The silence was both heavy and poignant, acknowledging events which had changed the course of their lives. Some time passed and I said that we had come to the end of our time and asked if anyone would

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<sup>44</sup> Interview no 1: Twic Dinka Small Group Interview

<sup>45</sup> Mayen-Abun, Twic County, Bahr el-Ghazal State

like to add anything else before we finished. Mary spoke through the interpreter:

*I: What she would like to add is that they are not isolated. They have their own community. They've got their chairman. His name is....., he is chairman to the whole community. They've got.... who is the chair for the women and she said, 'we gather and discuss issues as a collective setting, so we are happy like that. That's what she wants to add.*  
(Mary, Twic Dinka)

I responded by saying, 'It sounds like you have a sense of community here despite what has happened'. The women agreed with clicks and murmurs. Agnes said; 'Community Twic.'

Silence of this kind (as noted in Chapter Three) occurred in a number of small group interviews. This passage speaks clearly to the sense of identity women have maintained, despite, war, loss and forced migration. Identity and feelings of belonging appeared to be both personal and political (Atonsich, 2010). Twic women located their identity and belonging in the place they were born in which was their ethnic identity, their nationality as both South Sudanese and as Australian. Overall, the place they belonged to was Twic County and neither war, asylum, migration nor settlement had changed that.

## Chapter Six: The paradox of settlement

*'I feel good and I feel safe, yeah.'*

(Margaret, Twic Dinka)

### 6.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the second theme, the participants' experiences of resettlement in Australia as a foreign country. Notionally, settlement is a process which includes an array of cultural and social adjustments to life in a foreign country. However, less tangible elements to do with the self, belonging and regaining a sense of control over their own lives (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003, p. 62) are also elemental to resettlement.

Participants in this research travelled to Australia directly from their country of first asylum, where they had lived in impoverished and often dangerous circumstances for extended periods of time. During periods of asylum refugee women face sexual and physical violence, human rights abuses and protections failures. Those without family or community are particularly vulnerable (Bartolomei, Eckert, & Pittaway, 2009, p. 49). Participants' experiences of displacement ranged between 10 and 26 years. The gendered elements of the war they had survived were profoundly disembodiment—the body undone through the destruction of communities through enslavement, sexual violence and displacement. Data for this chapter shows elements of settlement in Australia provided a counterpoint to this, embodiment through safety and a sense of acceptance and belonging through various processes including the provision of health care. The security that participants had lived without for a significant period of their lives was found in Australia (Wille, 2013, p. 185).

The process of re-settlement begins years before a successful application. An application to migrate to Australia was the trigger for this process, a process which, for these participants, varied from two months to four years. Narratives in this chapter show the gendered and unconventional nature of these women's engagement with resettlement processes. Resettlement began with completing an application—described by the women as 'the form'. Descriptions of how they gained the form offers insight into a micro engagement with forced migration procedures. For a majority of participants, the form came from family members; others gained it from friends or NGO workers or, in one case, a complete stranger. The previous chapter showed family as the catalyst for survival and, here, family is again key

in both migration and resettlement. Acquiring a form, completing it, managing the administrative procedures that go with it, including interviews and medicals checks, further testifies to the tenacity and resilience of these former refugees seen in the survival narratives of the previous chapter. This chapter points to the many challenges of settlement, including language acquisition, and mothering in a new and foreign culture, as well as its paradoxes of safety and uncertainty and stress and creativity.

A timeframe that can define a period in which 'settlement' occurs is difficult to establish if based entirely on the provision of services which vary according to visa class. This study did not investigate participant visas, however, narratives suggest the full range of the 200 visa class were represented. This means women would have received services and support from government and non-government agencies both specialist and generalist, as well as family sponsors. However, for the purposes of this analysis, the process of settlement will be considered to take between three and five years based on settlement program availability, while including the understanding provided by this data that settlement is also a concept, a highly subjective, individual experience of adaptation and adjustment which is measured by more than timelines.

In contrast to the difficulties of adapting to an entirely different culture is the sense of safety and stability established in Australia. Physical security and the provision of a basic standard of living, including free health care, has allowed for that sense of safety. Safety is the foundation for processing of pre-migration experiences of violation and loss (Bartolomei, et al, 2009). Nearly 20% of the women in this study spoke directly and indirectly of sexual violence during war.

This paradox is also seen in the ways participant's pre-migration roles as carers shifted during and after settlement. Women spoke of being cared for by doctors, hospitals and the government here in Australia. This added to their sense of safety *and* belonging. Belonging is a personal sense (of feeling 'at home'), but it is also a political state, a feeling of being included in society (Atonsich, 2010). For these women inclusion is access to medical care, being treated with respect by medical professionals and knowing medical care is available to them at any time.

No longer feeling 'at risk' is a largely unacknowledged element of the settlement process for these women.<sup>46</sup> In the settlement and post-settlement phases women access services that provide a counterpoint to the pre-migration disembodiment of war. The provision of free health care has been a profoundly embodied experience, one which has created new subjectivities of acceptance and belonging. This is the major finding of this chapter.

In summary, this chapter will conclude that resettlement for former refugee women continues long after settlement services have ceased. Resettlement is a process of embodiment that reinstates safety and security, alongside and despite the stress and difficulties involved. In that regard, resettlement is paradoxical. Safety is foundational in forming new subjectivities, subjectivities which objectify pain, and in doing create a sense of feeling accepted as diaspora women. The strength and resilience of these women is seen in their ability to manage the paradoxical nature of settlement Australia, and still choose connection over isolation. This hypothesis links the stages of analysis in this chapter, the disembodied pre-migration phase, the embodied experience of settlement, and the varying degrees of objectification and connection in their post-settlement lives.

## 6.2. Pre- and post-arrival: 'getting 'the form', support and settlement

This section looks at the processes respondents underwent to gain visas to Australia and the ways in which women, who were in highly stressful and difficult circumstances, were able to access and engage with migration processes (Marete, 2011). It documents their pre-arrival perceptions of Australia.

The process of resettlement begins long before arrival in a new country and for these participants were initiated by family members, friends and allies. Participants spoke of the process of coming to Australia via 'the form': a written application for resettlement in Australia. Women acquired these forms from family, through officials, friends and in one case through beer. After eleven years in a refugee camp in Uganda, Nina moved to Kakuma camp in Kenya with her six children so they could access a free education. Nina supported her family for four years in Kakuma by making and selling beer:

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<sup>46</sup> Bartomolei et al. provide a counter argument to this. They write that while some women find safety and protection during settlement, others face the recurrence of previous abuses and risks and violations of their rights (Bartomolei et al., 2009, p. 45).



*I: Yeah, actually somebody offer her the form because she was making, like, local beer they make, like homemade. It her job to do it, she liked to do it, to help buy some vegetable or something. And somebody come across with the form and said, 'If you give me some beer and then I will have a form for you.' And then she offered the beer to the man and that man said, 'Here you go, your form. You can fill'.*

*S: Ok, so did you know that man?*

*I: She don't know, he just see what she was making, the local beer. She making it at home and the guy saw and then he come to buy.*

*S: Right, so did you know anything about Australia? When he offered you the form did you know what it was?*

*I: Yeah, because they heard about Australia, because lot of people they have a form, they filling for Australia and when the guy said this is Australia form, she happy to do it because she learn from some friends talking about Australia, it's a good country.*

*S: Did you know anyone in Australia?*

*I: At that time, no one, but she just listen, [to] local people when they talking about Australia.*

*S: And what did you hear from those people, what did they tell you about Australia?*

*I: They said it had really good schools, even you don't know anything, you go there and you can learn.*  
(Nina, Acholi)

Other women also spoke of Australia as a desirable destination, although one woman (Paulette) had not heard of the country, but wanted to go because it was peaceful. They heard in camps, through their networks and from people who had migrated before them that Australia was a good place for widows and their children to go to. They were told the Australian government would support them. Jocelyn, Erma and Caroline were encouraged by immigration officials in places of asylum to apply for Australia for those reasons.

In the previous chapter Jocelyn described repeated forced migrations, first to Khartoum, then Egypt, Libya and Malta. In Malta her claim for asylum took only two weeks. She was assisted by local UNHCR officer, who was also a Catholic priest. After four years, the same official suggested the family apply to settle in Australia, a country about which Jocelyn knew nothing:

*He encourage us. The Father said, 'because you are family you have to go to Australia, America is not a good place for your children and you are a protected mother so I want to take you to the good place. You go to Australia your kids will*

*grow up in Australia.' So I just believe him. So our process was done and we came here to Australia. And when I reach here it was so good ... we was given house, furnished. Everything was there even a lighter to light the gas, and everything, everything, four bedrooms ...it was so good and we was given social worker to help us, help go around, yeah... it was very good, very good, very good. I love this country.*  
(Jocelyn, Collo)

In 1993 Jocelyn was one of the first South Sudanese arrivals in Australia. There were just two other families in Melbourne at that time. Applying for Australia was the last in a series of intuitive decisions Jocelyn had made to keep herself and her family safe. Jocelyn's narrative of how she managed political and religious oppression repeated migrations and dangerous border crossings over a 10-year period—while caring for seven children alone—shows agency, tenacity and resilience, qualities shared by all of the women in this study. Paulette also knew nothing about Australia. She had also sought safety in Khartoum. After being arrested and released from jail in Khartoum, her family were extremely worried for her safety. A daughter in America sent her money to escape to Cairo. The same daughter then applied to sponsor her to America but the application failed. A 'half relative' in Australia then sent Paulette a form. During the Collo small group interview, with Theresia interpreting, Paulette said:

*T: ...there were some people, they were talking about Australia, that Australia is a bad country, nothing there, even no money. It's not a good country. And some forms, when they are given to people belonging to Australia they start to cry, 'Oh, I don't want to go there, it's very far, it's very bad.' Nobody knew about Australia, and then according to her, when she hear these things, she just say, 'if people can just stay there and there's no guns, it's all right.' This was her decision at that time.*

(Paulette, Collo)

Paulette's desire for safety and security was shared by Marta who also applied unsuccessfully for resettlement in America and Canada. By chance a friend gave her a form to apply for Australia. They encouraged her to apply and told her it was a better place to go than the Americas.

*I: Yes, she tried to do the form for American and Canada, they all fail and then somebody help them with the form for Australia.*

*S: Did you know anybody in Australia?*

*I: Yeah, there somebody from Dinka tribe, sent for their sister and their sister know Anna and then they give the form to her.*

*S: Marta, did you know anything about Australia?*

*I: Australia is more better. Is good. (Marta, Acholi)*

Margaret's cousin learned that she and another young cousin were in Kakuma and sent them a form. She said, 'I didn't know if Australia is a good country, I didn't know anything.' She applied and was refused, applied again with help from NGO workers in the camp and was accepted, arriving in Adelaide in 2005.

Theresia's application was initiated by one of her adult children. Theresia was living in Nairobi, and working for an NGO when she injured her leg, making it difficult for her to work and pay for the education of the youngest of her ten children. Her oldest son, who was working as an engineer, did not want to migrate with her but brought her a form and urged her to apply, telling her that women who moved to Australia were looked after by the government.

*S: ...he knew that Australia would be better for you and the children?*

*T: He knew, he knew, he knew, that's why he forced me to come here.*

*And I accepted and I came here. (Theresia, Collo)*

Cynthia's form also came through her family. Her migration story is perhaps the most convoluted of all. Cynthia and her seven children lived in Pinyudo camp in Ethiopia for 11 years. Seeing no future, she urged her older children to apply for resettlement in a Western country. A son was accepted for America and left. Another of her sons applied to Norway and included her in the application. When violence broke out in the camp she took the four youngest children and moved to a village some days away. Months later when she returned she discovered her son was gone. His application to Norway had been successful, but unable to contact her, or to know if she would return, he allowed another woman and her three children to act as his mother and siblings and they migrated to Norway together. Some years later he was able to provide financial support and Cynthia and the children moved from the camp to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia and then to Nairobi, Kenya. In Norway, her son completed

a form for Australia and sent it to a friend in Australia, who submitted it as her sponsor. The application was successful. Cynthia and the children arrived in Australia in 2006<sup>47</sup>.

The presence of relatives and the opportunity to bring other family to Australia was significant for Lisa. Lisa's brother-in-law sponsored her, her husband and four children and the family waited two years for their visas. When Lisa was asked if she knew anything about Australia, she replied:

*L: No but my brother, when he came here he said, 'Australia is a good country'. Because we heard Australia is not a good country, but what did I mention to myself? They say if you come to Australia you can bring your family, it's easy to send, to call your family from back home and bring them here. And that's why I pray to God, I say, take me to Australia, even if there's not work. Why people living in Australia? What they eat? I can eat what they eat. And I do what they do in Australia, so God listened to my prayer, and bring me to Australia.*

(Lisa, Collo)

As micro accounts of how resettlement begins, these narratives show refugee women, often without literacy skills, managing the often lengthy administrative processes that migration involves. A process which could only begin by acquiring 'the form'. For those who knew nothing of Australia, or had heard negative things about the country, their willingness to apply regardless is indicative of their commitment to finding safety for themselves and their families. The varying ways in which participants came to access a form for Australia, their knowledge and planning has been reported in previous research (Murray, 2010). The knowledge that they could bring family to join them was a deciding factor. Participation and membership in family groups is essential to wellbeing and helps to reduce stresses involved in migration (Milner & Khawaja, 2010, p. 22). The presence of family already resident in the country, or the hope that they could arrive later, also influenced decisions about applications to Australia. Whether the country was known to participants or not, the service provision provided in the initial settlement significantly mediated the unease and insecurity inherent in arriving in a new and unknown country. These services are addressed in the following section.

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<sup>47</sup> In 2014 Cynthia visited her son in Norway.

