

From Southern Sudan to Adelaide:  
Learning Journeys of Refugee Secondary Students

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## **Abstract**

This thesis contributes to the understanding of a small group of South Sudanese refugee students in Adelaide secondary schools by examining their learning, both in their homeland context in southern Sudan prior to its independence and in their mainstream schooling and life experiences in the Adelaide context.

School leaders and teachers in Australia have generally known little about the Dinka speaking refugees' family and community interaction, cultural background, home languages and learning experiences against the backdrop of almost constant war in southern Sudan. Similarly, their formal classroom learning experiences, feelings and attitudes, aspirations and challenges in the new learning context of English speaking schools in Adelaide have very rarely been explored in personal terms. This qualitative study focussed on the significant research gap in understanding the cultural and survival issues facing the South Sudanese secondary refugee students, commencing in war-torn southern Sudan and moving into the complexities of adapting to life and learning opportunities in the new safe locale and formal schooling environment of Adelaide in South Australia.

The aims of the research were to investigate the prior learning experiences and perspectives of the South Sudanese refugee students in southern Sudan and compare and contrast these with their life and mainstream schooling experiences in Adelaide. Open-ended interviews in English were used to allow the twenty-one South Sudanese participants, nineteen secondary students and two teachers, to talk about their learning journey in as natural a manner as possible. The qualitative theories of humanistic sociology and symbolic interactionism were used to develop a theoretical framework, linking social relations and the learning of cultural meanings, for analysing the interviews in the two main contexts of their lives. The first highlighted the participants' close relationships and everyday interactions with members of their family and community, church and school in southern Sudan. What the participants learned through these personal relationships was analysed thematically according to the cultural meanings or values, related to areas such as family life, moral, religious, linguistic, educational, sense of identity and aspirations. These early learning experiences were set alongside their relationships and learning in the new (second) context of schools in Adelaide where they related in a much more formal way to teachers and fellow students, in order to gain new

educational and linguistic meanings through the school curriculum. The participants provided evidence of their adaptation through their ongoing relations with their South Sudanese family and community, alongside their participation in the expected patterns of school life, and mainstream Australian values in the third context of overlapping cultural experiences in Adelaide. These dual influences shaped their sense of personal identity and aspirations for the future.

Through their learning in Australian schools, these participants had gained literacy in English which grounded the equivalent achievement in Dinka for many, enabling their successful completion of Year 12, with a number going on to university studies. The study concludes by drawing out the significant findings of these implications to further support the South Sudanese refugees and help teachers and administrators understand the refugee students in their schools. While most developed a successful intellectual identity as a student, these young refugees from South Sudan appeared to strengthen and maintain the sense of their home identity, based in part on their visibility, and many expressed their desire, once their academic and professional studies were complete, ‘to go back home’ and give service.

## **Declaration**

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

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Judith Sainsbury Thomas.

# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **Essence of the study**

How do South Sudanese refugee secondary students from one of the communities of southern Sudan <sup>1</sup> where learning was centred on the oral traditions of the extended family, learn effectively in and adapt to the individualistic literacy-based learning environment of mainstream schools and society in Adelaide? The study poses this as an urgent and significant question. It sought to obtain answers, from the actual voices of the South Sudanese secondary students themselves, as they reflected on their situations and learning journeys before and after settling in Adelaide. The understanding gained from their responses can lead to the development of more effective learning and teaching strategies in Australian classrooms.

The most important educational experiences for the South Sudanese secondary students before they came to Australia were in informal learning centred around the immediate and extended family and community in southern Sudan. Their realistic natural backdrop to time was based on daily and seasonal variations, and for those born in southern Sudan the sense of place in which the community life was centred was strong. Going to church, listening to the preachers and singing was informal and community-based learning. Whatever was required for daily life was learnt from and taught by the extended family and community according to the distinctive cultural patterns and nurturing practices typical of traditional African society in southern Sudan.

Oral communication was the medium of instruction and the learning of the spoken forms of the Dinka dialect of their local community was crucial. Whilst Dinka, in its various dialect forms, has the largest number of speakers, it is one of over 60 indigenous languages in South Sudan, but it is the mother tongue of most refugees who have settled in Australia. Some who follow the Islamic faith also know Arabic (Community Relations Section of DIAC, 2012).

The patterns of life of the Dinka-speaking communities had become shattered and unstable over three decades of civil wars. Instead of enjoying the usual patterns of family life, learning how to survive had become the priority for both children and adults in the

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'southern Sudan' describes the country prior to independence, [being] obtained on July 9, 2011 when the new nation of South Sudan formally came into existence.

southern Sudanese communities. Their life in such a threatened society had to focus on the practical daily activities linked with basic needs, combined with learning to run from the soldiers and support each other, when confronted with the ever-present danger of sudden attack in war-torn southern Sudan.

In relation to formal schooling, the experiences of the refugee students in Africa were very different from those they found in Adelaide secondary schools where English was the medium of instruction. The traditional African sense of flexible time operated on different assumptions to the dominance of the clock pendulum in Western schooling, for example, controlling multiple hierarchical levels of [organised] staff and students, fixed timetables; recess; lunchtimes; end of the school day; assignments; homework; class interaction styles and expectations. Whilst education had been a prime objective of South Sudanese parents for their children, discipline reigned harshly in the actual learning 'environment' of the local schools in southern Sudan as to both cleanliness and learning. Students had to pass 'exams' each year to graduate to the next level. Otherwise they remained (regardless of age) in their year level, including reception, until they managed to reach the required level (Dooley, 2009, p. 11). Resources, including textbooks, were few. Small blackboards for writing were fairly common. Some English<sup>2</sup> and maths were taught in an elementary sense but lessons relied on repetition and rote learning far more than the western style classroom in Australia. 'Class interaction' was tempered by large classes led by generally untrained yet respected teachers in often simple, roughly built classrooms in the bush or in the refugee camps. According to Father Ian Buckmaster, Roman Catholic missionary in Sudan, interview July 2, 2013 and Baak (2016), harsh physical discipline followed any deviation in the expected standard of their appearance or failure to learn and answer the teacher's questions, or complete a test.

When South Sudanese young people coming from such schooling experiences were immersed into the English- speaking Adelaide mainstream schooling environment, they were confronted by a rigid division of the timetabled day; detailed set curriculum; homework; varying assessment types with criteria; research projects and investigations; tutorials; laptops; 'deadlines' for assignments; teacher and peer expectations; paired and group work; parent/teacher meetings and pastoral care groups and activities. After school

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<sup>2</sup> English is the national language of South Sudan (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2015).



detentions, rather than physical punishment, were given for lapses in behaviour, school policy infringements and uncompleted school assignment work.

What challenges did these students face upon their arrival and entry into the classrooms of Adelaide secondary schools? How did they cope with the extraordinary differences in time, place and procedures of learning, and in a new language, English? Did they have opportunities to further their study and knowledge of their own language, Dinka? Did their teachers have sufficient preparation and understanding to offer support for their different learning needs, including past learning interaction styles, particularly with reference to compulsory literacy in English? How did the refugee secondary students fare and adapt in their learning journeys from southern Sudan to Adelaide, Australia, which was a new and stable but culturally very different country?

### **South Sudan as a nation of diversity and war**

As a preamble to the study, it is important to understand the context of Sudan. The Republic of Sudan was the largest country in Africa, located in the northeast of the continent immediately to the south of Egypt (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007, p. 3). However, when South Sudan formally declared independence on July 9 2011 after decades of war with the North, it became the third largest country in Africa, with its capital in Juba (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2011). The civil war in Sudan between 1983 and 2005 is estimated to have killed 1.9 million people, most of them civilians (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007). The long war in Sudan between north and south had its origins in religious division, as well as a conflict between peoples of differing cultures and languages. The language and culture of the north are principally based on Arabic and the Islamic faith, whereas the south has its own diverse, mostly African languages and cultures and its religious character is non-Muslim, either traditional African or Christian. These religious and cultural differences have played a fundamental role in the continuation of the conflict and its outcomes in terms of the migration of refugees and their resulting educational experiences and dislocation (Amusan, 2014, pp. 121-122). During these war years many southern Sudanese found themselves in refugee camps where they lived under harsh conditions, often experiencing extreme hardship, disease and violent deaths (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007, pp. 2-3). Since the independence of South Sudan in July 2011, civil

war in the form of inter-tribal violence has again broken out resulting in many deaths and further dislocation of its people (Australian Government, 2016).

Along with these obstacles resulting from the civil wars in southern Sudan, there were also a range of indigenous social and cultural issues which restricted formal education. The educational challenges faced by southern Sudanese in their home country have clearly impacted on the students' educational achievement after leaving their homes as refugees. Understanding the previous learning experiences of southern Sudanese students has become of particular concern in those Adelaide schools which have accepted large numbers of recently arrived refugees (Foundation House, 2005). Sources for the South Sudanese community in Australia have also claimed the refugees have faced a number of educational challenges in Adelaide. This has been due to their refugee background and the considerable differences between their prior learning in southern Sudan and their subsequent learning in Adelaide (Sudanese Online Research Association, 2011).