Table 2.3: Source of the 'form'<sup>48</sup>

1.	Relative in Australia	9
2.	Friend in Australia	3
3.	Agency/Worker Outside of Australia	2
4.	Self	5
5.	Stranger	1

Establishing safety and security was an integral part of the settlement process for these women. This section explores how this was achieved through the provision of settlement programmes provided by the Australian government and the social capital of their own communities (see also Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003). The limitations or lack of settlement services for long-term settlement outcomes support is addressed below. Connections to family and communities already in Australia were vital in the arrival time and its immediate aftermath. Being warmly greeted at the airport by relatives helped them remain calm<sup>49</sup> and eased them into the bewildering new culture of a large Australian city. Arriving in 2003, Lana's relatives met her at the airport:

*Yeah, I received by Collo around me. Somebody left when we was in Malakal, in my town, in my village, I find them here when I come to Australia. And I was very excited, because I find my relatives. I not scared anymore.*<sup>50</sup>  
(Lana, Collo)

For Twic Dinka woman, Margaret, combined support from settlement services and family assisted her on arrival into the country. She had known nothing about Australia, up until migrating she had lived with her parents in a rural village and then around 10 years in

<sup>48</sup> Table is incomplete. Data available for only 20 participants

<sup>49</sup> Unrecorded comment from Collo leader at her home prior to small group interview

<sup>50</sup> Lana was re-united with her husband a year after her arrival in Australia. Through the Collo network in Australia she discovered her husband was in Holland. She had lost contact with him years earlier when he had gone to Libya to work (see p. 20)

the sprawling Kakuma refugee camp. Margaret had worried about what would happen when she got to Australia:

*... [I] they show me everything, how to do this. They took me to the supermarket, to show me food and then another white lady help me. Walked with me together, get what you want here. And then I saw everything and I say, I need this, I need this, yeah they show me everything in the supermarket. In the house, my cousin teach me how to use the gas and then the bathroom hot water. You need to this and this to your children, to have a shower, take them to the bed and do everything and I know how to clean the children's place. Yep.*

*S: So, you weren't worried?*

*M: No, I'm not worried because everything I see and then [if there is] something to read, I leave. I cannot touch yeah, 'til my cousin come, because I don't know how to read properly. Yeah. I didn't touch something, that [I] is dangerous thing. But we know how to open tin, I know how to open to cook, yeah. I was safe.*

(Margaret, Twic Dinka)

Margaret's sense of safety was increased with the support of her cousin, who reassured her that not only was she safe but that she could say and do what she wanted. She no longer needed to worry about being attacked, Australia was secure and she could call on the police if she needed to. The support given to her by her cousin and by the settlement services when she arrived helped her to adjust to an entirely unfamiliar environment and reassured her that she and her family were not only safe, they were also free:

*When I come here I feel better because my cousin said, 'you don't think: nothing, nothing. You don't worry about it, you've won, you are free ...you can go where you are allowed, to go. But no one can hurt you. There is security here to protect people. If something happened, call the police, they will help you.*

(Margaret, Twic Dinka)

Katherine also valued the social order and infrastructure she found in Australia. Katherine arrived as a widow after an extended period of displacement in Kakuma camp. She had received no prior education:

*I: She loves the roads, she loves the education, she loves the houses that you get given. She loves the education that the kids get. She also loves the education that they get as adults, even if they failed to graduate or move onto higher education,*

*as long as they are getting something, so she is really happy with whatever Australia been given her and her family. She is very, very happy here in Australia.*  
(Katherine, Twic Dinka)

Katherine went onto to describe her happiness as grounded in the safety she had gained through settlement services that provided for her family in the way her husband would have in their homeland and that education is available for her children:

*I: ....my happiness in my son can go to school, if my son finishes his education, if I live in a house where I cannot hear gunshots, why would I not be happy? ... so I'm very happy cause I came as a single person, as a single woman, and Australia has acted like my husband cause in terms of helping my children, my children go to school, I've got a house, [] I'm very happy here in Australia.*  
(Katherine, Twic Dinka)

A number of other women stated how they 'loved' Australia, and appreciated Australian society and of wanting to thank the Australian government for accepting them into the country.

At that time of the 2006 Australian census, 19,050 Sudan-born migrants resided in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007, as cited in Hatoss and Huijser, 2010). Kakuma Refugee camp in Kenya and Cairo, Egypt, were the main source of arrivals (Robinson, 2013). The majority of participants arrived in Australia between 2003 and 2006. More arrived in 2004 than any other year. This generally reflects the migration patterns of the South Sudanese community into Australia. Holders of the subclasses 200, 201, 203 and 204 were provided with a five-day Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program and their airfare to Australia was paid. Initially, intensive support services were provided by government and non-government actors through the Integrated Humanitarian Support Services (IHSS) programme<sup>51</sup>, administered through the Department of Social Services (DSS). The IHSS programme included being met at the airport and transported to pre-arranged accommodation, case coordination, information and referrals, emergency medical care and short-term trauma and torture counselling. As a specialist service IHSS ends after six months. Generalist services were then provided by migrant services funded through Settlement Grants Program these services can be provided for up to five years. Pittaway, Muli and Shteir

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<sup>51</sup> Programme became the Humanitarian Support Program (HSS) in 2011

(2009) wrote that these service were not offered consistently across refugee locations and were under resourced (Pittaway, et al, 2009, p. 135).

During the settlement period participants experience changes that are expected and synonymous with migration processes, e.g. separation from family, learning a new language, adjusting to new cultural norms etc (Skrbîs, 2008, p. 235). Cultural adaptation, changes in inter-generational, familial relationships and coping with physical and mental health concerns have also been addressed in literature as additional and significant challenges for forced migrant women in Australia (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012; Deng & Marlowe, 2013; Herbani, Obijifor & Bristed, 2013; Kaplan & Webster, 2003; Levi, 2014; Marlowe, 2009; McMichael & Manderson, 2004; Schweitzer, Melville, Steel & Lacherez, 2006; Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2010; Westoby, 2009).

It has been suggested that service provision for newly arrived refugees in Australia is some of the most generous in the world (Murray, 2010) and participants in this study spoke highly of how they were received in their arrival and initial period of settlement. Prior research has shown refugees from Sudan showed extensive experience of trauma and torture (Steel, et al., 2002; Schweitzer, et al, 2006; Khawaja et al., 2008). Counselling for pre-migration trauma was included in settlement service provision, but participants in this study did not speak of utilising that service. Participants described surprise and pleasure at being provided with accommodation containing all household goods, including a fully stocked pantry and fridge. Arrivals within the 200 visa range were met at the airport by a case worker and relatives.

Case workers assisted new arrivals to register with Centrelink, Medicare, banks, schools and with a provider of the AMEP. In the following days, case workers assisted in gaining government benefits, healthcare, education and language training for them and their children. Women spoke warmly of this time, describing initial IHSS service provision, as a 'reception' that made them feel welcome, secure and supported. This was not expected, nor has not been forgotten:

*T: The goodness of this country is when you come in, when I was sponsored by my sister I thought I have come to rely on my sister ...but what I discovered was, I was taken down to Centrelink so I can be given some money. So in just a week's time we discovered that we had money in the bank, then... because we went to the bank also with them...I say ah, they give people money? They give to each one, so each one has the money, which is something that you can't imagine that*



*you would receive. You receive a home with all the food and everything and now you are received with money also and the money they can give me to rent a home so I can live independently...and after giving me that house also there are things brought into the house like, for free, like some of the things like bed sheets and all of the bedding were given to us, and then all the cooking utensils and all these things so really it is a well-considered reception. I always think of it. I always think of it that reception. When we talk to those who went to America, they're not talking of that reception, yeah, they're not talking of that reception. So the reception of Australia is very special, is very special. (Theresia, Collo)*

IHSS services were provided for a period of six months, although not all visas in the humanitarian range were eligible for these services (Spinks, 2009). The AMEP, which provided 510 hours of English language training, was also available to new arrivals. In 2008, the Complex Cases Support (CCS) programme, was established and available to those deemed to have 'exceptional need' (Spinks, 2009). Government and non-government agencies provided tailored and individualised support for periods of up to two years for those who were eligible. Exceptional needs included disability, health and mental health concerns, homelessness, family violence and child and youth welfare (Spinks, 2009). It is not known if participants in this study received CCS services, however it is likely that all who needed language training, claimed their 510 hours through the AMEP programme.<sup>52</sup> Currently, the HSS programme, which replaced the IHSS in 2011, is offered for one year after arrival, and CCS services are now available for up to five years, instead of the two years the original programme provided (Department of Social Service, 2017). AMEP 510 hours continue to be available for as long as it may take to complete.

Holders of the subclass 202, Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) visa were not eligible for the full IHSS program. Eligibility for the IHSS programme was on a 'needs basis' but the inference was on sponsors to provide case work service similar to the IHSS programme. Sponsors also covered the cost of the airfare, although no-interest loans for airfares are available through the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Pittaway, et al. note that those arriving on this visa experienced hardship through the lack of IHSS-like services. This is significant as 70 percent of Sudan-born arrivals arrived on the SHP programme (Pittaway, et al, 2009, p. 135). In an earlier study, in 2007, Murray wrote that

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<sup>52</sup> A 2014 evaluation of both HSS and CCS programmes, addressed the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of these programmes and concluded that both were working well, however a series of recommendations were also made to improve service delivery in both programmes (Ernst & Young, 2015).

four out of ten new arrivals who had been sponsored by friends had little contact with settlement services and at the time of the study there was the suggestion that this system might be considered for a change in policy, given the variability of services the sponsor could provide. This study also pointed out that previous exposure to westernised cultures could lessen settlement stress (Murray, 2010, p. 37). Only two of the participants in this study had previous experience with westernised cultures (Nairobi in Kenya, and Malta).<sup>53</sup>

Acculturation, language skills, employment and suitable housing are significant challenges for newly arrived refugee women (Colic-Peisker, 2009; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003; Milner & Khawaja, 2010; Murray, 2010; Pittaway, et al, 2009). Participants in this study spoke of those challenges during the initial settlement phase and well beyond that period. This study makes a contribution to the understandings about the ongoing nature of settlement and the ways in which its initial challenges are often *ongoing*. One of the most significant issues of post-settlement is not acquiring full literacy. This has long-term, destabilising consequences in the stages of settlement and post-settlement.

Limitations of English language skills were evident during interviews. Women had varying degrees of spoken competency, but reading and writing skills were far more limited. The older women had gained basic skills and were able sign their name and write their address (as seen on the consent form). Explanatory statements were however read aloud by interpreters.

Limited language skill significantly reduces employment possibilities, making women long-term dependents on government welfare systems. Approximately half of the participants in this study find themselves in this position. This is paradoxical. Safety and security established during the initial settlement phase is undermined in the post-settlement phase by low literacy skills.

Stella had not received any form of education and was the sole parent of three children, two who had migrated with her. During settlement Stella achieved limited literacy, although she spoke English and clearly understood it, she lacked the confidence to use it during the fieldwork interview, using an interpreter instead:

*I: When she came, she came with the younger daughter and of course when they arrived there was excitement; it's a new country, it's the first world. Everything*

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<sup>53</sup> Egypt has not been considered here to be a westernised culture. Nairobi, while not conforming to some norms expected in western cities, had considerably more developed infrastructure and modern conveniences than many participants were familiar with.

*seemed very good. Everything is there, but after you stay for a while then you start to experience some of the challenges, the difficulties.*

(Stella, Kuku)

Beyond settlement, approximately half of the participants faced ongoing acculturation difficulties due to a lack of language skills. Language skill is essential as a precursor for social inclusion, access to employment, housing and health services (Milner & Khawaja, 2010 p. 22). Participants who spoke English prior to arrival or had learned it during the settlement period had been able to find employment. One participant had educated her four children at a private school and they had all entered professional careers in medicine and law. Other employed participants described buying or building family homes. In contrast are participants who had not acquired English language skills. Women and older people who lack a prior education generally find language acquisition extremely difficult (DIMA, 2006, as cited in Milner & Khawaja, 2010; Pittaway, et al, 2009). Lack of English language skills also prevent women from gaining independence and confidence in dealing with their new environment (Atwell, Gifford, & McDonald-Wilmsen, 2009. p. 679; Hatoss & Huijser; 2010). Lack of language skills also prevents a full participation in the Australian community (Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2010, p. 33). Not being able to communicate in English makes women reliant on those in their family and community who can, often their children. It has been found that South Sudanese children acquired English language skills faster than their parents, so parents could, at times, be reliant on them to communicate with the English-speaking community (Hebbani, Obijiofor & Bristed, 2013, p. 165).

Stella is keenly aware of how her lack of English skill has shaped her life in Australia. Her comments below are typical of former refugee women who lack a prior education and who consequently found the AMEP's 510 hours, and the additional hours available through the SSP programme, to be inadequate. For the group of women that Stella represents, these programmes do not offer enough time to achieve proficiency:

*I: The first challenge, as for my case, I came when I was already older, I never went to school. I never studied English. So the first thing is the language barrier. We're conditioned to study the English in the 510 hours. It is very difficult for me to catch up within that scope of timeframe. Because of age, and different backgrounds, it's very difficult to understand language within that time although there is also an extension for you to learn English at the community centre given extra hours, but still I feel it's not enough for me to be able to learn English, to communicate with people and understand what I'm talking about.*

(Stella, Kuku)

Beyond the AMEP hours, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are available through other agencies, including Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres. Those are however, not necessarily designed for this category of learner and may also charge for classes, which can limit attendance. Many aspects of the refugee experience can affect concentration and learning, including war trauma and/or PTSD (Allender, 1998, as cited in Herman, Kaplan & Szwarc, 2010, p. 42).