There appears to be very little known concerning the southern Sudanese and their experience of R-12 school learning although numbers of studies exist on earlier immigrant and refugee groups. Miller (1999, p. 214), for example, undertook research into the dynamic links between identity and the learning of a new language in relation to a number of cultural groups. Likewise, a number of earlier studies concerned with refugee groups, such as the Poles, Latvians and Ukrainians like the South Sudanese in Adelaide have pointed to the central importance of students gaining literacy in their mother tongues (Smolicz, 1986; Smolicz & Secombe, 1981). More recently there have been research studies on the linguistic and identity adaptation of refugee immigrants, such as Cambodian-American women (Chhuon, Kyratzis, & Hudley, 2010), Cambodian young people (Smolicz, Yiv, & Secombe, 2003) and Ethiopians in Australia (Debela 1995).

Studies on the experiences of students from indigenous communities in formal schooling, and its influence both on their linguistic usage and knowledge, and their sense of identity are also relevant to the experiences of South Sudanese refugee immigrants in Adelaide schools. These include studies on the Maoris (Adds, Hall, Higgins, & Higgins, 2011; Peirce, 1995), the native North Americans known also as the First Nations and Aboriginal peoples of Canada (Fox, 2015) and a comparison of cultural heritage concerns among the Maori (D. Brown & Nicholas, 2012) and Aboriginal Australians (Colbung, Glover, Rau, & Ritchie, 2007; Hare 2011; Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013; Perso, 2012). Whilst these topics

could significantly and potentially impact positively on the learning processes of the South Sudanese refugee students, they have been largely unexplored to date with reference to this particular group. This represents a significant and pressing gap in research knowledge and understanding which deserves to be filled.

## **Conceptual Framework and Method**

In order to understand the learning journeys of these refugee students from southern Sudan, from their own perspective, two complementary theories which focussed on individuals as ‘actors’ in their social and cultural contexts, were used. This underlying assumption of the validity of the actor’s perspectives allowed the refugee students to speak out as actors in spontaneous conversation about their own cultural patterns including social relations, linguistic, religious and educational meanings or values which they encountered in their daily lives within the community groups they belonged to in southern Sudan. The feelings and viewpoints of the refugees were needed in order to obtain insights into their distinctive attitudes, perceptions and aspirations in regard to their families, languages, learning and life. Relationships with each other, family, friends and others from the community also formed essential components of this exploration into their learning and life firstly in southern Sudan and then on to the very different Adelaide mainstream schooling and society.

How the refugee students responded to the upheaval in their learning and lives, in terms of social relations and cultural meanings were of particular interest. How their relationships and cultural values fared under the changed conditions in Adelaide mainstream schooling and community life was the complementary feature of the study. The development of a conceptual framework appropriate for understanding these issues led to the choice of a qualitative methodology which would provide the opportunity for these participants to speak with ease, and in their own voices. In this way, the study ensured that the voices of the refugee students were made accessible for research purposes.

### **Aims, objectives and research questions**

In the research study, the approach focussed on social relations and the younger generation’s learning of cultural meanings (or values) in the various groups that make up

the life of community, such as family, church, home and 'school'. Subsequently the spotlight moved to their arrival and immersion into both Adelaide mainstream schooling and community life with an examination of how these changes impacted on their relationships and lives, learning of cultural values and languages. A special emphasis in this was understanding the language of communication used in these communities.

The aim of this research, therefore, was to explore the prior learning experiences of southern Sudanese refugee secondary students in their home context compared to their learning experiences in the new environment of Adelaide secondary schools.

Two very broad research questions were developed as the means of achieving this aim through interviewing with a number of South Sudanese refugee students in Adelaide secondary schools over 2012-14. The intention was to make the questions very open-ended, in order to give the participants, the opportunity to respond as far as possible in their own way. The questions were:

How do South Sudanese students describe their own learning experiences in their home context?

How do South Sudanese students describe and regard their own learning experiences in the Adelaide context?

To guide the formulation of the range of specific topics to be discussed in the interviews, as well as the analysis of the participants' comments, the specific objectives given below were outlined.

- To investigate the forms, languages and experiences of the learning of southern Sudanese refugee secondary students prior to coming to Adelaide;
- To explore the individual southern Sudanese refugee secondary students' perceptions of the ways of learning they experienced within the family and community in their homeland;
- To explore the perspectives of South Sudanese refugee secondary students on the forms, languages and experiences of learning in secondary schools in Adelaide;
- To ascertain the commonalities and differences across the interviewed group in terms of preferred ways of learning, their sense of identity and their aspirations for the future.

The participants' comments, in responding to the interview questions are reported and analysed as the focus of this thesis.

### **Significance of the study**

The study sought to understand the southern Sudanese refugee secondary students' perspectives of their lives and learning experiences in their home context, as well as in Adelaide. It is important for all educators and administrators of refugee students in Adelaide, the nation as a whole and in the global setting to understand the cultural issues of refugee young people, the nature and importance of relationships for learning of culture, home languages, identity, as well as to recognise different learning styles and experiences which are the result of constant migration and disrupted schooling. In fact, this portrayal of the experiences of one particular group of refugees can be regarded as a microcosm of the ever-worsening phenomenon of Global Refugee Migration. However, the findings of the study have special relevance for school teachers (both primary and secondary) in Adelaide, South Australia and for Australia as they teach to the recently introduced Australian Curriculum in all subjects, to a great diversity of students in all states.

This study of a group of South Sudanese refugee secondary students is important in understanding the ways in which learning can be inhibited by the lack of formal schooling experience; very low levels of achievement in basic literacy and numeracy; disrupted learning; very different physical appearance and psychological trauma resulting from civil war. As a qualitative study involving a small number of participants, the research has real limitations and cannot be used to generalise to other refugee groups, or even other groups of South Sudanese refugees. Nevertheless, this research hopes to contribute positively to understanding the learning experiences of South Sudanese students in Adelaide schools not only as newcomers to Australia but also in relation to their potential future endeavours in their own homeland, South Sudan. Furthermore, insights into learning approaches can be adapted and are transferable to refugee students from different cultural backgrounds. The findings could also have meaning and relevance for educators of tertiary students, particularly those first entering university studies. Although the study's findings are unique to the group of refugee students from southern Sudan, they can nevertheless point to constructive new directions for future research in the area of refugee education.

## **Outline of the thesis**

The thesis is organised into eight chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the urgent and pressing problems faced by southern Sudanese refugee students coming to Adelaide and entering the Australian secondary school system. It also presents the background, aims, research questions and importance of this study. Chapter 2 reviews the sources of information and previous studies related to the research topic. This discussion is organised into five sections: background profile to South Sudan; culture and language in communities of southern Sudan; Adelaide society and secondary schools; issues in teaching refugee students; and adaptations to life and learning in the new country.

Chapter 3 explains the theoretical framework which uses both humanistic sociology and symbolic interactionism to underpin and connect the learning of group cultural values with the significant social interactions and community relationships in the lives of the South Sudanese secondary students. Chapter 4 goes on to outline the relevant research methodology chosen for this study as well as details concerning the collection and analysis of data.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 utilise the interview data collected to analyse the participants' social relations and learning of cultural meanings. Social linguistic, religious and educational meanings, as well as identity and aspirations are examined across the three contexts: Social Relationships and Learning in Dinka Communities in Southern Sudan (Chapter 5); Mainstream Australian Society and Schools in Adelaide (Chapter 6) and Social Relations and Cultural Meanings in the South Sudanese Community in Adelaide (Chapter 7).

Finally, Chapter 8 outlines the main findings and discusses recommendations to improve the learning experiences of South Sudanese students. Directions for future research on refugee students in Australian schools are also suggested.

The next chapter provides the foundation for this investigation by presenting the background information available on South Sudan, and going on to discuss earlier research studies that have some bearing on various aspects of the topic being investigated.







## **Chapter Two: Understanding the Two Learning Contexts of the Refugee Students**

### **Introduction**

To better understand the South Sudanese students' accounts of their learning in their homeland as well as in Adelaide, it is essential to review current information and previous research studies in relation to southern Sudan and Adelaide, the two learning contexts being investigated.

With reference to the first context, the geographical and historical backdrop of South Sudan with the early work and impact of the missionaries commencing in the 1880s, and the changing political control and government structures, are outlined. Since gaining independence Sudan has endured over six decades of strife and civil war. The second section focusses on the culture of the various traditional communities in southern Sudan, especially the history of the Dinka language and its role in the life of the community.

With respect to the second context, there is a description of Adelaide society and secondary schooling experienced by the South Sudanese secondary students. Australia is portrayed as a 'receiving society' of immigrant and refugee children and the educational response from the Child Migrant Educational program of the 1960s to the development of community language education in the 1970s and 1980s is outlined. Earlier studies on issues related to teaching refugee students are reviewed for their relevance to Adelaide classrooms that received the southern Sudanese students. The final section focuses on the sorts of adaptations to life and learning in Australia which the South Sudanese secondary refugee students could be expected to make. This discussion includes theoretical studies on the value of cultural adaptation, as well as the research studies on how earlier immigrant and refugee groups adapted to life in Adelaide.