For Stella and other participants with limited literacy, who were also sole parents, dependency on government benefits causes unresolvable fear and uncertainty. The stress of this is a consistent reality in their daily lives. Not being able to read or write English proficiently, or use a computer, meant searching for work was nearly impossible. Without adequate English language skills, their ability to even search for work is extremely limited. Yet the pressure to prove to job providers and Centrelink that they doing is ongoing:

*After they have assumed you had already learned English and you need to look for work. You know it's very difficult, I don't have any qualification. Any specific work experience. What kind of job can I get? This gives us a lot of tension. You are not at ease. Any time they send you another letter about going to look for job and you don't know where you are going to work, and you threaten with your income, that your income will be stopped. And even though everything is there you know, we're not living at ease. We're under a lot of pressure, and fear, you know how are you're going to solve that tension? Australia's a country, they came here, they settled here and it's peaceful and start being supported financially by Centrelink. But also with the conditions, the conditions are, like what she already explain, you know, it's very, very difficult for people who come here who are already elderly. Who are mature, especially when they never went to school. They don't have any qualifications, any work experience, and once they are here, once they finished their so-called hours for English, it's very difficult for them to get a job. People want to work, but it's very difficult for them to get a job. And then the Centrelink pressure and stress for them to get the job, it's really, very stressful and most people are really depressed, they are sleepless because, 'oh my god, tomorrow they're going to ask me'. What about if they stop the money? How am I going to stay in my home, especially when you have children? [] ... all that fear, it's not good that the people are restless because of that condition.*

(Stella, Kuku)

Christine presents another perspective to life on government benefits. Christine arrived from Kakuma camp in 2003 with her seven children, with English as a third language. She is proficient in the language and is a qualified teacher. Christine seems able to manage the pressure of the ongoing requirements of Centrelink and even the difficulty of living with

the constant demands on her small government benefit. South Sudan did not have living costs comparable to Australia, but Christine thought Australia's system of living was preferable:

*Life on Centrelink is hard. It is good to get job you know. The money is little, you're always in trouble; when you drive car, there is CityLink when you go there, a lot of fine. When you park the car, a lot of fine, when you come and say you're paying back there is not enough money and paper, always paper. I'm always sometimes I come like crazy, Oh, I hate the letters (laughter). I don't want any bill you see. But what can I do? That's the life. Because in South Sudan, we don't have any bill. You live in the house, there is no bill, there is no anything. Yeah. But without paying bill, it's not good, because everything is on system. Life without system is not good. This is the reality, the reality life. Yeah. We should follow this life. I'm really appreciating life in Australia, even though there's some difficulties...*

(Christine, Ngok Dinka)

Christine expressed frustration about not being able to find employment, when she believed herself employable, and the constraints this put on her ability to support her children. She added that she wanted to pay tax, to support other Australians who needed it. Christine described Australian people who she described as having a 'good heart', people she 'really, really appreciated.' Christine's desire to give back to the Australian community, to thank it for the support she has been given, was a sentiment conveyed by a number of other participants:

*C: When you try for the job you don't get any good job, to help you with your kids, but they are still supporting us. Me, I have ten years in this country, but I didn't get any better job and then I can help my kids without Centrelink, see? [...] a lot of people now, they are with Centrelink since they arrived up to now, and I always pray, I say God, God open for us a job. And then we can pick this beautiful life and then help Australian people like, like what they did for us, helping us.*

(Christine, Ngok Dinka)

Christine also felt the paradox of settlement. She had gained security for herself and her children but had not been able to find employment. Christine aspired to paying tax and owning her own home, but could not see how that would ever be possible without finding employment.

Julia experienced a different dimension in the tensions created by receiving financial support. A qualified accountant, Julia did not stop working during the war. She was one of the few respondents who stayed in the war zone in Malakal, Upper Nile, for 12 years. Julia

adapted to the hardship and risks, raising her five children and going to work each day. Her husband went to Egypt to study, but after two of their children died, her husband called his family to Egypt. When they arrived Julia discovered he had made a successful application to Australia and the family left Egypt, arriving in Australia in 2002. Julia had a relative in Australia which made her transition much easier. Julia was interviewed in the Collo small group interview, with Theresia interpreting for her:

*T: I think she is trying to explain that the reception that Australian did for people who came here, to receive, you given homes, you live in the houses, all the good things that are being done with the people are really something that raised the appreciation of the goodness of Australia here.*

*S: So there weren't other difficulties for you?*

*T: There's no difficulties because things are settled. Only the concern is that when you are used to work, to sit down from morning to evening is the concern that she wanted to mention...you feel like working because you are someone who is used to work. Wanting to work I think, it troubled her.*

(Julia, Collo)

For Julia, her lack of English skill, recognition of her professional qualifications and a physical disability prevents her from working in Australia. She walks on crutches with difficulty, although a scooter increases her mobility. The limited mobility never prevented her working in her home country however. After nearly ten years on a disability pension, Julia's frustration at not being able to find employment led her to return to Malakal in 2011 to start a business. She did not see the impoverished situation of her country, or her own disability as a limitation. Julia returned to Malakal and started a brick factory. She was there for nearly two years before the current conflict broke out, which forced her to return to Australia.

Women with limited literacy are likely to remain as recipients of unemployment benefits up until they can receive an aged pension at aged sixty-five. At that point, they will no longer have to fulfil the fortnightly obligations associated with unemployment benefits. While being grateful for the peace and safety they have found in Australia, the sense of security they had established during settlement has been undermined by the very institutions that had helped create it. There is no way of resolving this tension. Even if Stella had been able to acquire adequate English language skills, her age and lack of work training are additional barriers to her entering the job market. The complexity of the position Stella and

other women like her are in is not acknowledged by the bureaucratic requirements of the Government agencies operating these programmes.

Knowing that this tension cannot be resolved until they reach pension age and are able to receive financial support without obligations has increased emotional stress and created conditions for the collapse of the integration of war experiences achieved earlier in the settlement process when support without requirements was available.

### 6.3. Settlement as embodiment

The findings of this research show women to have experienced arrival in Australia as largely supportive, with significant positive changes for some. Age and lack of prior education on arrival continue to present severe challenges in post-settlement. Stella, Christine and Julia experience dependence on government to varying degrees, but for all of them a lack of employment, undermines a sense of belonging, inclusion, security and confidence. McPherson (2010) suggests that a meaningful education can play a role in social cohesion for refugee women, not solely as a gateway to employment, but as means to gain 'autonomous capabilities' (Olsen, 2005, as cited in McPherson, 2010, p. 566) which links to empowerment. That women in this study have not been able to gain the 'functional English' within the AMEP programme hours, and continue to try and develop their English skills in post-settlement, raises questions as to the adequacy of ESL training and the long-term implications for former refugee women, especially older women. Inadequate language training and the subsequent lack of employment undermine social cohesion, although age, lack of work experience and discrimination are also contributing factors in job market exclusion (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2011; Hatoss & Huijser, 2010; Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2010). Yet, women feel included in other ways, i.e. the health and welfare systems, which is discussed more in the following section. The idea that women may feel included in some aspects of Australian society and not in others reinforces that settlement is deeply paradoxical.

In 2009, Colic-Peisker addressed life satisfaction in three refugee communities, Yugoslav, African and Middle Eastern. Findings suggested employment as a necessary condition of successful settlement. Life satisfaction was not dramatically lower than the general population, but that was thought to, at least partly, be due to a combination of 'still-

fresh memories of war and flight, alongside enjoying safety in Australia and the hope that their children will have a good life and experience social mobility' (Colic-Peisker, 2009, p. 194). Findings also pointed to a 'relative deprivation theory'. Being relatively new arrivals, they contained social comparisons within their own communities and maintained a narrative of gratefulness or gratitude toward the broader Australian community (Colic-Peisker, 2009, p. 194). Colic-Peisker commented that this type of gratitude might start to dissipate in later stages of settlement. This research suggests that it has not, but for women with low literacy their gratitude has been tempered by frustration and worry about financial dependency on government services and the lack of opportunity that brings them.

Despite the ongoing challenges in their current lives, the early settlement period was significant in building a secure foundation for participants. In having all their essential, basic needs met, and importantly believing police to be reliable and trustworthy, participants were able to establish a sense of safety.

What is clear in this section is that while all participants had established safety in Australia, security in the form of income was dependant on age. In the previous section Julia, Christine and Stella were uncomfortable with their dependence on government income because of the fears, conditions and limitations that came with it. Women who were recipients of a pension however said they were very happy to receive government support. Receiving an income and health care reinforced a sense of security in Australia. Literature on health care and refugee women points to considerable barriers in the access to appropriate health care, (Drummond, Mizan, Brocx & Wright, 2011; Riggs, et al., 2012, Sheikh-Mohammed et al., 2006). However, access and availability was not mentioned as problematic by the participants in this study. Free health care was significant for a range of participants, not solely the pensioners, and it is surmised here that health care adds to feelings of safety and security in Australia, but also to a sense of inclusion. Health care has enabled women to shift from their role of carer, to being *cared for*. Income and health care in these forms are also metaphors for *being cared for*. In this regard, settlement is embodied through safety, income—and through health care.

Collo woman Paulette, at 69-years-old receives the aged pension. When asked how her life in Australia was now, she replied, 'Nothing bad, now that the government is standing with me and they are caring for me and [there is] no war'. For Paulette the safety she has found in Australia is threefold. Using excerpts from the quote below, the three elements of



that safety are a) the country is free from war, (*she is well treated*), b) she receives an income without conditions (*she has the money in hand*) and c) receives free health care (*this is one of the best things she is getting*). Additionally, Pauline has specialist health care. After falling down an escalator at a major train station in Melbourne and seriously injuring herself, she required hospital care and receives ongoing treatment:

*I: She's happy here, she's well treated. She's sick all the time and she's now receiving the good [best] treatment that is possible for her, and this is one of the best things she is getting, and the money. She has the money in hand.*

(Paulette, Collo)

As the second oldest woman in the study, Paulette's recollections of violence, insecurity and instability encompass most of her life. This is also the case for Della, Maluwal Dinka and at 72 years, the oldest participant. Della's experience of government programs like Medicare also helped alleviate the vulnerability of being a widow. She, like many others, arrived without a husband or male members of their extended families. Della expressed no desire to return to her homeland, saying she would not be comfortable there; 'Life is good here. I was sick when I arrived and the doctors were very good to me'. Della was also given a bone density test to establish her age and was grateful to the hospital that conducted the procedure. Knowing her age was a source of pride for her. Receiving high quality, free health care helped Della feel secure and confident in her new home. No medical services were available to her in her home town, or in Cairo where she spent many years working as a servant, prior to her arrival in Australia.

Cynthia's war experience was comparable to that of Paulette and Della as they are all similar in age. While Della had been able to establish her age and Paulette also knew her date of birth,<sup>54</sup> Cynthia did not, so was receiving unemployment benefits, not an aged pension. She was under constant pressure to find employment and during her interview she spoke of financial stress. She was struggling to pay the rent and utilities and had closed her mobile phone account. Cynthia continue to attend ESL classes to improve her literacy. Ten years had passed since her arrival and she still spoke of her gratitude for the safety found in Australia

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<sup>54</sup> Paulette told a lengthy story of how she came to know her age. She married her teacher and moved away from her village, some months later she returned and the missionary attached to her husband school told her she was too young to marry. He had recorded her birth date in his bible. She was 14 at the time.

and access to health care. She acknowledged that education and employment opportunities were orientated toward young people:

*I: ... arriving in Australia here is very good. You stay here with security, there's no one, like back home, not happening here. People here are living in peace, people are really good; not like what happened to her back home in South Sudan. There's no any bad thing about Australia. You get knowledge, you go to school and life can be better, especially for those who are young. There is now time for them to go to school and to make life easy for them, for the future. She said Australia here is a very good country. They provide Medicare, if you are sick you go to a doctor, they provide a doctor. If she were young, if she were young arriving in Australia she would do good things. Go to school and do something for career.*  
(Cynthia, Anuak)

Participants spoke of an appreciation of Australian society and wanting to thank the Australian government for accepting them into the country. Collo woman, Olivia receives a benefit to care for a young daughter who has a physical disability. As a full-timer carer, she is not able to seek employment, but is very conscious of the support she is given, of a desire to contribute to the tax system and how she pays back a sense of good fortune by sponsoring a child in Ethiopia:

*O: I'm very much ok here. They are good people. People are, Australian people are very good to me. Sometime even I feel, getting this money from Centrelink, oh my god, I'm, I'm trying hard, with the disability of my daughter, I want to start to get job, you know. I want also to pay tax for those who pay me tax you know. Because I don't want to be that way, since I came here in 2003, 2005 I started to sponsor child, because I can't get a job, because of my daughter... [] from what I am getting, I'm sponsoring a child through World Vision. Since that time [].*  
(Olivia, Collo)

Of the participants, Jocelyn had resided in Australia the longest. Her narrative adds a perspective on the health and welfare systems that is unique amongst the women as Jocelyn has worked for the same employer for 15 years:

*Here I can get sick, I go to hospital, I find medicine, I get cured. I have food, even though I do work, social security is here for me, which you can't find anywhere in this world. The way people live here, the way government take care of people, you can't find it anywhere. How many people in the country? Most are not working. Government still care about them. Still look after them. Where can you find that?*

*Nowhere. Nowhere. You get sick, you don't have money, you go to the hospital, [] you go to the clinic, it's a blessing and that's why I always get up, before I put my foot on the ground, [] I will say Lord, I praise you. I adore you because without you I will not be able to reach this country and I am here; happy and pleased with my family.*  
(Jocelyn, Collo)

For Paulette and Della being comprehensively 'cared for' and supported through health care and a pension has created a sense of inclusion; being included in the health and welfare systems of Australian society creates a sense of belonging. Olivia and Katherine also feel that inclusion through being able to care for a disabled child full time or continue to access education as an adult, even when little improvement is gained. While Cynthia feels the same pressure as Stella to gain employment, the stress of being required to seek work they will not be able to get does not undermine their appreciation for medical care that is available. Jocelyn has worked full time at the same company for the past 15 years. She had been resident in Australia, longer than any other participant. Knowing that she can rely on the health and welfare systems in Australia if she needed to also speaks of a sense of belonging through access. Belonging is considered essential to social cohesion (Antonsich, 2010, p. 652), but Antonsich supports the claim that belonging is a process (becoming) rather than a status (being). In that sense, participants in this study are in various, post-settlement phases of belonging. Degrees to which they are able to progress along what could be called a continuum of becoming, seems dependent on age, education and a sense of themselves as included in the society in which they live. Speaking about pre-migration sexual violence also places women on the continuum of belonging.