### **Background Profile of South Sudan**

An in-depth understanding of the refugees who came to Australia from southern Sudan requires a knowledge of the geographical and historical background of their homeland. Until recently South Sudan was part of the country known as Sudan situated in the north-eastern region of the African continent. At the beginning of the twentieth century Sudan was a colonial territory, governed by a joint Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. In 1956, the country gained independence from its colonial rulers as the Republic of Sudan, with its

capital in Khartoum and Arabic as its official language (Idris, 2004, p. 12). It was the third largest country in Africa at that time.



Map 2. 1 Sudan after Independence, 1956  
Reproduced with permission from Lonely Planet, ©2016

A relief map of Africa shows that Sudan consists mainly of high plains with mountains to the south, west and east. Through the central plateau basin, the White Nile flows from its source in the lakes of Rwanda and Uganda before it is joined at Khartoum by the Blue Nile flowing from the highlands of Ethiopia. Temperature, rainfall patterns and vegetation follow the patterns of terrain, from deserts in the north to equatorial rainforests in the south, with savannah lands and low lying river swamps (the Sud) in between. Annual rainfall in the dry and desert lands of the north is low but in the savannah further south greater rainfall supports an economy of agriculture and pastoral pursuits among the scattered communities (Willis, Egemi, & Winter, 2011, pp. 11-14). Although the northerners achieve enough cultivation for livelihood, their towns where the people predominantly live are located on rivers or oases (Willis et al., 2011, p. 16).

Gum arabic and minerals such as gold and copper have been plentiful but have declined in recent years. The most valuable oil reserves are spread out across Sudan, from west to east with most of the known oil reserves in the south (Ryle, 2011). It is significant to note that the profitable oil industry is largely in the hands of the government and private sector controls in the north. Control of the oil facility has been one of the ongoing issues in the conflict between the north and the south (Willis et al., 2011, p. 22).

The peoples of Sudan represent a great diversity of languages, religions and cultures. In fact 'the diversity of Sudan is its most salient feature' (Ryle, Willis, Baldo, & Jok, 2011, p. 3). The north and the south are 'host to two world religions (Islam and Christianity), myriad local belief systems and hundreds of indigenous languages' (Ryle, 2011, p. 31). Even though Islamic Arab traders penetrated further and further up the Nile over the nineteenth century, Arab and Islamic influences diminished markedly in the south (Ryle, 2011, p. 39). The pastoral communities of southern Sudan, such as the Nuer and Dinka, practise mixed agriculture and livestock husbandry (Ryle, 2011, p. 40). Cattle ownership assumes a significant importance in terms of wealth and is frequently behind many violent and bloodthirsty tribal disputes and revenge killings. Despite the numerous ethnic and ethnolinguistic groups in the south, the sense of place, of kinship and common language in the local community remain the paramount components of a sense of identity and belonging, for the Sudanese. This survives even when they are forced as refugees to settle in other countries (Ryle, 2011, p. 33).

In 1918 a missionary doctor with SUM (Sudan United Mission which will be discussed later), Dr Ronald Trudinger, summed up his observations and impressions of the land where he had settled five years earlier. In an article for the medical students and staff at the University of Adelaide, he wrote:

*this vast area of country as an agricultural and pastoralist land, for hundreds of miles in the southern half, not only along the rivers, but inland, the land is wonderfully fertile, and can produce almost anything, having a good rainfall...At Melut [the nearest town on the river]...were Arab traders, some pure Arab blood, others with a huge mixture of black in their Arab blood, and the townspeople were a motley lot of all shades and colours and all the Soudan tribes were represented. All in the town professed Mohammedanism, but kept on with the pagan customs and beliefs ingrained in them from youth...The Magistrate is usually an Egyptian, the clerk often Soudanese, and the postmaster, a Coptic Christian, usually from Egypt... Inland from the river...dwell a cattle-loving and rearing people called Dinka...The Dinkas are spread far and wide over the whole of the Southern Soudan, and are pagans, with no liking for the Mohammedans as a rule (Trudinger, 1918, p. 16).*

His comments are not only very important as first-hand historical observations of the part of southern Sudan where he settled, but they also represent a detailed and insightful description of the peoples and their lives.

## **Colonial History and Christian Mission Activity**

From 1899-1956 Sudan was governed as an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, where British rather than Egyptian rule was dominant. The British colonial administration favoured modernising the northern half, with its Arab townspeople and traders while neglecting the African peoples in the southern part of Sudan. The North was encouraged to remain Islamic and under Sharia Law whereas the South generally followed African traditional and religious beliefs and practices, until the advent of Christian missionaries. Initially the British set up separate administration and business facilities with separate passports for each of the two provinces. In 1946 the British integrated the two areas under one Arabic administration. Arabic became the official language for the south as well as the north and few government positions were available to people from the South even if there had been any individuals capable of filling them. Some sources (Cobham, 2005) describe these inequalities as ‘germinating future ‘seeds’’ (Amusan, 2014, p. 121) of the civil strife which followed the granting of independence in 1956. The British authorities had a clear policy on the activities of Christian missions in Sudan. They forbade the establishment of mission stations in the Islamic north, because they were afraid this would constitute a threat to the stability of the region (Idris, 2004). In contrast, the English-speaking Protestant missionaries were allowed, and even encouraged, to work in the south. However, their areas of activity were strictly rationalised as separate spheres of influence, to prevent the possibility of competition and hostility within the same linguistic community (Deng, 1994; Idris, 2004, p. 89; Lo Bianco, Cunningham, & McCombe, 2009, p. 15).

The first group of missionaries to reach Sudan were priests from a Roman Catholic order, based in Verona. They arrived some thirty years before British colonial rule was established in southern Sudan (Wheeler, 1991). By 1854, the order had established the Holy Cross Mission station at Kaneshe in the area west of the White Nile and begun work on transcribing the local Dinka language (Rek dialect) into literary form according to Buckmaster, 2/7/2013. While some priests worked to establish outposts for teaching and preaching in the hope of ‘regenerating Africa through Africans’ (Deng, 1994, p. 27), Bettrame, another of the Fathers, compiled a manuscript grammar of the Dinka language which was published in Florence in 1869 (Toniolo & Hill, 1974, p. 35). In these ways, the Verona fathers had laid the ‘intellectual foundations’ upon which later missionaries could build (Toniolo & Hill, 1974). In particular, their language work continued, with

further publications of parts of the Bible in the Rek dialect in 1948 (Table 2.1. *A Chronology Showing Literacy Development in the Dinka Language*).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, two groups of Protestant missions arrived, the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Presbyterian-based Sudan United Mission (SUM) in southern Sudan. The British administrators allocated them - together with the already established Roman Catholic mission - to different areas of southern Sudan. The Catholics remained in the area west of the Nile, among the peoples speaking the Rek dialect of Dinka, while the CMS were centred on the south and east of the Nile, among communities speaking the Bor dialect (Cole, 1971, p. 95). The SUM went to the area northeast of the river, among the Padang-speaking Dinka communities (Deng, 1994, pp. 43-44; Lo Bianco et al., 2009, p. 13). Each missionary group established 'strategic centres' in the huge areas of land allocated to them, from which they hoped 'the influence of the Gospel would radiate' (Deng, 1994, p. 44). For the Catholic mission in the west, this division proved 'problematic' because they 'were not allowed to do missionary work on the Eastern bank of the Nile', the more populous region allotted to the Protestant missions, according to Buckmaster, 2/7/2013. The CMS missionaries established a number of mission stations and schools in their central area south east of the river, combining their preaching, teaching and medical work with language study of the Bor dialect (Cole, 1971, pp. 94-95). The Rev. Venerable Archdeacon A. Shaw translated numerous parts of the Bible into the Bor dialect of the area (Table 2.1). As with the Catholics, the work of these missionaries was visionary given the difficulties of adjusting to the climate. There was little assistance from the governments and funding from the home countries missionary resources was limited.

The Sudan United Mission (SUM), the third Christian group to begin work in southern Sudan in the early years of the British colonial administration, was mainly Presbyterian, but involved some other Protestant churches as well. Although this was founded in the United Kingdom in the early 1900s by Karl Kumm and has its archives in the University of Edinburgh, it had active branches in Australia. The Australian Board of SUM commenced work in 1912 with responsibility for supporting the establishment of missions in the Sudan (Matthew, 2015).

Support for the Sudan United Mission in Australia was an off-shoot of the intense interest and concern that the defeat and death of General Gordon at the hands of the Mahdi and

his followers on January 26 1885 had aroused in the Australian colonies. According to Rodwell (2013) the enthusiasm was so intense that an expeditionary force of volunteers was raised in New South Wales and went to the Sudan, although they arrived too late to be involved in the main fighting. It is possible that this was one origin of the great enthusiasm for the Sudan United Mission in Australia. Another was the visit to Australia around 1905 of the founder of the Sudan United Mission to attract financial support and commitment from people prepared to serve as missionaries (Matthew, 2015). An example of this enthusiasm was the fact that the Adelaide branch of the Sudan United Mission had the support of no less a person than the Governor of South Australia, Sir Henry Galway, as well as leading figures from the University of Adelaide.

The University of Adelaide's Medical Students' Society Review (*The M.S.S. Review*) for February 1913 reported the departure of one of its recent graduates, Dr Ronald Trudinger, to work as a medical missionary for the Sudan United Mission. Dr Trudinger had established a SUM mission station in 1913 on the north bank of the White Nile at Melut, among Dinka communities speaking the Padang dialect of Dinka. Its position was described at the time as the 'Anglo-Egyptian Soudan [sic], about 450 miles south of Khartoum on the White Nile, some distance above Fashoda' (University of Adelaide, 1914, p. 23). The work of the SUM missionaries followed a similar pattern to the other two Christian missions - evangelising and teaching, but with a greater emphasis on medical help because of Trudinger's training. He also proved to be an effective linguist, recording the Padang dialect of the local communities and translating several books from the New Testament (Table 2.1).

All three missions working in Sudan, along with most Christian groups in Africa, were agreed on a plan to establish a line of two hundred mission stations 'in every large tribe across the continent from east to west' (Cole, 1971, p. 109). The aim was 'to stop the southern advance of the strongly flowing Mohammedan tide and to Christianize the native races before they are muslemized'(University of Adelaide, 1913, pp. 2-3). The missions also did all they could to prepare Africans to become the leaders and organisers of their local churches, in what the Catholics referred to as 'indirect administration' (Deng, 1994, pp. 28-29) and the SUM missionaries described as 'the formation of an African Church, self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating' (MacDiarmid, 1934, p. 109).

The work of the missionaries had an important influence on the communities where they settled. Individuals developed a heightened sense of their own worth and identity based on their religious beliefs and their ability to read and write in their mother tongue. Eventually the colonial government saw the opportunity to utilise the missionaries' educational work for their own political purposes and strengthen their control over southern Sudan. Deng (1994) distinguished three phases in the provision of schools in southern Sudan. From 1900 to 1926 the missionaries were the only providers and bore all the costs of establishing and resourcing the schools.

In the next phase from 1926-1946, the government intervened to the extent of providing subsidies to approved mission schools, on condition they had a European supervisor and complied with the set syllabus and government regulations on school matters. The colonial government took over the main responsibility for providing education from 1946-57, but the local churches built up by the missionaries continued to make an important contribution. Education could be seen as 'a shared concern between the missionaries and the government' (Deng, 1994, p. 45). In political terms, however, Amusan (2014, p. 12) has pointed out that such educational policies did nothing to change the domination of the north over the south; the relationship remained one of 'unequal exchange'. In the period of independence that followed, this became one of the many tensions and divisions that escalated into civil war. The everyday life of the Dinka communities, language literacy and education became swept up in ever-increasing turmoil and violence.

### **The Post-Independence History of Civil War in Sudan**

Whilst the modern Republic of Sudan was formed in 1956, with the capital at Khartoum and Arab serving as the official language (Idris, 2004, p. 12), fighting over access to political power, representation and resources, notably the valuable oil fields, had already commenced in 1955. Over the next 50 years two extended periods of civil war were fought in the south (Community Relations Section of DIAC, 2012). The first civil war between the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement and the government in Khartoum ended in 1972 with the signing of the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement (Idris, 2004, p. 12). This agreement recognised English as the principal language for southern Sudan, together with Arabic as the official language for the whole of Sudan. The major southern Sudanese

languages were planned to be reintroduced ‘without prejudice in the first years of primary school’ (Idris, 2004, p. 12).

Fighting erupted again between the Southern Peoples’ Liberation Army (SPLA) and the government in Khartoum between 1983 and 2005. The estimated ‘toll from the second civil war and associated famine included almost two million deaths and more than four million displaced persons’ (Community Relations Section of DIAC, 2012). The Dinka community was severely disrupted economically and culturally by the ongoing violence of the guerrilla warfare (Idris, 2004, p. 17).

Discussions between the government and the South Sudanese fighting groups led to the interim Machakos Protocol agreement of 2002 which recognised the political rights and future self-determination for the African peoples of the south (Idris, 2004, pp. 17-18). Finally, the ongoing fighting ended in 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which granted the southern part autonomy for six years. A referendum to determine the south’s political future was held in 2011 and a new nation, the Republic of South Sudan, was born (Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne), 2012). As Map 2.2 shows, it shares borders with six other African nations: Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. South Sudan has an estimated population of 8,260,490 with approximately 600 ethnic groups speaking over 400 different languages (Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne), 2012).





Map 2. 2 The new map of the two Sudans, July 9, 2011  
Source: [www.africaguide.com](http://www.africaguide.com)

On December 15, 2013, however, a political crisis between the rival tribes of Nuer and Dinka, represented at the highest levels respectively by Vice-President Riek Machar and President Salva Kiir (Pinaud, 2014, p. 192), erupted into further civil war with the new nation. Corruption and nepotism associated with the ongoing power of the guerrilla groups, the SPLA and SPLM were also touted as major causes in a complex struggle with Dinka groups involved on both sides (Pinaud, 2014, p. 210; Rolandsen, 2015, p. 171). This current civil war is causing serious dislocation of the South Sudanese peoples and the country is rated as at 'high risk' by the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

## **Refugee Migration to Australia**

The successive lengthy civil wars in South Sudan led to substantial migration of South Sudanese refugees together with their families, seeking safety and security elsewhere. Many spent years in refugee camps like Kakuma, north of Kenya, where life was extremely difficult. 'Everyone in there [was] always just praying to get out and go somewhere better, so people were applying to come to Australia or go to America; a great opportunity for us...that dream...of a place, [where] everyone is equal' ("Think Big," 2013).

Between 1997 and 2007 more than 20,000 settlers born in Sudan emigrated to Australia. During this period there were also approximately 2200 ethnic Sudanese, born to Sudanese parents in refugee camps in Egypt or Kenya, who also went to Australia (Stevenson, 2009). Among the total Sudan-born in Australia at the 2011 Census, a further 14.6 per cent arrived between 2007 and 2011 (Community Relations Section of DIAC, 2012, p. 3). In the 2011 Census Geographic Distribution by state and territory, South Australia had 1416 Sudan-born refugees which represented 7.3% of the total 19,369 in Australia. The median age of the Sudan-born<sup>3</sup> in 2011 was 28 years and the sex ratio was 103.2 males per 100 females (Community Relations Section of DIAC, 2012, p. 2).

Most Sudanese migrants came to Australia through the Humanitarian Program, with more than ninety-eight per cent of Sudan-born arrivals entering the country as part of this program. These settlers can be further classified into Refugee or Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) intake. (Stevenson, 2009). Applicants classed as refugees were identified and referred by UNHCR to Australia for resettlement. This category included the Refugee, In-country Special Humanitarian, Emergency Rescue and Woman at Risk visa subclasses (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011). Refugee entrants granted visas solely on humanitarian criteria usually did not have any family or friends in Australia, while SHP entrants are proposed by an Australian citizen, permanent resident or an organisation based in Australia. From 2001 to 2007 seventy-four per cent of all Sudanese humanitarian entrants to Australia came as SHP entrants (Stevenson, 2009).

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<sup>3</sup> These figures from the 2011 Census all related to Sudan as 'due to the Republic of South Sudan becoming a new country no statistics had been reported which isolated the south from the north' (Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne), 2012, p. 1).

When the Sudanese refugees of secondary school age began arriving in the early 2000s, they were placed mainly in state and Catholic schools in South Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). DECD (Department of Education and Child Development) recorded the highest number of arrivals and active enrolments of Sudanese refugee secondary students in government schools in South Australia over the years 2005-2014. There were 377 students in 2007 (the peak year), 200 in 2011, falling to 137 by 2014 (Marriner, 2015).

The major disruptions in their daily lives and the constant struggle for survival of the South Sudanese refugees in their homeland along the Nile were changed into diverse challenges of being refugee newcomers in Adelaide, South Australia. Memories of their past families, and their collective cultural life including kinship, moral values and languages, accompanied these peoples fleeing strife and tragedy to seek solace and peace in a new country. To understand the South Sudanese refugees, it is necessary to now find out what is known about their culture and language, of family and community life in their homeland.

### **The Family and Community in Southern Sudan**

The complexity of social grouping among the peoples of southern Sudan has been explained by one of the refugees:

*The Southern society...could be depicted as a web of self-contained tribal entities based on linguistic and traditional ties. Each tribal entity is further divided into sections [or communities] which are in turn composed of clans [or extended families]...Every individual person was first and foremost required to pay allegiance to his clan, his section and ultimately his tribe. The most cherished virtues were chivalry, pride, toughness and straight-forwardness. These virtues were essential since the splitting of society into tribal entities meant perilous and tough existence (Deng, 1994, p. 21).*

Buckmaster too, repeatedly stressed in his interview, 2/7/2013, the strength of the extended family clan in southern Sudanese culture.