A study of the effects of war on women is, by proxy, a study of the effects of sexual violence, however it had been assumed by the author that women would remain silent on this subject. The silences that tend to prevail in the wake of sexual violence was broken in this study. A significant portion (19.6%) of the 42 participants in this study, of various age and ethnicities, broached the subject. They did so in public, and of their own volition. They spoke of the subject directly and indirectly, gave accounts of attacks on themselves and their communities, and of witnessing attacks on others, during raids, in flight and in refugee camps. Olivia spoke of a woman being raped by local militia as a large group of Collo fled toward the Ethiopia border. Rachael, Nina and Bridget all described villages raids where women and children were systematically raped. Caroline, whose husband was killed during the war, had

remarried in Australia. She was interviewed in her home and spoke of forced marriage and other traumatic events of sexual violence in the presence of her husband.

Lisa spoke of women being attacked in her town, when the government army arrived in the area. Her narrative describes the vulnerability of women caught in conflict and their potential of being a target. Lisa was the youngest of five Collo women in a small group interview. Prior to the war, she had divorced her husband and worked as a nurse to support herself and her children. But after the conflict began, women without husbands were more vulnerable to attack than women with husbands. Lisa's strategy to protect herself and her children was to marry again. In Chapter Five she recalled escaping rape by a Sudanese soldier, saying the event had made her 'very sad' and the experience was one which she had never been able to get out of her mind.

The analysis of the accounts women gave of their early phase of settlement suggests that women broke the silence over sexual violence due to a cultural shift that has occurred over long-term residence in a safe and secure environment. Women spoke of the value they placed on the peace they found in this country, of being able to call police, and of women not being at risk in the way they were prior to arrival. Ngok Dinka woman, Eleanor, (55 years) contrasted the lives of women in war and asylum settings with their lives in diaspora: 'In Australia, no one can come and knock on your door and take a woman outside and do something bad to them.'

The ways in which these women have given voice to sexual violence during war is creating a new and embodied subjectivity in the post-settlement period. This subjectivity includes a sense of belonging in Australia based on the ways in which their bodies are now cared for. The feeling is a personal sense of Australia being home, but it is also political. In breaking the taboos around sexual violence, by sharing their stories, these women are politicising their experience by exercising both power and agency. Inclusion means the right to speak and to be heard.

## 6.4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored how South Sudanese women negotiated the migration process and their initial settlement in Australia. It has also addressed key assumptions around notions of refugees and their experience of trauma. It has traced how women developed a sense of

safety and security on arrival in Australia, despite the weight of traumatic pre-migration experience. Trust and reliance on Australian police services were integral to that sense. Re-establishing control over their lives, by having homes, income and, in particular, health care has given women feelings of being included in the social order of Australian society. In this study inclusion is equivalent to or identified as a type of belonging.

However, participants also experienced settlement as paradoxical. The security they achieved in Australia has been undermined by long-term unemployment. Age and limited education means women face financial dependence on government benefits for the rest of their lives. Those benefits come with obligations. Proving that they were seeking employment, when they did not have the language or education skills needed to get work, caused significant stress and tension. Post-settlement their sense of security is undermined by the very agencies who help them establish security during settlement.

Despite ongoing acculturation difficulties and stresses, in their post-settlement lives, new subjectivities are emerging for South Sudanese women. Nordstrom (1997) wrote that identity and self are strategic targets of war. In post-settlement women are re-creating the self. They have found ways to describe the indescribable. Being cared for and objectifying pain are new forms of embodiment. The following chapter will discuss translocal caring and emotional labouring during crisis as additional layers of the post-settlement experience.

## Chapter Seven: Transnationalism, family and emotional labour

*'... you're neither here nor there emotionally'*  
(Leda, Twic Dinka)

### 7.1. Introduction

This chapter will address the third overarching theme of this research, that is the period of post-settlement. Here, I posit that post-settlement continues after a period of three to five years from the initial settlement. In the post-settlement period, respondents have adjusted to living in diaspora and developed social connections, but the difficulties of maintaining traditional cultural practices continue, as do complex processes of acculturation. The changes in family dynamics, including their role as mothers and intergenerational conflicts with their children, have been a significant source of stress and anxiety. As caregivers, South Sudanese Australian women experience a complex daily reality of managing the expectations of family, community and society. Dinka women settled in America who believe their own well-being was tied to the well-being of their community (Baird & Boyle, 2012, p. 19) appear to share this reality.

Many of the initial stressors of the settlement period have eased, but the grief and longing for absent family continues into the post-settlement period and, likely, never ceases. All participants in this study experienced pre-arrival separation from family, during and in the aftermath of conflict. Internal and external displacement during war meant that absent family members were living in multiple, transnational locations including their homeland of South Sudan, countries of first asylum,<sup>55</sup> Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt and other settlement countries, America, Canada, New Zealand and Norway. Within the Australian diaspora family was also located in multiple, interstate locations.

The cultural imperative of caring for absent family, *in situ* and at a distance, presents a significant challenge for the South Sudanese diaspora in Australia. For the women in this study, familial relationships of care present multiple and complex transnational negotiations.

Translocality is a transformative process which sees localised social communities

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<sup>55</sup> Family members in countries of first asylum may reside in refugee camps or urban settings

evolve into internationalised communities (Conradson & McKay, 2007, p. 168). While transnationality is synonymous with migrations, voluntary or forced, the notion of translocality is underutilised as a tool to conceptualise diaspora created by forced migrations. The notion of translocality illuminates key understandings of the South Sudanese diaspora in Australia that a single focus on transnationality would not (Al-Ali et al., 2001, as cited in Halilovich, 2001, p. 168). Translocality reminds us that the South Sudanese have been internationalised by war. The population in Melbourne is one of many South Sudanese diaspora communities around the world. Dispersal has not however broken familial and cultural bonds. Data gathered in this research project suggests that those bonds may in fact have been strengthened by it. Diaspora women in national and transnational locations interact with each other, their homeland and with externally displaced refugee communities (that are not deemed diaspora) often in countries of first asylum.

Translocality also describes the commitment transnational migrants have towards family and community, and recognises that the maintenance of such affiliations can be emotionally and materially intensive (Larsen, 2006, as cited in Conradson & McKay, 2007, p.168). A sense of self based in multiple, transnational locations can be described as translocally subjective. For voluntary migrants, mobility can create new forms of subjectivity and emotion— which can be both negative and positive (Conradson & McKay, 2007, p. 168). South Sudanese Australian women maintain commitment to family and communities in multiple locations. This research's data has shown this commitment to be both materially and emotionally intensive as is the case for voluntary migrants. One of the key commitments of Australian South Sudanese women, different to those of voluntary migrants, is the provision of care to family and communities during violent conflict. Since inter-ethnic political violence broke out in their country in December 2013, (and which at the time of writing is ongoing), care-giving in this context is experienced both positively and negatively, be it provided *in situ* or at a distance.

Care-giving is theorised as 'emotional labour' or 'emotional displays and spheres where emotional gift exchanges are conducted' (Skrbiš, 2008, p. 237). Care-giving also includes the notion of co-presence—times when the separated can be together again—when emotional labour and gift exchanges can be performed. Co-presence takes the form of two key processes: return migrant visits and transnational family reunions (Skrbiš, 2008, p. 237). Co-presence allows for a spatial interaction between reunited migrant with family and

community again. Since 2005, when the second Sudanese war ended, transnational family reunion has been a common experience for South Sudanese. I attended one myself in 2010. However, this chapter will address the range of caregiving that has occurred since the 2013 crisis of political, inter-ethnic violence. It will focus on the emotional labour of return visits (Lim, 2009; Ramsay, 2016) in contexts of family, clan and country and consider the emotional displays and exchanges performed from a distance (McKay, 2007).

Transnationalism has taken on a new dimension with the development of technology and global access to it. Technologies allow instantaneous contact between diaspora and distant family. Online communications create a new type of 'in-between' space (Halilovich, 2001, p. 162; Skrbiš, 2008, p. 138) for separated communities. People can return to that space to view photos, re-read text messages, posts or emails. However, it is not known if this closeness and ease of contact exacerbates the sense of loss caused by family separation or lessens it, especially during times of crisis. Diasporas do utilise communication technologies to bridge the gap between themselves and distant family, (McKay, 2007; Lim, 2009; Savic, Chur-Hansen, Mahmood & Moore, 2013). Even older community members with limited education own a mobile phone.

South Sudanese Australians access South Sudanese television via satellite. Social events, weddings, meetings, etc. are videoed and exchanged between countries. Social media sites are frequently utilised and community radio stations, such as 3ZZZ, Melbourne's ethnic radio station, broadcasts a weekly show for the community which is listened to widely, including in South Sudan. Communication technologies have effectively re-shaped distant care-giving, allowing forced migrants to create a form of co-presence which nurtures connection and caring at a distance.

*...our elders, our parents and great grandparents, we didn't have photos of them, but now in Australia here we've been able to take our photos and our children will see us when we are no longer here*  
(Agnes, Twic Dinka)

Technology can be used to nurture and maintain familial relationships, but it is used to request support. These requests can come at any time and increase during crisis and levels of stress rise accordingly. The stress is three-fold: first concern for family, second duty and obligation and third limited resources available to provide care. Responsibility to care for family is fundamental to South Sudanese culture. However, the speed, frequency and



constancy of contact, via technology, creates a co-presence which, while desirable, can be difficult to negotiate (Lim, 2009).

The need to care for family increases significantly during epidemics, natural disasters and in the aftermath of conflict. Requests, demands and expectations for care in those times are often urgent and intensify obligation and responsibility to provide it (Baldassar, 2008). Caregiving becomes central in the life of the caregiver during a crisis and can affect families and care-givers long term (Heymann, 2006). Participants in this study had been providing post-conflict care to family and community since their arrival in Australia. Acholi woman Pia clearly stated the need and desire to provide care from Australia; 'We must do something. We must help. Some people they don't have something. We must help.'

In December 2013 however, emotional labour shifted from a situation of post-conflict to one of current conflict. To better understand this I theorise the notion of cross border circuits, which describe 'countergeographies of globalizations' as a way to understand global economies that are based on the low income work of women (Sassen, 2003). These circuits increase transnational and translocal networks. In an extension of this notion, I suggest that the translocal subjectivities of South Sudanese Australian women have created another type of cross border circuit, one that is not necessarily connected to globalised labour markets. Instead, its dynamic is one of transnational emotional labouring during a crisis—specifically war.

## 7.2. Transnational cross-border circuits

South Sudan is one of the poorest countries in the world and prior to the current conflict was a fragile, post-conflict, newly independent state. During the two phases of my fieldwork, (June/August, 2015 and January/February, 2016), fighting erupted in different location. Tensions between ethnicities increased and decreased as the conflict moved. Regardless of ethnicity or proximity to the fighting, none of the population was immune to the ripple effects of violence and destruction. The country was effectively a failed state.

All respondents spoke of what was happening in their homeland and the subsequent effects on their communities in Australia. The deep ethnic and political divisions that had splintered any sense of a unified society in South Sudan were reflected in the diaspora. Respondents described palpable anger and distrust between the various groups. Women

expressed sadness, worry, and stress on news of death and loss in their homeland. A number also described such news causing the return of traumatic war memories. There was a sense of despair for the conditions their relatives and communities faced, and grief for the loss of family and unity within the community. Women talked of feeling torn between two places, their new home in Australia and their homeland. The conflict intensified a sense of guilt for living a relatively comfortable life in Australia while family in South Sudan faced a daily struggle for survival. An Australian study described the feelings of guilt, shame, helplessness and loss of dignity for Dinka women in the diaspora who had been unable to meet familial obligations of care through remittances (Baak, 2015).

Translocal caregiving during this conflict has created individualised cross-border circuits. These circuits can include multiple locations, dependent on residence of family. Locations can be local, translocal, national, and transnational. For Julia, her cross-border circuit includes Melbourne (translocal), South Sudan (national) and Malakal (local). Mary's primary circuit is Melbourne (translocal) and Cairo in Egypt (transnational). Her secondary circuit is Melbourne (translocal) and her home village of Wunroc in Twic County (local). Leda's primary circuit is Melbourne and Turalei, Twic County. Thus, the translocal subjectivities of the South Sudanese diaspora are highly mobile during conflict. Family who are internally (and externally) displaced family are highly mobile reacting to the unpredictable nature of militarised violence. Crisis-driven mobility means circuits are highly changeable. A stable kinship circuit can rapidly transmute into intense episodes of emotional labouring activated by conflict-driven need. The degree to which diasporic networks expand or contract during conflict is largely unknown. Neither is the scale and complexity of emotional gift giving or exchanges during such time. Further research is required into what degree emotional labouring within these circuits might destabilise or undermine settlement processes for diaspora communities.