Life in such families has been depicted as ‘a strong brotherhood’ (Renzaho, McCabe, & Sainsbury, 2011), as representing a ‘culture of caring’ (Zutt 1994, p. 34) and as having ‘an amazing...and unbreakable bond’ (David & Bolay, 2012, p. 68) among family members and with southern Sudanese culture as a whole (Zutt 1994). In a recent visit to South Sudan, Anglican Archbishop Driver recalled, in an interview in Adelaide, April 6,

2016, observing a demonstration of this. As part of the initial personal introduction, there would be a formal recitation on the newcomer's relationship to all other family members.

The extended family could take one of two forms in southern Sudanese communities. Among families who were practising Christians, the family extended into a three-generational grouping, based around the two parents and their children, but including the children's grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. This is the taken-for-granted pattern portrayed in several authentic life stories by South Sudanese children (Sandy, 2013). Similarly, an episode of the ABC television series *Australian Story* featured a fatherless South Sudanese refugee, Johnson Maker-Adeng ("Think Big," 2013) vividly recounting his mother's struggles and his own subsequent role as surrogate father in leading the family through war-torn South Sudan to the refugee camp at Kakuma in Kenya.

The other extended family pattern was found in cases where the father at least was not Christian and therefore free, according to Islamic law and traditional African custom, to have more than one wife. Akoi Manyiel Guong, one of the Lost Boys<sup>4</sup> in Africa, from southern Sudan, who eventually reached Australia, fled the attacking North Sudanese army in 1987. Akoi explained that big families in traditional Dinka society were valuable: firstly, for providing sons to assist with the cattle and their protection; and secondly, for providing daughters who would bring wealth in the form of 'bride-price of cattle' to the family (Guong & Lindemann, 2011, pp. 2-3). In his experience the presence of 'multiple' mothers during his early years did have advantages:

*We kids thought of all our father's wives as our mothers... We were brought up by everybody around us and the whole community took responsibility for us... We grew up feeling that we were part of a strong, cohesive community. There were clear rules and regulations and everybody, boys, girls, wives, husbands, aunts, uncles-knew exactly what was expected of them (2011, p. 3).*

Little appears to have been written in previous studies on refugee accounts about the father in family life in southern Sudan beyond his traditional role as pastoralist, acquiring and maintaining the family's wealth in the form of cattle (Ryle, 2011, p. 40). Given the decades of civil war from 1956, into which most men were drawn as either regular soldiers or guerrilla fighters, and the high mortality rate in such struggles, this is hardly

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<sup>4</sup> 'Lost Boys' described Guong as one of the boys forced to flee the 'warmth and security of his family...[joining] thousands of other boys-the Sudanese lost boys-before becoming a child soldier, a fugitive, and ultimately a refugee seeking safety on the other side of the world' (Guong & Lindemann, 2011,back cover).

surprising. Instead, much has been written about mothers both as figureheads for the family and as the practical maintainers of everyday life. Their collective role was to raise children and bind the family together in terms of survival, close daily caring and essential chores. Mothers, and in their absence, often grandmothers, were the lead nurturers of the family, as the stories written by South Sudanese refugee children in Australia attest. One of these refugee children remembered the time his family spent in a camp where there was so little to eat that the children began to starve:

*Starving feels like when you are so hungry your tummy hurts when we went to bed hungry, my mum would try to make us feel better. She would say, "There is food growing right now and while we sleep. It will be ready soon". She was right because we had been given some seeds to grow. Sometimes I would drink from my mother (Sandy, 2013, p. 5).*

The effect on family life when a mother was removed, was vividly shown in one line from a South Sudanese refugee secondary student in Adelaide: 'My mother disappeared during the war; she used to provide the boundaries we needed' (Pager, 2012, p. 2).

As they grew older, children were expected to contribute to the life of the family, helping with various duties appropriate to age and ability, as in other East African communities (Lema, 1981). Family responsibilities and duties were divided along gender lines. Daughters, or girls as they were often called, since ultimately they would marry into another family, were involved in supporting their mother in household chores, such as cleaning, gathering firewood and caring for younger children. Boys, usually referred to as sons since they would remain members of the family all their lives, were expected to be involved in herding the cattle and sheep to pasture each day, finding them the best grazing possible and bringing them safely home at night (Malual, 2014, pp. 32-33).

One of the features of family life that observers like missionaries, and refugee writers have, described was the nightly ritual of storytelling, when the whole family gathered to listen to the evening's entertainment. In an interview given by Mrs Lina Trudinger, wife of the SUM missionary doctor, Dr Ronald Trudinger, she is reported as saying,

*After sunset, and never at any other time, the village people tell fairy tales [sic<sup>5</sup>], which they call lion stories named because of the belief that some human beings can turn into lions, and behave like them after dark ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 13).*

In Mrs Trudinger's view, the Dinka people were 'professional storytellers and poets who could be commissioned, on handsome terms, to celebrate special victories by composing songs' ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 13). Family and community life was also the centre of celebrations. Although Mrs Trudinger detected an underlying fear within the Dinka people, she recognised that 'on the surface' they were 'merry people':

*They loved singing and dancing, and delighted in their children. Their voices were very good, and their musical instrument-a harp with two strings and the drums -made a fantastic accompaniment to night-long dances under the moon ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 13).*

*For those who were Christians, the church established by the missionaries working in their area was a focal point for celebrating special occasions. Gathering each Sunday for worship, was regarded as one of those occasions where everyone enjoyed getting dressed up, singing to the harps and drums, and listening to Bible stories read in their Dinka dialect. Missionaries like Buckmaster, 2/7/2013, have attested to religion being central to the Dinka people's family and community life.*

*Mrs Trudinger's comments about the underlying fear she sensed in the Dinka peoples appear to be related to traditional African religious beliefs. These considered the world to be inhabited with spirits, sometimes good but often evil. As Mrs Trudinger explained, 'They are spirit worshippers, and go always in dread of evil ghosts...Some tribes will not kill a cobra because to them that snake is sacred' ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 13). The missionaries sought to counter the deep fears of the Dinka communities that the world was peopled with dangerous and hostile beings, by telling them about a God who cared for them. Through their preaching, the medical care they offered, and the formal schools they set up, the missionaries sought to help the Dinka people deal with the fears that haunted them and give them hope for the future according to Buckmaster, 2/7/2013.*

## **Modes of Learning**

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<sup>5</sup> The term followed by [sic] would seem to be based on the reporter's interpretation of what Mrs Trudinger said, chosen as words that an English-speaking reader would understand. All the evidence of other writers indicates that southern Sudanese communities had stories related to animals and peoples, not fairies.

Before the arrival of the missionaries, the culture of the Dinka communities was oral, so that communication depended on speaking and listening, supplemented by facial expression and gesture. All knowledge and skills were transmitted from one generation to the next through the spoken word and movement in the form of instruction, stories, songs and dances. The young generally learned by listening, watching and observing older family members in the normal activities of family life, as well as the special occasions of community celebration (K Perry, 2008). Akoi Manjyiel Guong (Guong & Lindemann, 2011, p. 4) attributed most of his early education to family members from whom he learned through observation and imitation. The most valuable learning experiences came with the opportunity for children to actually do things together with parents, grandparents, older siblings or peers, so that they could model their actions on their elders and imitate what they saw being done. In this way, children went through a process of learning the skills and knowledge they needed in their adult lives - the boys learning about cattle and agriculture, and the girls about cooking, cleaning and caring for young children.

Other important methods of informal learning in the Dinka communities were telling stories, singing songs, participating in dances and playing games. Through the nightly storytelling, the tales of family history and what might be called the legends of the community were passed down from generation to generation (Hamilton, 1987). The ways these stories were told emphasised the moral and family values of the community (Darr, 2008) and strengthened the listeners' sense of identity in belonging to the Dinka community (Linde, 2001; K Perry, 2008). The depiction of South Sudanese culture in the film *The Good Lie* (Nagle, 2014) included a segment about a memory game the boys used to play in the sand. The forebears of those involved were an important feature of playing the game. For his part, Akoi Manyiel Guong recalled learning

*the traditional Dinka songs and dances as well as games intended to help develop our strength and skills. These included fighting games, running races and most popular of all, wrestling...we were learning how to use our hands to defend ourselves, to be strong and show no fear, and to be confident as men. The expectation of our family and our society was that we would be courageous* (2011, p. 4).

With the missionaries came the beginnings of literacy and the establishment of the first formal schools. Both of these offered a whole new way of learning, not linked to the immediate concrete experiences of daily living but offering theoretical knowledge of

many kinds related to the whole world (Smolicz, 1979). The missionaries' initial task was to learn the language spoken by the communities surrounding their mission station and seek to produce an orthography of written symbols that represented each distinct sound (MacDiarmid, 1934). Through this process, they learned to communicate orally with the local people. In their first teachings of the Christian faith, they had to rely on the oral traditions of learning which was at the centre of Dinka community life. As the accounts of mission work in areas of East Africa detailed (Lema, 1981), in the church services the missionaries read Bible stories to the people in Dinka, explained their meaning in Dinka and taught them songs, what might be called hymns, about the Christian message in Dinka. Doing so encouraged them to use their traditional dance forms to act out the stories they heard.

In order to meet their long-term goals of developing local, self-sustaining churches, however, the missionaries considered it vital to establish European-style formal schools, where those young people who showed enthusiasm and commitment to the new religious beliefs could be educated as local leaders according to Buckmaster, 2/7/2013 and MacDiarmid (1934). Literacy was considered the most vital skill which they needed in order to be able to read the Bible, in Dinka and other books about the Christian faith, to write and keep contact with the churches and mission centres. Thus, formal schools began to be established in the bush around the mission. These were day schools taught by the missionaries themselves, later helped by students who had proved good learners. For students who successfully completed these basic lessons, the missionaries established boarding schools at their central station, providing for students across the whole area of their influence. Mrs Trudinger explained that she taught the beginners reading and writing in the boys' boarding school at Melut ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 13). In the early years Dinka was the language of instruction and the focus of literacy learning, but from the mid-1920s, when the British colonial authorities began to fund and direct schools in southern Sudan, learning English was added to the curriculum after the first two years (Lo Bianco et al., 2009, p. 15). According to Deng, 'By 1926 there were 22 boys' elementary schools, 9 girls' elementary schools, 2 boys' intermediate and 1 boys' trade school<sup>6</sup> in southern Sudan as a whole. In addition there was a large number of village [or bush] schools all over the South' (Deng, 1994, p. 45).

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<sup>6</sup> All of the above would have been boarding schools.



The local people were rather cautious about the new mission schools. Mrs Trudinger noted, 'Parents will not send their sons to school unless they have other sons to stay at home, partly because they have strong family feeling, and do not wish the boys to be alienated, and partly because their labor is important in looking after the [family cattle] country' ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 13). In the case of the girls, the Dinka families considered that sending them to school was out of the question. Their help was needed at home and there seemed to be no point in spending even the little bit of money required to educate them in skills and knowledge that would be useless in their future roles as wives and mothers in another family. As a result, Mrs Trudinger claimed that 'girls [were] not sent to school at all in that part of the country' ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 13). These comments aligned with the most recent comments made in Australia by one South Sudanese refugee father, Gabriel Majok Madit who recalled that: 'we Sudanese, we undermine the ladies. We didn't consider that the ladies [are] important. So, a lot of people didn't take their girl to school' ("Think Big," 2013). According to Archbishop Driver, 6/4/2016, his recent visits to Bor in South Sudan have shown that the situation remains the same today. Girls are still encouraged to attend to domestic duties and not be educated. Recent Anglican missions to Bor have contributed to a boarding house being built for girls so that some can receive education.

Nevertheless, both Mrs Trudinger and Buckmaster had formed a high opinion of the ability of Dinka students to do well in the new forms of school learning. Mrs Trudinger considered that 'many of the children are extremely intelligent at their lessons' ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 13). For his part, over forty years later, Buckmaster observed the keenness for learning that the children displayed at school. He noted, however, that the learning of basic skills in literacy and numeracy, so different conceptually from the oral based learning they were used to at home, did prove an obstacle initially in their school learning. However, once they had grasped the basic principles 'of reading and writing and mathematics, [then] there is no stopping them' according to Buckmaster 2/7/2013.

Buckmaster's period of service in Sudan coincided with the early years of the second civil war, at a time when the new education system had switched to English as the medium of instruction. He commented that 'formal education was patchy in rural areas of Sudan', partly as a result of the fighting. The disruptive effects of almost continuing

conflict were evident, not only on individuals and families but in the breakdown of schooling, according to Buckmaster 2/7/2013. In the residues of basic schools that tried to carry on in the last decades of the civil wars, the lack of trained teachers, of resources and even of school buildings meant that there was much repetition and rote learning in the open air or copying from a chalkboard, as Perry (2007b) and later Archbishop Driver observed in 2016. Under these conditions the teachers left often resorted to harsh physical punishment. Beatings were a taken-for-granted part of family discipline when children had been disobedient or failed to learn what was expected of them. However, Driver, 6/4/2016, linked the use of the stick, which he recently observed in South Sudanese classrooms, to the country's military history of constant warfare and violence over many decades. Baak (2016, p. 153) also drew attention to the regular and harsh physical forms of discipline used in the classroom. Such teacher behaviour left some students with 'hidden injuries' in the form of their fear of such beatings and dread of going to school.

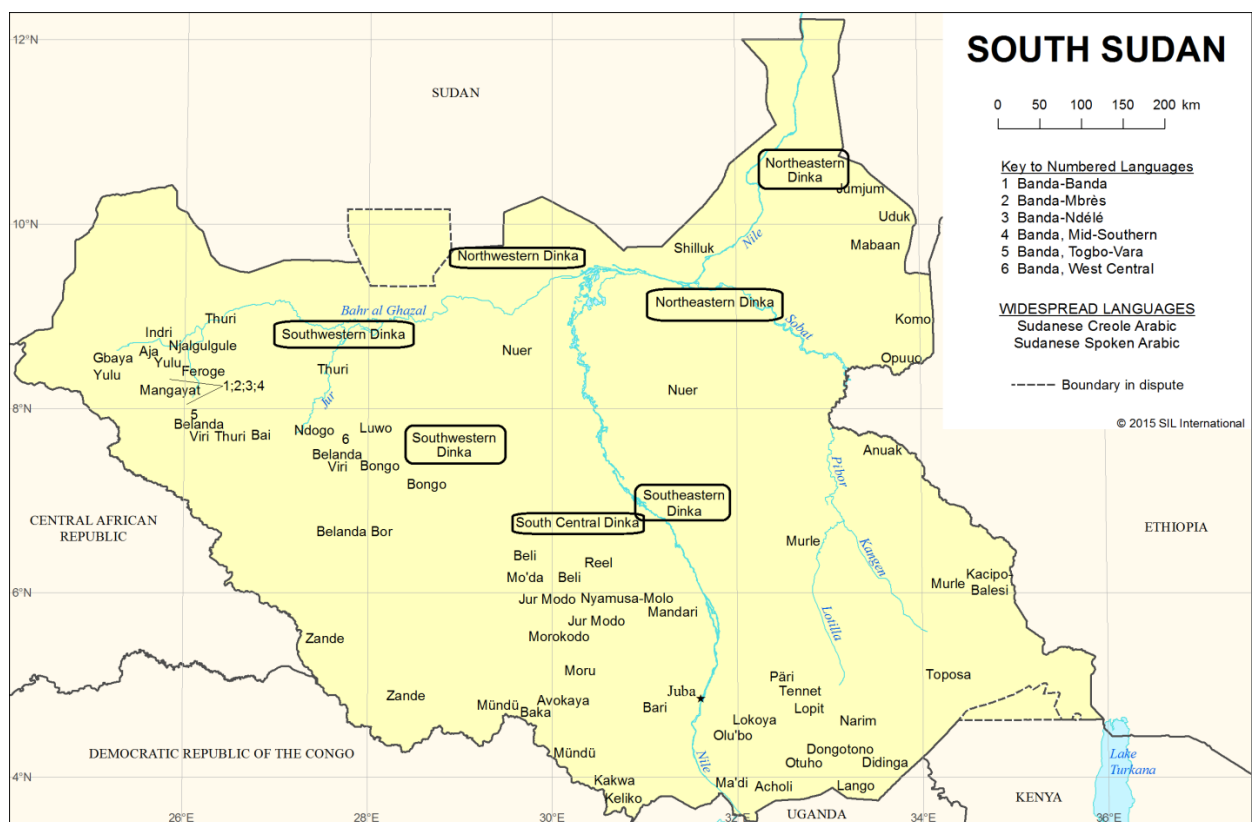
It seems clear from the sources discussed above that those young people who became refugees in Australian secondary schools had suffered a double educational disadvantage. They had been forced to flee from their homelands which had provided the essential context for the oral tradition of learning based on family and community life and suffered the loss of key family members in southern Sudan. The comparatively limited opportunity for formal schooling had become so disrupted and residual that few had managed to gain any basic literacy and numeracy skills. Yet the personal stories of a number of young South Sudanese refugees revealed the ongoing importance of the Dinka language and culture they brought with them from their homeland. They were eagerly determined to make the most of the educational opportunities available to them in Australia, despite the fact that their experiences of schooling in southern Sudan and refugee camps had given them little or no literacy skills in either Dinka or English.

### **The Development of Dinka Literacy from the mid-nineteenth century**

Given the complexities of the language situation in southern Sudan, in terms of different languages, and dialects within languages, a map is useful for understanding how these relate to one another in geographical terms. Map 2.3 (2015) below is a representation of the new nation of South Sudan, but it shows the different language communities in the various locations, as they were when the missionaries first began their linguistic work.

The rectangular label Southwestern Dinka represents the area where the Catholic missionaries began their work on the Rek dialect. The similar labels for South Central and South-eastern Dinka indicate where the CMS worked on the Bor and related Agar dialects. The North-western Dinka label shows the area where the SUM (Presbyterian) missionaries established their work using the Padang dialect. The setting up of these mission centres was described earlier. Thus, early initiatives in Dinka were driven by these missionaries. The focus of these mission groups was to develop Dinka literacy and translate the Bible into the Dinka dialect of the communities they were working with ‘limited work done on a cross-dialect analysis of the Dinka language’ (Lo Bianco et al., 2009, p. 15).