The imperative to provide care-giving during conflict had created a double-bind. Respondents were caught between their desire to fulfil familial obligations and their limited ability to do so. The needs of distant family far outweighed the participant's financial resources. Leda articulated her experience of being caught in this double-bind:

*I: She's very happy in Australia. Australia's given her children's education and her kids have something to eat, they're not scared of anything. She is very, very, happy, but*

*she is not happy about what keeps going on in South Sudan.*

(Leda, Twic Dinka)

The cross-border circuit for Leda is an intensely uncomfortable one. Providing care for her family during a return visit did not lessen this discomfort. Her inability to alleviate the situation her family increased it. Leda cried as she recalled visiting her homeland in 2015 to find her family devastated by the violence. Her maternal cousin and four of her six children had been killed. Of the two remaining children, the baby then died of starvation:

*I: [] ...when she went there she found this little baby, [] ...they don't even have a bottle. They couldn't even buy a bottle cause there's nowhere to buy the bottle, to feed this little baby so then the baby died. The baby was taken to Kuajok to try and get the milk and give it to the baby, but the baby didn't survive and she said why is that? She said this has caused her a lot of pain, cause if they cannot even get a bottle, to feed a baby then the country is completely devastated. This second one has really devastated my family in that all the people have died and she said now there is only one boy that is left by my cousin—from this lady that died with the four children that died, and [then]the baby that died. Then she's only left with one child. She's here in Australia, but she's not happy. So then she's saying that the death of this baby in particular has hurt her more, because [] ... she could not rescue the baby.*

(Leda, Twic Dinka)

This situation had left Leda feeling powerless—her co-presence had not relieved the situation—and guilty. Leda felt that she had failed in her duty and role as care-giver. The sense of failure is exacerbated by the contrasting life she is able to lead in Australia, where a situation such as that she faced with the baby would never happen. Even as a low income earner in Australia, her daily reality meant she could have all her basic needs fulfilled. She had access to food, medical care and accommodation and a basic income, but had very little to offer to family at home:

*I: Whenever she thinks about this situation, she just wants to go to Sudan, to South Sudan and live over there and maybe just grow old over there and die over there [] ...when she went there, she was really very upset in the condition that she found them in, cause they're not living a good life...*

(Leda, Twic Dinka)

Lucy, another Twic Dinka elder present in the room added her own voice to Leda's story, elaborating on this dilemma:

*I: [] ...what she is trying to explain is her feeling about being here, while those people who live in Africa over there. They think here is a rich country, that you've got a lot of money. So how come you're living a good life there and every fortnight when they ask, or every month when they ask for some money, you are able to say, 'I've got nothing'. She's [Leda] saying what makes it worse for her. She doesn't have a job. So therefore she doesn't have a lot of money to be able to send money all the time over there. So then it makes it harder for her, when she thinks about it. So that's why she resolves to say if she's living over there, with them they, they won't be saying give us this, give us that. Then she will just be there and then, they just lead the poor life together. [] ...it would be easier on her and on them. Because they, they won't keep on calling her to ask for things that she cannot afford to provide them. So she's saying if she was living over there it's easier for all of them.*

*(Lucy, Twic Dinka)*

Lucy described her own cross border circuit and the intense difficulty of providing the type of care expected of her. In 2015, her husband had been killed in the conflict. As the first wife, it was her duty to now care for the remaining family:

*I: [] ...he was killed, her husband, last year, September last year. Her son went there to try and investigate how the Dad was killed and to find out what really happened and he [the son] didn't come back. He has thirty-two children and seven wives, all these children and wives, she has to look after them. She's not working, also, she is sick.*

*(Lucy, Twic Dinka)*

Leda's and Lucy's experiences of struggling to care for family at home was shared by Katherine. All of the Twic women in this small group interview had experienced the burden of becoming responsible for family affected by the war. Katherine's brother and his wife were killed in the conflict, leaving behind four children:

*I: [] ...now she's left with these four children to look after, every time I have to send money and it's like I haven't sent any, because every time the calling they need this and they need that. So I send money, she said, this is ongoing for me. It doesn't stop because it's emotional, it's physical, it's draining.*

*(Katherine, Twic Dinka)*

Those who had lost family to the conflict lived with grief and daily anxiety about how to support surviving family. Grief was expressed verbally and in silence. For Leda and one other respondent, it was expressed in tears. Grief is a form of emotional labour and part of the cross-border circuits that operated in the daily lives of these women. The intensity of

grief no doubt varies, dependent on the locations of individual cross-border circuits. There can be no doubt that loss, because of the 2013 conflict, compounded grief that already existed because of absent family. Further research is necessary to examine the impact of this type of multi-layered grief in the daily lives of South Sudanese Australian women.

However, women in this study did discuss religious practice as a means of coping with the complex intersections of duty and obligation, emotional labour, family separation and the on-going conflict in their homeland. Faith had sustained them prior to arriving in Australia and continues to do so. Christianity is the major religion of the South Sudanese, with Catholicism as the largest denomination (Lucas, Jamali & Edgar, 2013). Faith in a Christian God is deep and unwavering. Without exception women referred to their faith during interviews and the strength, luck and opportunity it brought them (see also Maher, 2014; Niner, Kokanovic & Cuthbert, 2013; Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2009), that it was God that had control of their world, not them (Tankink & Richters, 2007; Khawaja, et al., 2008), as well as practical and emotional support (Schweitzer, Greenslade & Kagee, 2007). Their belief in a benevolent God was maintained during the war, even in the most difficult circumstances. It was the power that kept them alive. Stella lived in a refugee camp for nine years amongst her own community, but it was her spiritual practice, her belief in Christianity that helped her endure:

*S: The community is there but they are all helpless, they can't help you materially or with anything, everybody is struggling. Morally maybe they can come together, console you, ask you, but after that there's nothing else they can do. The only important thing was that I am a believer. I am a Christian, so the church used to help me spiritually, with the word of God, and that used to encourage me and keep me strong while I was still living there.*

*S: Was there a church in the camp?*

*S: Yeah.*

(Stella, Kuku)

Lana talked of relying on prayer to deal with the stress of worry. Katherine, Christina, and Agnes also described religious faith as a coping mechanism:

*The way to deal with it is to go to church. Because the issue is so big you can't, you can't, you can't solve it. So what they do, most of them here, is to go to church. Cause she said the more you think about it, it nearly drives you crazy. So then you leave it to God and then just move on. And just think about it sometimes, not all the time.*

(Katherine, Twic Dinka)

Agnes (Twic Dinka) said faith not only had the power to heal but also ease stress, 'For herself she had found solace in religion so everything that happens she prays to God that everything would be ok.' Even at the toughest times in her life, Christina did not stop believing in God. Difficulty and stress only served to deepen her faith:

*I still believed. Like now, when there is a big rain, rain, rain, rain, rain, you can see now this rain cannot stop but suddenly it will be just like this (stretches both hands out wide in front of her). That's the life sometimes, you got. Life is harder but suddenly when God coming in, everything will be normal (laughs). If God give me a little bit I see it is like a big, big thing. Because I share with them, and say thank-you father, I've got something to give to my people. [...] I feel happy, because the day I send money I sleep well, because I think this money will help them. I don't think about goal[s], about anything, I just think about our people there.*

(Christina, Ngok Dinka)

For Judith, prayer was the only tool available to her community to maintain any hope for change in their homeland:

*We are just praying for our people back there, you know. We achieved the independence but it's still going. The war is still there, there is still no difference. You don't see a change. You just hope that one day things will be okay.*

(Judith, Bari)

Jocelyn had compared her life in Australia with life in South Sudan and hoped that God would help her homeland and keep Australia safe as well:

*So I just praise the lord to keep this country safe. To keep it safe ...let God keep this country safe and let God give people who have frightened heart to look after people still and do something for South Sudan, especially my people.*

(Jocelyn, Collo)

This type of abiding faith in God was also discussed by Congolese women in refugee camps in Rwanda (Pavlish, 2005). In that study women described a God who they had personalised ('only God knew me'), who cared about them and watched over them, who listened to their problems and received and kept their problems (Pavlish, 2005, p. 15). It is not clear if these women's religious faith means they relinquish their sense of power to a higher power. Neither is it clear if it supported and directed their agency. As in Pavlish's

study, these narratives indicate models of faith that vary from a God that gives strength and protection in the face of helplessness and need and is benevolent and offers relief in times of great stress. Sossou et al., (2008) however found that amongst Balkan women resident in America their solace came in a range of spiritualities, rather than institutionalised religion. This was also the case for Karen refugee women in Australia (Niner, Kokanovic & Cuthbert, 2013).

### 7.3. Family: separation, togetherness and mothering

South Sudanese cultural life in Australia is based around the extended family and the associations and social groups that represent women, clan, and cultural interests. Such is the need to live communally, that Kuku woman Victoria, spoke of migrating from New Zealand, after seven years, to be part of a larger community in Australia. Victoria's husband was the sole speaker of his language in New Zealand and he badly missed connection to his language and community. Twic women Lucy and Margaret had both moved from Adelaide, South Australia, to be part of a much larger Twic Mayardit community in Melbourne. Ngok woman Clara had moved from Tasmania to Melbourne for the same reason. Anecdotally, this type of secondary inter-state migration, for reasons of community support and connection, has occurred regularly in Australia:

*...there are a lot of struggle here and there's a lot of movement here. But the one thing we can say we can accept; here we are. You got the citizenship, you got an identity in place. You can settle and make it and that is there. The one positive thing that I've seen around with the community here, who are mostly the Kuku community, [] they all manage to make this place their home by trying to buy place and settle in [] ... that is a sign they are willing to stay put. And this could be the starting point of this generation. To also integrate into this Australian society. It's more promising and they have settled down. I've got a mortgage, and the children are trying to study. To compare that to New Zealand [] nobody doing that because they don't say they could live there due to the numbers. They feel, and I feel the same as them, if worse comes to worse, if there was a situation there's no one there to help you out. Basically, because we came from the community setting living and for you to live alone is very hard.*  
(Victoria, Kuku)

Respondents in this study spoke of family with whom they will never live with, or be closely associated with again. Community helps Marta to cope with the most difficult aspect

of living in Australia—the absence of family. While still in Khartoum, Marta lost contact with her 15-year-old daughter: ‘The life is not easy, the daughter decided to get a husband.’ And Marta did not know where her daughter was, but due to the difficulties of caring for her children, she felt she had no choice but to seek asylum in Egypt. After seven years in Egypt, her application to Australia was successful. When the time came for their departure, her oldest daughter was pregnant and consequently refused a visa. Marta migrated with just three of her five children. Marta has since applied to bring both daughters and their families to Australia, but an incorrect date on a form rendered an application invalid and meant she had to undertake a fresh application process.<sup>56</sup> These types of minor administrative mistakes have long-ranging consequences and anecdotally seem to be common amongst applicants with low literacy rates and whose limited financial means prevents them from engaging a lawyer or migration agent in the process. From within diaspora, respondents attempted to reunite with family through formal migration processes. It is a financially and bureaucratically daunting task. Women described the overwhelming difficulty in securing a visa to bring family to Australia:

*I: Yeah, when she arrived here, actually she seen the place look good and beautiful and no gunshot and the place she said maybe I’m set, because the people they not look worried, like where she come from. Yeah.*

(Marta, Acholi)

Marta has since located her second daughter who is now living in South Sudan. Her eldest daughter has left Egypt and also returned to their homeland. Marta has applied to sponsor them to Australia but the application failed. She has been able to visit her children, but the fact that they have not been reunited as a family in Australia causes Marta daily grief and stress:

*I: Australia is good. Australia good. Even she can go to school because when she was coming first, she don’t even know how to write her name, but now she can write her name and can write her address, she can eat the good food, but the problem is she’s not happy about her two children, [they are] supposed to be together with her. But Australia is a good country, that’s what she says.*

(Marta, Acholi)

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<sup>56</sup> See page 127 for Marta’s pre-migration story



Marta was interviewed in a group of four. The interview occurred during a meeting of the Acholi women's group held at the family home of one of its members. Marta said the women's group gave her a sense of community and when she was with other Acholi women she was not worrying about her daughters and grandchildren in South Sudan:

*I: Yeah, when you come in here you feel alright, but you go back home you start feeling about her children again. But when she's out she's not feeling anything, but when she go back home again, she start feeling about her children.*

*S: You worry about them when you are thinking about them?*

*I: Yeah, she's really worried because they don't have their Dad. When they are together she will be happy.* (Marta, Acholi)

Describing the absence of her family as the most difficult aspect of living in Australia, Marta said she had everything she needed, but her daughter's daily struggle to survive in their homeland was a source of constant discomfort for her. The physical reality of her life in Australia compared to her daughters, maintains Marta (and other participants) in a conflicted emotional state.

Applications to immigrate to settlement countries occurred prior to knowing where other family members were or even if they were still alive. Ambiguous loss was mentioned by a number of the women. So too were family decisions to separate. Husbands chose to stay behind, wanting to continue supporting their country's struggle to rebuild after the war. Suzanne described arriving with her four children, but not her husband:

*It was very exciting, [but] first of all my husband didn't come with me. He said he knows the first world. He's been working government organisations.*

*It would be very difficult for him to get a job. Again, he has this ambition that he wants to be there for his country and struggle, and he said just the family is going to come, he's not going to come with us. So he didn't come with us.*

(Suzanne, Kuku)

Separation from family maintains forced migrants in cycles of longing, grief and loneliness that can rarely be resolved (McMichael & Ahmed, 2003). The absence of family members, for those now resident in Australia, has been a consistent source of stress through their process of settlement and was acutely exacerbated by the current conflict.

The relationship between the diaspora in Australia and their family and communities in South Sudan is close:

*I: We still feel what is going on over there because many of us go back to visit. Reasons being, we've still got mothers there, brothers, grandparents, children, like if you left a child there, not a small child, but like an adult child, you still go there to visit.*  
(Katherine, Twic Dinka)

Attempts to bring family to Australia are arduous, time consuming and expensive. The cost and administrative requirements of these applications can be prohibitive, with no guarantee of a positive outcome.

A lack of financial resources to apply for family reunification visas for separated family, not knowing where family is, or the loss of family in conflict zones, have substantial effects on the wellbeing of those in diaspora. From the literature two concepts are useful to describe this: emotionally distressing and traumatic. These categories tend to represent opposing views across differing disciplines, but in this study, as both categories were clear in the data, neither is given precedence.