Despite these divisions, the limited funding and the harsh toll on health, the Catholics, Sudanese United Mission and the CMS all achieved notable milestones in the development of written orthography in the Dinka dialects which constituted the mother tongues of their communities.



Map 2. 3 South Sudan showing Languages and their regions Adapted from Ethnologue Source: Languages of the World, Eighteenth Edition, online version (Lewis et al., 2015)

***The work of missionary linguists.*** From the time of their arrival the missionaries worked on three major Dinka dialect groups in order to create orthographies, translate the bible and develop educational material (Idris, 2004). The Rev Dr R. Trudinger, based in the Padang area, wrote a Dinka grammar and a Dinka-English dictionary. Archdeacon A. Shaw translated the Old and New Testaments of the Bible into the Bor dialect and the Rev. Fr. Arturo Nebel in the Rek area, wrote a grammar and compiled dictionaries (Idris, 2004, p. 19). Table 2.1 lists all the language resources, such as grammars and vocabularies, and all the parts of the Bible translated into the three dialects of Dinka mainly by missionaries, as well as later key developments from 1866 to 2011.

The approach of the Sudan United Mission, described by the Rev D.N. MacDiarmid, one of the prominent missionaries and linguists of the 1920s and 1930s, made clear that the missionaries saw their language work as having a religious purpose:

*And so, the work goes on. Missionaries first learn the native tongue and reduce the language to writing. Then in the Mission Schools the people learn to read their own language, and soon are able to say in common with the hearers of two thousand years ago, "We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God" (MacDiarmid, 1934, p. 97).*

Dr Trudinger's contribution had been also described in a range of articles in the University of Adelaide's Medical Students' Journal. In another newspaper article, Dr Trudinger is recorded as having:

*done invaluable work among the Dinka and Shilluk tribes. Having mastered these languages, he [became] a most proficient speaker and writer of both... Many have been taught to write in their own language, which was unwritten until the advent of the missionaries. In addition to this important work the medical and surgical side has not been overlooked ("Housekeeping in the tropics," 1935, p. 4).*

***Early Attempts at Formalising Dinka Orthography.*** Lo Bianco has pointed to the need for some consolidation of orthography across the Dinka dialect groups. The first attempt to do this was the British efforts to introduce an education policy for the African peoples of the South. According to Lo Bianco,

*the Dinka alphabet was first standardised in 1928 at the Rejaf Language Conference. British education policy for South Sudan at the time was to provide the first two years of education in a local or regional language and then move to*

*curriculum delivery in English. Dinka was one of those languages used for education (2009, p. 15).*

The Catholic missionary, Ian Buckmaster attested first-hand to the existence of Dinka literacy in the mission schools regardless of the religion of the founders. He described the 'elementary schools for boys and girls as using the 'vernacular', the mother tongue as early the 1920s and 1930s' in an interview, December 30, 2014.

A later development came after A.N. Tucker was commissioned by the British Administration to prepare an orthography for Dinka at the 1938 Cueibet language conference. On his recommendation, a Latin orthography, based on the written Rek dialect, came to be considered the standard or prestige variety (Ager, 1998). It was important, therefore that in 1948, Arturo Nebel, the Roman Catholic priest published *Dinka Grammar (Rek-Malual dialect) with texts and vocabulary* Instituto Missioni Africane, Verona according to Andrew Cunningham, Research & Development Coordinator, Digital Content & Development, State Library, Victoria, in an interview, June 11, 2015.

***Dinka Language Development since the Independence of Sudan (1956).*** On gaining independence in 1956, Arabic became the national language. Fighting had already begun between the north and the south in the first civil war. Recognition of the African mother tongues of the south and the right to have them taught in schools were among the issues that the southerners were fighting for. The peace treaty at the end of the two civil wars between north and south contained revisions that recognised languages other than Arabic. The Addis Ababa Peace Agreement that ended the fighting of 1955-1972 and the Machakos Protocol of 2002, just before the 1983-2005 fighting ceased, specifically included language policies recognising the local languages of the southern African peoples like Dinka. They were intended as formal recognition of the cultural diversity, languages and hundreds of dialects of the country's inhabitants. Following on from the work of the missionary linguists, the government in Khartoum was forced to recognise the growing movement of non-Arabic languages in the south and allow for them to be taught in schools (Idris, 2004).

In 1991 the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) commenced literacy programs, leading up to the 1993 Dinka Literacy Project (Idris, 2004) which revised the orthography and

alphabet to allow ‘vowel breathiness to be distinguished when writing’ (Lo Bianco et al., 2009, p. 15). In 1995 a Dinka Language Institute commenced to allow leading scholars to further develop Dinka literature and culture. Ater Morwell Morwell (now South Sudanese elder and secondary school teacher and resident in Adelaide, South Australia) was one of those who contributed to the initiative and wrote a Dinka course with the Khartoum Dinka Literacy Team in 1994. The Roman Catholic priest, Arturo Nebel, developed Dinka history, science and geography books with the Khartoum Sudan Workshop in 2001 (Idris, 2004).

Over the years, the Dinka language has borrowed extensively from the Arabic and English languages for reasons of history, contact, type of interaction, need or requirement. The Arabic language influence has permeated into Dinka (Idris, 2004, p. 25) in everyday conversation and for utilitarian aspects. The borrowings relate to the daily interactions about household utensils, market and foodstuffs. English borrowings frequently relate to function words and interjections (for example, the English words: ‘but’ and ‘enough’ (Idris, 2004, p. 26). Content words in Dinka derive mainly from Arabic and English loanwords (Idris, 2004, p. 25). The migration of the Dinka speakers as refugees to the Arabic-speaking areas in northern Sudan or to English-speaking countries has served to accelerate this lexical borrowing. English serves also as an international reservoir for new concepts and technological and scientific innovations for the Dinka language.

The Dinka language has proved surprisingly resilient over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in terms of growth and adaptability despite the continuous fracture of South Sudan and its peoples due to almost constant warfare. Since the movement of refugees to countries like Canada, Britain, the Netherlands, the United States of America (subsequently referred to as the United States) and Australia, there are now also Dinka-speaking communities in the diaspora. Given the reach of the internet of today, Dinka language tools can be made available worldwide (Lo Bianco et al., 2009, p. 21). Both within southern Sudan and internationally, linguists have worked on improving Dinka orthography and preparing reading and resource materials for Dinka literacy (Idris, 2004). Whilst it appears that the Dinka language is thus capable of and sufficiently flexible for entering and mingling with the modern world’s linguistic milieu, Idris considered that

greater co-ordination of its speakers world-wide would serve to promote this language more widely and securely (2004, p. 44).

Overall the distinctive culture, and languages of communities in southern Sudan can be described as the inner workings and heartbeat of and for their people. The oral tradition via the mother tongue of Dinka was the means for informal learning; the church and its activities interacted and joined with the moral stories from the extended families. Overall the exact details of young peoples' language learning experiences were sketchy in the research literature. Apart some autobiographical works and newspaper interviews, the personal voices of the young South Sudanese with their thoughts, feelings about literacy in their mother tongue, Dinka language were missing. This situation could be described as a haunting silence, unusual in adolescents around the world, regardless of living and learning situations.

Table 2. 1 A Chronology showing Literacy Development in the Dinka Language

<b>Date</b>	<b>Publication</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Linguist/Translator</b>
1866	1. <i>Die Dinka-Sprache in Central-Afrika; Kurze Grammatik, Text und Wörterbuch</i> 2. <i>Die Sprache der Bari in Central-Afrika</i>	Brixen: A. Weger	Miterrutzner, Johannes Chrysostomus
1870	<i>Grammatica della lingua denka.</i>	Firenze: G. Civelli	Beltrame, Giovanni
1905	Bible.N.T.Luke.Dinka	London: British and Foreign Bible Society	Weakley.
1908	Bible.Dinka.Selections	[S.I.]: [s.n.], [ca.]	Shaw
1915	Bible.N.T.Luke.Dinka	London: British and Foreign Bible Society	Shaw
1916	Bible.N.T.Mark.Dinka.	London: British and Foreign Bible Society	Lea-Wilson
1917	Bible.N.T.Mark.Dinka.	London: British and Foreign Bible Society	Lea-Wilson
1922	Bible.N.T.Acts I-XX.Dinka	Malek: Mission Press, 1918-21	Shaw
1923	Bible.N.T.Acts.Dinka	London: British and Foreign Bible Society	Shaw-Agul.
1925	Bible.O.T.Genesis I-IV, 15.Dinka	Malek Mission Press, 1925.	Shaw
1926	Bible.N.T.Luke.Dinka, Padang.	London: British and Foreign Bible Society	Trüdinger
1928	Rejaf language conference		
1929	Bible.N.T.John.Dinka.	London: British and Foreign Bible Society	Shaw et al
1931	Bible.N.T.James.Dinka	London: British and Foreign Bible Society	Shaw
1932	Bible.N.T.Matthew.Dinka	London: British and Foreign Bible Society	Shaw-Agul.
1935	Bible.O.T.Dinka.Selections	London: British and Foreign Bible Society	Shaw
1936	Bible.N.T.Mark.Dinka.	London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1936.	
1938	Cueibet language conference.	British Administration	Tucker to prepare orthography of Dinka
1939	Final draft of <i>Dinka orthography.</i>		Tucker
1940	Bible.N.T.Dinka	London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1936.	Shaw
1943	Bible.N.T.Acts.Dinka,Padang.	Cairo: Printed by Nile Mission Press	Trüdinger.
1943	Bible.N.T.John.Dinka, Padang	London: British and Foreign Bible Society (Cairo [printed])	Trüdinger.
1948	<i>Dinka Grammar (Rek-Malual dialect) with texts and vocabulary</i>	Verona: Instituto Missioni Africane	Nebel
1948	Bible.Dinka, Rek.Selections	Kuajok: Catholic Mission,1948 (Italy [printed])	Nebel, R.C. Missionaries
1952	Bible.N.T.Dinka, Padang	London: British and Foreign Bible Society	Trüdinger.
1954	<i>Dinka-English, English-Dinka dictionary.</i> 1st. ed.		Nebel