In mental health literature, the effects of separation from family during the processes of settlement and acculturation in Australia have been defined as a trauma that interrupts the settlement process (Rousseau, Mekki-Berrada & Moreau, 2001; Schweitzer, Melville, Steel, & Lacherez, 2006). Scholars from anthropology, social work and migration studies (McMichael & Ahmed, 2003; Westoby & Ingamells, 2010) offer alternative views. McMichael & Ahmed proposed that 'the emotional impact of refugee family separation is broader than as a corollary to diagnostic categories such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder' (McMichael & Ahmed, 2003), (Mitchell, Kaplan & Crowe, 2006). Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) exist on a continuum of experience. The women in this study spoke of trauma, of re-experiencing feelings from the past, in response to bad news from home. But this cannot necessarily be defined as an indicator of PTSD. It is clear that family separation did affect the settlement process for these women, and it continues to impact in the post-settlement period. As suggested by McMichael and Ahmed (2003), the anxieties and difficulties that are caused by family separation are insidious. Analysis of data in this study shows the effects of pre-arrival separation from family as both traumatic and a constant concern. Katherine's description of the long term effect of war trauma aligns with key aspects of the mental health school of thought:

*I: She saying that, like she said for the ten years that I've been here, it gets easier, but she said the only time it gets worse is when there is an attack that happens and you hear of it and then it brings back all the memories that they went through, because she said, I've been there through the attacks that happened. So when they get attacked over there and I get told, she said, it brings back the same fear that I felt when I was there because it's something that I know, she said, it's something that you imagine what it is like, that is not when you can actually feel it internally, but when it's something you've been through, and been through it before and you hear someone again is going through it you know exactly what happened, so that hurts more.*  
(Katherine, Twic Dinka)

Worry about absent family ranked highest in the post-migration living difficulties for Sudanese refugees in Queensland, Australia. For the participants in the study, that worry had caused moderate to severe problems in the 12 months prior to or at the time of interview (Schweitzer, Melville, Steel & Lacherez, 2006). Schweitzer and colleagues showed that the presence of family and social support from within their own communities were significant determinants in mental health functioning during settlement in Australia. Additionally, the study revealed that high degrees of stress in survivors of torture could trigger the return of trauma, regardless of how long they had been resident in the country (Schweitzer et al., 2006). In a Canadian study of African and Latin American refugees, the absence of family was also found to compound distress and symptoms of PTSD (Rousseau, Mekki-Berrada & Moreau, 2001). Respondents in this study described traumatic events during war, as well as the return of those feelings, in the context of the war in their homeland at the time of the fieldwork.

Diana was part of a small group interview of Malual Dinka women. Their homeland is Aweil county on the border with Sudan. This area of the province then known as the Bahr el-Ghazal was the epicentre of the early period of the war (1983-1991). Malual Dinka were enslaved in high numbers and Aweil county was devastated by raids (Jok, 2001). Diana describes the return of war trauma when disturbing news from her homeland arrives:

*I: She lost her family, her husband and her sons. She said, the Arab came to kill the women and children. Over time in Australia, life has got better, we have enough food, the government gives us money and houses. But then the trauma come back when things go wrong there.*  
(Diana, Malual Dinka)

Diana's sense of powerlessness, and the grief of the loss of her immediate family re-emerged with news of the violence in her homeland in the way that it did for Katherine.

Lana however, described concern for her family as 'worry' rather than trauma. Her four sisters were resident in Canada, Sudan, and South Sudan. Diana was particularly worried for her sister in South Sudan, who was caring for their mother. Since the 2013 conflict had begun, her sister and mother had moved from their home in the town of Malakal, in the state of Upper Nile, to the capital of Juba, as Juba was thought to be safer:

*L: Australia is good, but I am still thinking about my country I want to go there.  
(laughter)*

*T: (laughter) You miss your people, your mum and your sisters?<sup>57</sup>*

*L: My Mum and my brother, a lot.*

*S: Do you think about that a lot?*

*L: Yes. Yeah, I think about that a lot.*

*S: And when you are thinking about that does it worry you?*

*L: Yeah, it worry you, but what you gonna do? Just pray. Pray to god. I can't do anything. It's not in my hands.*

*S: So that's how you stay strong [], through prayer?*

*L: Yeah, through prayer. The prayer with my husband and with my kid. Sit down and pray. We can't do anything. Just God will help. One day we will be good country, bring peace. God bring peace to the people. Go to see your dad and your mother and relative one day.*

*S: One day you'll be able to see them again?*

*L: Yes, to see them again. If they're alive. If they're gone, it's ok.*

*S: It sounds very hard.*

*L: Very hard.*

(Lana, Collo)

Lana also spoke of other family in the town of Malakal. When the current conflict reached that area in 2014, family members had taken refuge in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) compound, but Lana had not been able to contact them via phone. She and Theresia, in whose home the interview was conducted, discussed the problems trying to charge batteries for mobile phones within the compound as a possible explanation as to why Lana could not make contact with them. This lack of contact during crisis and the worry it causes is another form of emotional labour.

Acholi woman Marta immigrated in 2009 with three of her five children. Marta's husband had been killed in the war when her children were young. Of the two absent

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<sup>57</sup> Theresia was present for some of Lana's interview as the interview was conducted at her house.

children, both daughters, one had gone missing while the family were internally displaced in Khartoum and her whereabouts were unknown to Marta when she applied for the visa. The other had become pregnant and was consequently not included on the visa when it was issued. Marta is a member of the Acholi Women's Group and attends the group's regular meetings which are held at the home of one of its members. Marta was interviewed at one of those meetings and described worry for absent family in a similar fashion to Lana. For Marta, the presence of fellow Acholi women provided some relief from the constant worry:

*I: Yeah, when you come in here you feel alright, but you go back home you start feeling about the children again. But when she's out she's not feeling anything, but when she go back home again, she start feeling about her children ...she's really worried because they don't have their Dad. When they are together she will be happy.*  
(Marta, Acholi)

In the intervening years since her arrival, Marta had located her missing daughter and she and her older sister had since married and both have their own families. Marta had applied a number of times for them to join her in Australia, but both attempts had been unsuccessful. She had visited her daughters and their families, both of whom are now resident in South Sudan. Marta receives a government benefit and as both of her daughters and their families live in impoverished circumstances, she sends small remittances to them when she is able. Marta's provision of emotional labour through remittances, phone calls, return visits, and constant worry and concern for her absent family, is typical of the translocal subjectivities of South Sudanese Australian women.

Ramsay described African women settled in Australia making return visits, particularly to countries of first asylum. Return visits were to provide 'care' (Ramsey's quotation) to family in protracted displacement, who could not be reunited, due to the preference of unification based on a nuclear family models (Ramsay, 2016). Ramsey described gift exchanges and emotional displays during return visits. While two participants spoke of being fearful of returning to their homeland, the majority had made return visits to their homeland and/or to countries of first asylum. Such trips are very expensive and in the period of settlement and post-settlement, women had made only one or two return visits.

Women in this study, who were dependent on government benefits, had little to exchange during return visits. For them, co-presence was the act of emotional labour. This is

particularly the case during conflict. Regular requests for care from a range of family members could mean that during an actual home visit there is little to offer in a financial or material form. Ngok woman Christina described having to rely on her oldest children, who are young adults, to send her money when she was visiting her homeland of Abyei, as what she took with her ran out quickly because the need was so high:

*Like now when I go there, I have to spend a lot. Have to call my kid, ah if there is something bring it to me. Then I spend it, give it. When you buy water you have to share with someone. You can't buy your bottle and drink it and there is some people here need water, I can't do that. I have to share. My kids they send me money today; after two days my hand is empty. I have to call them, 'hey, I need something for myself.' They live their life and they give me money, and then I spend them all.*

(Christina, Ngok Dinka)

Twic Dinka woman Mary's husband and sons had died in the war and her two young daughters were abducted during a raid on her village of Mayen Abun. Mary was left with an infant daughter. She made her way to Khartoum and joined a community of internally displaced Twic people. She was told that other people had found their lost children in Egypt. Mary went there to look for them and to claim asylum. Two years after the raid, Mary found her daughters living with an uncle's son in Cairo. The girls had escaped their capturers and found other southerners who were able to reunite them with family members. Mary worked as a servant from many years while waiting for a visa to Australia. During the wait, two of her daughters married, which then excluded them from the visa to travel when it was granted. Mary maintains regular contact with her daughters by phone and described saving as much of her government benefit as possible, to allow her to visit her daughters and grandchildren who had been born in her country of first asylum. During those visits Mary provides emotional labour via co-presence. Co-presence is her form of gift exchange as her limited income prevents gift to her family in the form of money or other materials. Mary is very aware that her provision of *in situ* emotional labour to her absent family members is only possible through her government benefit:

*I: She thanks the Australian government very much, because she said if she was in a different place which is not Australia, she would not have the ability to go back. Like now she gets the welfare payment, she saves some money and she's able to go, every now and again to go visit her daughters in Egypt and she says for this she is*

*really thankful because without this sort of payment she would not be able to see her daughters.*  
(Mary, Twic Dinka)

Collo woman Lisa was one of two respondents who talked of successfully reuniting with family members, despite the process of bringing family from Egypt being costly and lengthy. After two unsuccessful applications, Lisa made a third, successful application. Lisa works two jobs which allows her to pay the \$10,000 fee for each application. There are other substantial costs involved, including DNA tests to prove kinship. The combination of Lisa's financial and emotional commitment to reunification with her family is suggestive of the emotional labour that both Baldassar (2008) and Skrbis (2008) described as common in the lives of non-forced migrants. Forced migrant women's commitment to kin and their attempts to bring them to safety and security with them in Australia are aspects of their translocal subjectivity not well understood outside of the diaspora.

## 7.4 Families in diaspora

Changes in family dynamics, particularly intergenerational conflict, was a topic raised by all participants. Participants spoke of very real dilemmas in managing changes in the way their children related to them as parents. Conflicts and tensions have arisen as children have grown and acculturated, adapting and adopting aspects of a new culture that can conflict with traditional South Sudanese family functioning. These difficulties are more evident in the management of teenagers who have developed expectations of individual rights and freedoms that are in contrast with African family values of collective living and obedience to adults (Deng, 2017, p. 7). The ways in which teenagers might resist family expectations and traditions in Australia has caused significant stress for their families and communities.

In previous studies women have expressed concerns regarding the disciplining and raising of children, relationships with teenagers, and the cultural contrasts between their mothering traditions and westernised parenting practices (Hebbani, Obijiofor & Bristed, 2009, p. 66). Diaspora women have also discussed sole parenting during resettlement, symbolic and literal fears of losing their children, and loss of parental authority (Levi, 2014, p. 480). In this study women also spoke of feeling shame in relation to the public behaviour of young people, involvement with police, failure to take up education or employment

opportunities and worrying over negative public perceptions of their young people. Data suggests these stressors have intensified during post-settlement.

Women who struggle with the challenges of parenting children in a foreign culture, find themselves caught in another paradox of settlement. Having brought their children to a peaceful and prosperous place they have found safety and degrees of material comfort. A study of parenting and South Sudanese migrants in New Zealand noted that while migrants found security in New Zealand, their struggle with parenting made them feel less secure (Deng & Marlow, 2013).

One of the unexpected consequences of migration is children developing expectations of freedom and independence, which are often supported by the institution with which they are involved. This is vastly different to how parents were raised. Bridget, a Ngok Dinka woman, referred to the relationships between parents and young people in Australia as one of conflict: 'We are at war now with our children on the streets.' Bridget meant this in terms of trying to control the behaviour of teenagers outside of the home and avoiding conflict with police. Eleanor, Ngok Dinka, also saw the problem as internal. She had heard some South Sudanese blame the Australian government for the freedom young people had. However, she did not agree:

*I: She also said the problem of our children being somehow dysfunctional is not an Australian government or public issue. She said this country is a safe country, she still blames the children for, for, not listening to their parents and just running off. [...] Is just our children that go out there and cause the trouble. Otherwise if they stayed at home with their parents, all this trouble that find them will not find them. So, she feels that whatever issue are happening with the children, it's not the Australian government problem, it's actually the children who go out there and find trouble.*  
(Eleanor, Ngok Dinka)

For Caroline verbal commands and physical punishment is appropriate and culturally acceptable (see also Hebbani, Obijiofor & Bristed, 2009). Government intervention in that parenting style and the support of children's rights was seen to undermine parental authority and she felt their children were being lost to them and their community as parents lost the right to parent in a manner appropriate to them:

*...and the government comes to you and says you are mistreating the child, because we are from Africa and we treat children harder. So, from there the government cannot allow us to do such a thing. So, the children can do whatever*



*they like. Yeah, even the talking they can't understand. Maybe the kids who can help us are the kids born here, but the kids we brought here, they can't understand us. If the government would leave a little bit of gap to the parents to teach them. We grow like that and we were not killed by parents. Parents have to talk with force to the child, so the child can understand.*

*S: When you say talking with force, do you mean hitting them?*

*C: Not hitting them, but you can sit your child down force and say, by me, I'm going to fight you if you go. And even if you get, the parents fight with the child or beat the child, the parents are not going to kill, only to let them understand. [] When you touch them, 'oh, I'm calling the police'. We've got a big, big, problem. Because the children must use the law here, like saying children's right. So, they are misusing the law, and that's why we lose a lot of kids...this thing is really affecting Sudanese. It's really affecting Sudanese.*

*S: Boys more than girls?*

*R: Boys and girls too. Mostly boys.*

*(Caroline, Acholi, 49yrs)*

The difficulty single women faced in raising teenagers in a new and extremely different culture was also found in a 2014 study. Levi wrote that while significant work had been done on the psychosocial consequences of war trauma and displacement experienced by former refugee women little attention has been given to how this impacts the raising of children in resettlement countries (Levi, 2014, p. 482). Levi points to the potential impacts of adapting to Australian cultural expectations of familial relationships have on family well-being. Suzanne identified intergenerational conflict as a cause of constant stress on parents, particularly parents of teenagers:

*The kids are, I think the issues with the kids is, because, the south Sudanese we have a culture, a different way of lifestyle. A different way of children being brought up. And with the kids, when they came here, they are very quick in the adjustment to the current situation, but the parents are still lagging back to the traditional way of lifestyle. So that creates a gap between the parents and the children and that one is creating tension. The kids are moving very fast [and] parents are still behind. And when the kids trying to adapt to Australian way of life, parents will take it that the children are not understanding them, they are disrespectful to them, they are not listening to them, and the kids, so don't understand (laughter) [] and that's the tension. The parents become more stressed, even saying, 'We came here because of our children. What's the point of living here if the children, the reason we came here, they all out of control, you know?' They are not going to school. They're out everywhere. So, they are helpless, they feel helpless and hopeless. So that is the distress parents are facing now, this current situation.*

*(Suzanne, Kuku)*

Also, significant were women's perceptions of how young people had settled into Australian society and whether they had taken advantage of the opportunities they believed were available to them. Participants were immensely proud of the achievements of their children in education and employment, such as Collo woman Lisa's five children working in law and medicine. Nevertheless, others perceived a lack of achievement as a failure to take advantage of their new environment. Olivia believed young South Sudanese were not taking up opportunities available to them. She saw no limitation for people with a refugee background in Australia. As a leader in her community, she had spoken with young people and admonished them for drinking and not looking to work or study. Olivia had been a soldier in the women's battalion in the early years of the war and fought on the front lines. For her, young South Sudanese people in Australia failed to understand the sacrifice made by their parents during that time. The image of young people in trouble with police or drinking in the street caused distress and feelings of powerlessness:

*O: I said, shame. You have been invited. Somebody invited you to have that house or this house, free. Clean bed, food, free, everything free and this is the appreciation they are giving back. 'Aunty what are you saying?' I say, 'Yes. I really feel shame, I'm free. I don't know how to explain myself, because you supposed to be studying and working. Here, you get a job, job opportunity open for everybody. You get good pay. Here there is no limit that you are refugee, so there is no limit that you are from south or from north, or wherever. It is your energy that will give you the money, you work hard, get a lot of money. You work hard, you will live a good life. Why you not doing it? You, young men full of energy. You need to go drink and do this, this is nonsense?' Some of them get angry with me, some of them say, 'Yeah, Aunty, we understand.' I said, 'You don't understand, because if you do you should have gone and done it. There is TAFE, unis open, doors open. So, sometimes I feel shame even to go and go in Australian community and talk, present myself, because of what is happening. But how am I going to prevent it? It is very hard. I can't, you know. So, I feel so sorry for them. Especially, when I sometimes work here in the shop I see kids a going here, drunk, walking home like that and all this. (Sigh). We came here to bring disaster, we didn't come peacefully, which is not good you know. I feel shame sometimes you know...*

(Olivia, Collo)

Patricia saw the problems facing adolescents, such as drug taking, as an issue for all young people, not just South Sudanese Australians. She saw school peer groups as responsible for this type of behaviour. She was hopeful that some adolescents who were having difficulty could get better and that parents will change in the future as they adjust to

an Australian way of life, although the lack of respect for parents from children was a major problem for her.

Participants also spoke of changes in family dynamics during the process of acculturation to Australian culture. Resistance to changes in tradition and cultural practice was discussed. Theresia described how family functioning had changed. For her, forms of cooperation amongst extended family members in the care of children and the management of the household were traditional. But in Australia, in the absence of extended family, reciprocal cooperation was not available in the same way. People were busy in ways they had not been in their homeland. She chose to care for her grandchildren, as she would have were she living in South Sudan, but arrangements like this now varied in family lives. Theresia knew of people who registered as home carers and received payment for caring for their grandchildren or requested payment for babysitting children. She would not receive any form of payment herself for caring for her grandchildren as this was not the traditional way of doing things. It was better to provide than accept or ask for money:

*...To support people to have basics of life. Show them love... promoting it to other people... or to themselves also as people together. That's how I look into it. Because they will feel that and they will agree that have people who support us and this love will remain in their hearts for life. And this is how I look at it. And they say give me the money for care for the child. I say no. It's not the way of life.*

(Theresia, Collo)

Changes to the structure of familial relationships and family functioning appears as a significant and ongoing issue of post-settlement. This raises questions as to how the stresses and tensions of mothering teenagers in Australia, which have been addressed in earlier studies, currently affect women and their families. Data for this study confirms that it continues to be a serious issue, one which is likely to have been exacerbated by media representations of young South Sudanese men after a result of a very public brawl during the Moomba festivities in Melbourne, in March 2016 (Davey, 2016). That, and the so-called 'Apex' gang activities in the aftermath of the brawl, received comprehensive media saturation.

Post-settlement mothering appears to be highly stressful. Women are under constant pressure to accommodate needs and demands of children, family and government

bodies. Difficult relationships with children, intergenerational conflict, ideas of failure and shame and feeling undermined by government bodies are just some of the challenges faced by South Sudanese Australian mothers. The degree to which these issues, combined or individually, risk the well-being of mothers and families in post-settlement suggests that more research in this field is required. It also asks what is the effect on subjectivity and how this connects to belonging? To answer this the following section looks at how safety was established in Australia and how that began the process of belonging.

Conradson and McKay (2007) described 'multiply-located senses of self, amongst those who inhabit transnational social fields' as translocal subjectivities. A translocal subjectivity is one in which transnational migrants maintain commitment and loyalty toward family and community in specific locations (Conradson & McKay, 2007, p. 168). Translocal subjectivity also includes the understanding that migrant self-hood is not related to nations but to localities within nations. This is the case for South Sudanese migrants. Non-migrant and other migrant groups within Australia are likely to identify them as their translocal South Sudanese identity. However, South Sudanese identify each other by tribe and or clan— as both descriptors identify a specific location. Significant emotional labour has been shown to be typical of households which are internationally mobile, i.e. Filipina female migrant workers (Conradson & McKay, 2007, p. 169). The same long-distance social networks exist for translocal forced migrants. This study shows that translocal subjectivities connect forced migrants to multiple locations that are both transnational, homeland and countries of first asylum, and national, i.e. Australian.

Care-giving is a cultural imperative and the duty and obligation to maintain care from diaspora is exacerbated by crisis. The women in this study described the insecurity, dislocation, danger and deprivation absent family were experiencing due to the internal conflict that had erupted in South Sudan in December, 2013. Women spoke of constant and daily 'worry' for absent family and their 'suffering' as well as the stress of seeing their homeland collapse into violence again. The conflict had been catastrophic for the country and additional to concern for their family and communities, participants described the conflict causing strong feelings of both hopelessness and powerlessness. Some respondents were more directly implicated in the violence, i.e. family members had been killed, but all were affected in some way and their ability to provide and fulfil family expectations and traditions of care were limited. Requests for financial assistance increased significantly

during the conflict. Financial support was needed for a range of issues, from relocating from conflict areas to the cost of basic needs. Three participants spoke of suddenly becoming financially responsible for family whose provider had been killed and the difficulty they faced in providing, especially as these situations would be long-term. Financial stress was one of the most significant and consistent issues raised during interviews, especially for women whose sole income was a government benefit.

Diaspora women's sense of responsibility toward their homeland had existed prior to the most recent conflict. Translocal emotional labour had been amplified by this war. Whether these exchanges occurred at a distance or *in situ*, the war had deepened an already very difficult challenge of caring for separated family and community.

In a small group interview, Malual women talked about the responsibility they felt toward the people in their home county of Aweil and their longing to help them recover from the effects of the second war (1983-2005). Ngok women also sent financial and medical aid to their homeland of Abyei.

Bridget, a Malual elder described a return visit to Aweil county in 2007,<sup>58</sup> where she met a woman who had been brutally attacked by militia and had lost all her family members. Bridget said there were many like her and 'women like her need help.' The sense of responsibility to family is equal to responsibility toward communities. Julia's story however, reflects an additional sense of responsibility: one toward the country itself.

Collo woman Julia is an accountant and had remained in her home town of Malakal, Upper Nile State, during the second war. For twelve years, following its outbreak, she worked and raised five children while her husband studied in Egypt. However, two of their children died and her husband then applied for the family to go to Australia. Julia and the remaining three children left Malakal and joined him in Cairo. They waited a year for their visas, then immigrated to Australia. Julia can't walk without assistance, she has a physical disability and when she arrived in Australia, she was given a disability pension. She remained unemployed until 2011 when she returned to home district of Malakal to start a business:

*T:<sup>59</sup>[in Australia]... you are given some money but you don't have work []... for someone who has learned to work, I think she is trying to put it,[] about having*

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<sup>58</sup> See Bridget's quote on page 134.

<sup>59</sup> Theresia interpreted for Julia during a small group interview of Collo women. The interview was held at Theresia's home. Lisa interjects several times in this passage.

*something without work. For how long could you live like that? []*

*S: So you weren't comfortable getting money for no work?*

*T: For no work, because she is used to work. She's used to work and she doesn't feel the real comfort of living without doing something.*

*S: Ok.*

*T: That's why she managed to go back again. To look for something to do.*

*S: Ok, from 02 to 2011 there was no work for you?*

*T: Yes. [] She was given scooter for disability. I think she's trying to explain that the reception that Australians did for people who came here, [] you get homes, you live in the houses, all these good things that are being done with the people, are really something that raised the appreciation of the goodness of Australia here.*

*S: So there weren't other difficulties for you?*

*T: There's not difficulties because things are settled. Only the concern is that the when you are used to work, to sit down from morning to evening is the concern that she wanted to mention.*

*S: So that was the hardest thing?*

*T: Yep, this was the concern. Otherwise, everything was there. So if you want to live with everything there, everything is there, but the question is there. You feel like working because you are someone who is used to work. Wanting to work I think. It troubled her.*

*S: You left?*

*T: She left in 2011.*

*S: You went back.*

*T: She went back. To see what's going on there. Ah, she went to do some...*

*L ... business...*

*T ... brickmaking. She engaged some men to do the bricking.*

*S: Ok, so you started a business? You went back to Malakal and started a business.*

*T: She went back to the region, the village, outside Malakal a bit.*

*S: Why that business, because you could see that there was, it was something that was needed?*

*L: There was nothing at that time. The peace has settled already there like um, we did an election and Sudan is separate in two countries. We are southern and the north go on. So now we looking for future...*

*T: We are free.*

*L: We are a free country to build up our country, so she thinks she better do something for herself and for other people who can't do something. So that's why she start to do the business.*

In 2013, two years after Julia's returned to her home county of Malakal, Upper Nile State, the current conflict began. The violence quickly spread to Malakal. Repeated battles for the town over several months saw it completely destroyed.

When the fighting began, Julia made her way to the nearby UNMISS compound on a donkey. A number of UNMISS compounds across the country became havens for huge numbers of civilians and came to be called Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites. By October

2016, 202,709 thousand people were residing in a number of POC sites across the country (UNMISS, 2016). However, conditions were harsh; no water, no food, no latrines, etc. and she returned to her home to hide. Several days later, renewed fighting saw her return to the UNMISS compound. Soldiers intercepted her at the market place and threatened to shoot her, but she was, instead, robbed of all she had, except her Australian passport which fell to the ground ignored by the soldiers. They let her go and she went to the hospital thinking she would find safety there. However, it had also been attacked and Julia recalled having to climb over bodies to get inside where she found soldiers. Patients had been killed in their beds and Julia witnessed a woman in labour being shot in the head by soldiers who were annoyed by her screaming:

*Midnight, she finds somebody with a scooter inside the hospital and they, both of them, they sit on the scooter. She was lucky to have that lady and they drove their scooter outside the hospital [] ... and they went down to UNMISS again.*

(Julia, Collo)

At the compound she was able to organise money to be sent to her from her family in Australia and she made plans to return. However, due to an act of emotional labour, Julia delayed her return. The imperative to provide care to a lost child took precedence over her own security:

*T: There was a child that she picked up while they were running and that child cannot be left by herself because the Mum, they don't know where the Mum is and she kept the girl with her. When she tried to move [out of the compound] she can't take the girl, because the girl has nothing, no document to move even down to Juba. She can't make it, so she [Julia] just hesitated to see if [the]Mum comes back to collect the girl then she can come and that's what delayed her. So she stayed for one month while looking.*

*S: Did the mother come back?*

*J: Yeah.*

*T: The mother come back and she took the child. And she boards the plane for Juba.*

(Julia, Collo)

Julia's desire to contribute to her country's recovery from war was defeated by war. Returning to her tribal land to start a business producing bricks, which would literally help rebuild the area, was an act of emotional labour, as was her caring for a lost and vulnerable child. Julia returned to Melbourne, is again unemployed and a recipient of the disability benefit. The question of how many return visits are purposed like Julia's. This seem largely

unknown and suggestive of further research (Harris, Lyons & Marlowe, 2013).

## 7.5. Conclusion

This chapter has added a further dimension to understanding the paradoxes of settlement continue in the post-settlement stage of South Sudanese women's lives in Australia. The diversity and intensity of emotional labour that is performed during resettlement and in times of crisis are the key findings of this chapter.

Participants in this study described emotional labour in a range of contexts and locations. These acts included remittances for a wide range of needs including visa applications, food, accommodation, education, health care and safety. Constant worry for absent family, for communities and country during conflict and grief for those displaced and killed are also acts of emotional labour. These acts were common and shared amongst the participants in this study and played a significant part in their daily lives. Co-presence as a form of emotional labour was made possible on return visits to their homeland, countries of first asylum, or other settlement countries. Co-presence was also achieved through various communication technologies.

Providing translocal emotional labour during conflict increased stress significantly, but equally not being able to provide care was also stressful. The major coping mechanism for this type of stress is religious practice. All participants were devout Christians and spoke of their belief in God and in prayer to alleviate the difficulties in their lives.

There seems little hope that South Sudan will recover from its current state of crisis any time in the foreseeable future. This means that South Sudanese Australian women will continue to be engaged in long-term in acts of emotional labour, additional to those they were engaged with prior to war. Further research is needed to address to what degree emotional labour of this type might undermine post-settlement for diaspora women. Additionally, research could also seek to understand to what degree multi-layered or compounded grief affects their daily lives.



## Chapter Eight: Surviving and belonging

### 8.1. Introduction

This research contributes to the criminological literature on gendered negotiations of militarised violence, asylum, forced migration and resettlement. In this study former refugee women narrated the reality of their diaspora lives alongside memories of the disembodiment of war and displacement. The consequences of war on women was discussed in terms of the relationship between political violence and the embodied self. This study has sought to portray the daily lives for South Sudanese women living in 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia in a non-essentialising way. By centring the voices of these women it has sought to challenge ideas of Western epistemological hegemony. As voices of a translocalised, oral, rural, culture relocated to a major metropolitan Westernised city, their ways of knowing are valuable and important. They contribute much to contextualised understanding of how forced migrant women have negotiated war and its aftermath.

Thematic, feminist analysis of these women's narratives traced historic trajectories of violence and oppression to Sudan's second civil war. Slavery had existed as an institution of Sudanese society since antiquity (Fluer-Lobbans, 1991; Gray, 1961; Johnson, 2003; Jok, 2001, 2005; La Rue, 2004; Lobban, 2001; Moszynski, 2007; Sharkey, 1994; Thomas, 2009; Trout Powell, 2012). Precedents of the gendered and genocidal violence which occurred in Sudan's second civil war can be located in the history of that institution. The GoS maintained denial of any military policies inclusive of slavery, claiming instead slave abductions to simply be due to inter-ethnic conflict between Arab and African cattle nomads. Participants in this study gave accounts of enslavement during this war, of members of their families and communities and of themselves. They identified the genocidal acts of displacement, enslavement and sexual violence as gendered. They spoke of the second civil war as different to the first civil conflict (1955-1972), when women and children were not targeted.

Women's responses to the disembodiment of war was extraordinary resilience. Culture and identity were re-created and maintained through constructs of family and community. Resilience, creativity and agency were key strategies in surviving the complex

suffering of prolonged deprivation and insecurity. Their narrations of the pre-migration phase of their lives indicates the vulnerability of the female body as systemic *and* created.

War and asylum initiated changes in traditional gender roles in the cultural practices of the South Sudanese. In the absence of husbands, brothers or fathers lost to war, women became heads of households and responsible for the welfare of their families. In transnational asylum settings, including urban and refugee camp dwellings, women began to resist traditional cultural and social practices that no longer benefited their children or themselves (see also Beswick, 1994, 2001b; Duany & Duany, 2001; Edward, 2001, 2007; Hutchinson, 2004, Jok, 1999, 2006; Maher, 2014; Pinaud, 2013, 2014, 2015; Stern, 2011).

Those changes are located in the social and cultural adaptations evident in the process of resettlement. Significantly, those adaptations included decisions to end silence as a culturally sanctioned response to the sexual violence inherent of war and displacement. Different to the findings of prior studies, (Burnett, 2012; D'Awol, 2011; Gruber, 2005; Tankink, 2004, 2007; Warin & Dennis, 2008), through speech these women embodied a traumatic social and political history of gendered, genocidal violence.

In this chapter, the empirical and theoretical contributions of the research are addressed by returning to the key findings of the three organising themes: pre-migration, settlement and post-settlement. It goes on to discuss concepts of belonging as a central unifying theme of the thesis. The conclusion suggests further possible research related to this thesis, to better understand forced migrations and the gendered themes of post-settlement for diaspora women.

## 8.2. Key findings

### Pre-migration

The locus of the violence in Sudan's second civil war was the family. The elimination of family aimed to destroy the morale and sustainability of African communities. It was also designed to undermine support for the rebel army. While the policy was effective in the killing and displacing millions of people, it did not destroy familial and cultural bonds. It was these bonds that helped women and their children to survive displacement and asylum. These bonds also provided access to migration processes for the majority of participants in this study.

Participants described the forced migrations of asylum and displacement as lengthy, dangerous and highly stressful. Women experienced asylum in multiple urban locations and refugee camps. Surviving protracted periods of war and asylum appeared reliant on women's networks of kinship support, but were also contingent on a combination of agency, resilience and creativity. Women's agency can be seen in decisions to relocate from one asylum setting to another. These moves were based on needs to increase safety and security, to improve education opportunities for their children, and make applications for resettlement to a Western country. Agentic and creative decision-making continued to be utilised throughout resettlement processes.

### Settlement

The majority of participants arrived between 2004 and 2006, which reflects the migration pattern of Sudanese refugees to Australia in general. The peak years for immigration were 2004 and 2005, when just under 6,000 people arrived (Jakubowicz, 2010). The majority of participants in this study had resided in Australia for 10 or 11 years.

Settlement in a new and completely foreign country presented many difficulties. The absence of kin is one of the most significant. Family networks, in Western terms are often described as 'extended family'. In South Sudanese terms families constitute networks of kin relationships (Lim, 2009). The absence of family undermines the collectivist nature of kin relation and causes unresolvable stress and grief for new migrants. In the first few years of settlement, worry for absent family is the most significant challenge (see also Lim, 2009; McMichael & Ahmed, 2003; Schweitzer et., 2006; Simich, Este & Hamilton, 2010; Wilmsen, 2013). Trying to maintain cultural imperatives to share what they have with absent family, regardless of income, causes considerable stress. The desire to provide care combined with a limited ability to do so has deepened the emotional stress participants already experienced as forced migrants separated from family.

Collo woman Theresia talked of being happy in Australia and of the opportunities available to herself and the five children with whom she had migrated. They had all achieved high levels of education and professional employment. Theresia spoke proudly of their achievements, but also of missing her other children, five adult sons who did not migrate with her and were resident in South Sudan, Sudan and Canada. After ten years in Australia, she had not been able to have her other children visit her. Theresia believed

Australian Immigration officials were suspicious of visa requests from members of former refugee families and visas to visit were rarely issued. Theresia did not want her absent children to reside in Australia with her, only to visit her occasionally. Her own ill health prevented her from visiting them:

*T: Because I am here, I am happy, and those who are with me, [] we can build up ourselves in the way we want [] because they have no fear, [] in this country people are free to do the best they want, if they want, but there, there is some difficulties. I don't want them [her sons] to be with me, but I want to see them from time to time only. And I want them to visit me [] ... I cannot go, but I wish one could come and see me.*

Theresia's story highlight the complexities of maintaining familial and community relations in diaspora.

Other significant difficulties during settlement are education (including language acquisition) and employment. Former refugee women face cultural and linguistic barriers to education opportunities. Education opportunities for in Australia can be limited by cultural expectations, when women's roles as mothers and carers might be given priority over education (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010).

### Post-settlement

In post-settlement three significant paradoxical tensions exist. First, is the correlation between poor literacy and unemployment. Women with low literacy cannot find work and struggle to develop English language skills. Women are grateful that their basic needs are met by government benefits, but the regulatory obligations of that benefit creates daily anxieties. Lack of language skills and employment experience means compliance borders on impossible. Fear that they will have their benefit stopped if they are perceived as non-compliant increases anxiety. This stress has to be managed until they become eligible for an aged pension, which for some could take 15 years. The same system that helped established safety and security during settlement now undermines it in post-settlement.

The second tension connects all South Sudanese Australian women. Mothering in diaspora is fraught with difficulties. Women must balance their desire to raise children according to their cultures imperatives with the expectations of the host culture (Hebbani, Obijiofor & Bristed, 2013). Conflict arises over Western ideas of the individual rights of

children in contrast to African concepts of collectivism and clearly defined hierarchical roles of power and respect. The challenge of parenting teenagers who resist traditional expectations of family functioning or are perceived as rebellious or criminal is deeply felt. Changes in family functioning create significant stress in familial and community relations. Concerns over intergenerational conflicts and public perceptions of South Sudanese Australia teenagers are ongoing.

The third tension are the desires and expectations of emotional labour. Transnational kin relations are paradoxical in nature, in that the fulfilment of duty and obligation toward kin, while desired, creates both economic and emotional stress (Lim, 2009; Baak, 2015). This analysis addressed new emotional obligations in the performances of grief, worry and religious faith as forms of emotional labour. Women also managed multiple sites in their cross-border circuits of care-giving. These can include local, national and transnational sites.

Group acts of emotional labour were conducted regularly. These acts involved shipping containers of goods to South Sudan and collective cash donations. The Abyei Women's group, as an example, had performed both of these types of labour, before the outbreak of war. Group acts also include contributing to the costs of events such as funerals, be they in Australia or their homeland. Costs of transporting deceased persons back to the homeland for burial can be extremely high.

Individual acts of emotional labour toward the homeland were also shown in the data. Women provide remittances to family members regularly. Collo woman Julia, with the desire to help rebuild her country—returned to her homeland to start a business—which was halted by the outbreak of the war.

Imperatives to provide transnational care prior to the war have been intensified by the conflict. Diaspora women are deeply worried for their homeland and are desperate for peace to return. At the time of writing South Sudan is currently feeding the largest refugees flows in the world (i.e. from South Sudan into Uganda and other bordering countries). Ethnic militarism is surging, famine has been declared in four states and reports of epidemic and brutal sexual violence towards women continue. Women described re-experiencing feelings of trauma on news of family killed and suffering in the current war. Their connection with family and community in their homeland is a daily engagement with the conflict. The provision and performance of care-giving by diaspora women during conflict in their homeland revealed types of emotional labour that are both subjective and unique within

this diaspora. The need to care for family during a crisis becomes central in the life of caregivers (see Heymann, 2006). For diaspora women the provision of emotional labour, *in situ* and at a distance, drains limited resources, increases daily worry and anxiety for absent family and adds to feeling of grief and powerlessness. The powerlessness relates to the desperate situation in their homeland as well as not being able to provide for those displaced or endangered by the conflict. Their desire to fulfil financial requests for care and their sense of duty to provide conflates their inability to do so due to restrictions on their own income. Additional to the distress of losing family members in the current conflict is the increase of financial pressure for participants who had become responsible for remaining family members. During the period of the current war, funerals in South Sudan have been frequent and contributions to those costs were also expected.

During interviews a sense of the conflict in South Sudan as intractable was conveyed alongside ongoing inter-ethnic tensions in the diaspora. A recent study by Ng, Lopez, Pritchard and Deng (2017) addressed barriers to peace-building in South Sudan. Most participants who reported on trauma exposure and PTSD did not support amnesty programmes. Reconciliation was not considered possible without perpetrators being held to account and victims being compensated. Findings suggest the more traumatic events people experienced the more they endorsed criminal punishment for perpetrators (Ng et al., 2017, p. 1). The authors concluded that conflict mitigation, peace building and justice processes need to consider mental health treatment in the population. These findings raise questions of how the Australian diaspora may be implicated in barriers to peace and unity in their homeland *and* within the diaspora.

### 8.3. Belonging

During the second war in Sudan, South Sudanese refugees in Cairo, when seeking medical care described pains that moved around the body. Their symptoms were somatic; without objectively verifiable cause. Bodily pain appeared to move in the body as the body was continually dislocated. Pain did not end as the disruption of war and asylum had no foreseeable end (Coker, 2004, p. 21). In resettlement travelling pain described by Coker (2004) is met with new relationships of trust, security and co-operation, which help to alter

or alleviate the vulnerability of the body. Reordering of culture and community must begin with the reordering of the body. The embodied safety of resettlement replaces the disembodied violence of conflict. In Australia the bodies of former refugee women are no longer at risk of systemic, political violence. Safety mediates the systemic and created vulnerability of the body. The vulnerabilities that were created during the war may remain in the form of past pain and current un-wellness, but these vulnerabilities are now able to be treated and cared for. Diaspora women describe the body as being cared for by institutional systems in Australia, including policing and through health care. Women said they would call police if they needed help and protection from violence. Knowing that police will respond to their need is a marker of inclusion. Health systems are also sites in which responses to political violence can be made (Henry, 2006). Health services in Australia are accessible, and often free for beneficiaries. Access to a range of health care services, provides comfort and support for diaspora women. Being cared for in these ways allows for a sense of inclusion and I posit here that inclusion transmutes into feelings of belonging.

#### 8.4. Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have highlighted the gendered history of violence and oppression in Sudan and the ways in which Sudanese women managed war, displacement and forced migration. I have illuminated the ways in which women utilised and adapted strategies for survival during asylum and forced migration that were relational, based on kin relations and ethnic identity. In Chapters Six and Seven I have argued that settlement for these women was complex, multi-faceted and paradoxical. Alongside the significant difficulties of settlement in Australia is, however, the safety, security and bodily care former refugee women have experienced here. I argue that long-term interaction between poor literacy, unemployment and post-settlement poverty raises issues of social cohesion, social inclusion and gender justice. This requires better understanding as does the incidence of sexual violence amongst former refugee women and how this may continue to be part of their lives in Australia.

In Chapter Four I used theorisations of the objectification of pain allowing bodies to materialise and create new subjectivities. Bodies can be understood as sites of exploitation

*and* agency. The vulnerability of women's bodies during war was systemic *and* created. I have posited here that those vulnerabilities can be mitigated through post-settlement relationships of trust and care. Gender roles have changed due to war, forced migration and settlement, but cultural imperatives to care have not. Caregiving locally and transnationally is a key strategy to social connectedness for diaspora women. My research shows South Sudanese women in post-settlement continue to engage the resilience and agency that was key to their pre-migration survival. Their negotiations of the ongoing challenges of adaptation and acculturation has seen them build a sense of belonging in Australia that is both personal and political.



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