1969	Bible.Dinka, Padang.Gill.Selections	London: British and Foreign Bible Society	Gill
1975	Institute of Regional Languages established.		
1978	Institute of Regional Languages and Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL)		
1979	<i>Dinka-English, English-Dinka dictionary. 2nd.ed.</i>	Bologna: Editrice Missionaria Italiana	Nebel
1979	Bible.Dinka.New Reader.Selections	Nairobi: United Bible Societies	Hon
1988	Bible.N.T.Dinka	Khartoum: Bible Society of the Sudan	Shaw
1990	Dinka Cultural Society: Dinka Literacy classes & new orthography		
1991	Dinka Language course	University of Khartoum	
1995	Dinka Language Institute	Cairo, Egypt	
2000	Dinka Language Institute (Australia)		
2000	Bible.O.T.Dinka, Ciec.Selections	Wycliffe Bible Translators	Orlando
2006	Bible.N.T.Dinka, Rek	Published by the Diocese of Wau in cooperation with Bible League	Wau
2006	Bible.O.T.Proverbs.Dinka, South Central.	Wycliffe Bible Translators	Orlando
2006	Bible.O.T.Proverbs.Dinka, South Central.	Wycliffe Bible Translators	Orlando
2011	Bible.Dinka, Padang	Khartoum: Bible Society in Sudan	

Table developed from Neil Rees, British & Foreign Bible Society & Andrew Cunningham, Melbourne 2015

## **Adelaide Society and Secondary Schools**

### **Adelaide as a Culturally Plural Society**

Since the large-scale immigration of refugees after the Second World War, Adelaide has become a society of multiple cultures co-existing in such a way that immigrants and refugees could continue to speak their home language, alongside learning to use English as the common language. In the same way, they could maintain many of their own cultural traditions, while learning the new patterns of culture they needed to have jobs and participate in mainstream cultural life. In the past, South Australia enjoyed the status of a 'cutting-edge' state in terms of appreciating the value of languages other than English and establishing innovative arrangements to provide language maintenance for different ethnic groups. Ethnic Schools and the School of Languages both cater for a wide variety of languages other than English from the primary to senior secondary school levels. Ethnic Schools offer language study organised by the ethnic community itself, with some financial support provided by the commonwealth and state governments. The School of Languages is a government school offering a range of over 20 languages to students from all school sectors, in classes held after normal school hours. It specialises in providing Year 11 and 12 classes for students from small ethnic groups who wish to study their home language to count for their South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) and for university entrance.

These structures have been flexible enough to add languages as new refugee and immigrant groups have settled in Adelaide. Since the early 1980s languages such as Vietnamese, Khmer, Farsi, Filipino, Tamil and Swahili have had language syllabuses approved. By 2005 the School of Languages and SACE were offering a range of 43 languages at Years 11 and 12, at various levels, for example: Beginners, Background, Continuers, and Speakers of other languages (Mercurio & Scarino, 2005, p. 155). At the same time, ESL (English as a Second Language) /EAL/D (English as an Additional Language or Dialect) teaching at primary and secondary school levels became a recognised feature of English as a Second Language learning in South Australia (Jupp, 2001; Smolicz, 1997). This represented the language education context into which the refugees from southern Sudan entered. Since then, in response to requests from the southern Sudanese community, Dinka has become available as a *SACE Language and Culture* subject at Years 11 and 12 and taught at the School of Languages. As such it

counts toward university entrance. In addition, the Dinka-speaking community offers ethnic school classes for students in the lower age group range according to Darryl Buchanan, Executive Officer, February 8, 2016.

### **Adelaide Schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

*Structure, Organisation & Curriculum (general).* In Australia, South Sudanese refugee students were introduced into schools that were very different from schools in southern Sudan. Secondary schools in Adelaide are formal institutions of education. From the perspective of the recently arrived refugee student, each school seemed to be a complex network of buildings each with a designated aim and purpose. They had to learn to negotiate their way through this maze.

The administration block contained offices for the principal, other senior and professional staff. The library or resource centre catered for student research with books and computers. Apart from the school classrooms, frequently there were break-out spaces for the students to work together in groups or individually on various tasks. Sports facilities varied according to the schools' budget. Most had school ovals and gymnasiums but others had swimming pools and extensive facilities for learning music, dance, drama and art. Canteens existed in every school with opening hours restricted to school break times such as recess and lunch. Car parking was available for parents, visitors and senior students learning to drive. Drop-off centres were designed for parents to deposit their children safely to the school grounds. Staff monitored bus stops and pedestrian crossings to ensure the students had safe access to schools.

In addition, the school staff and students were familiar with the aims and purposes of the building layout and school personnel services provided, such as counsellors. The secondary students (Years 8-12 in South Australia) were aged approximately from 13 to 20 years of age. Generally, the oldest student age would be close to 18 years; however, international and refugee students could be older due to their individual and past circumstances.

The southern Sudanese refugee secondary students had to follow an equally unfamiliar set of fixed expectations and rules for acceptable interaction with their families, mainstream school students, and the teachers. Secondary school teachers themselves had 21<sup>st</sup> century preferred qualities and aims described as: Adaptable, Visionary,

Collaborator, Risk Taker, Lifelong learner; Effective Communicator; Ethical Role model and Leader with goals and objectives in their teaching and career (Van Ruiten, 2014). The teachers had to be registered with the Teachers' Registration Board of South Australia and abide by a legal duty of care to their students. This included behavioural observations of the students and their families with mandatory reporting to the Responding to Abuse and Neglect Mandatory Notification hotline required by the DECD policy on Child Protection (Department for Education and Child Development, 2013b). Guidelines were in place to cater for handling and organisation of matters (in school and in the home) concerning refugees and for those from other diverse cultures (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015). Additional services included the Bilingual School Services Officer (BSSO) program for interpreting and translating and the Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) who similarly 'support communication and cultural understanding between schools and culturally and linguistically diverse communities' (CALD) (Government of South Australia, 2016a, pp. 6-7). Schools from the Catholic and Independent sectors could also use these services when necessary (Catholic Education, 2016). However, the DECD policy on Child Protection and parental discipline was recently questioned in a recent Supreme Court case in Adelaide. A 'smacking conviction' was overturned due to Justice Peek's ruling that 'There's no way that a genuine, honest attempt to correct a child's behaviour can transform a parent into a criminal' (Fewster, 2016b, p. 1).

For the refugee students, there were many new rules, expectations and subsequent consequences for infringements. They had to absorb and follow requirements such as wearing the school uniform, punctuality, timetable, unfamiliar subject areas, homework, written and oral assignments, working in groups, evacuation and fire drills and respectful communication towards the teachers and other students. Daily membership of pastoral care or mentor groups was another non-negotiable requirement. Attendance at religious schools involved participation in masses such as at Catholic schools. Parent-teacher meetings were held strategically (after exams) to review and discuss students' academic progress. Upon enrolment and prior to these meetings parents were informed of the schools' expectations and policies. Such practices could well have been puzzling to new parents from other cultures including refugee families.

The refugees faced the complex and unknown South Australian curriculum following the Australian Curriculum<sup>7</sup> from Foundation to Year 10, with several subjects being written to cover the senior years (SACE levels) of Year 11 and 12. Overall there were 43 learning areas and subjects. The major learning areas were: the arts; English; health and physical education; humanities and social sciences; languages; mathematics; science; technologies and work studies Years 9–10. The three cross-curriculum priorities (to be identified and accessed where appropriate to the learning areas and adding depth and richness) were: firstly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures; secondly, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia; and thirdly, sustainability (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2013, 2016).

As new arrivals in South Australia, the refugees were catered for in primary Intensive English Language Centres (IELCs) and secondary New Arrivals Program (NAP) (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 1). English as a Second Language generally formed a part of the English department or faculty. In the past, several schools had classes at junior levels (Years 8-10) for ESL students. However, some schools provided literacy classes for ESL students and others with literacy concerns. The Catholic and state school sectors provided extra assistance in the form of ESL support in the classroom or as a group outside the classroom to work on language areas such as drafting written and oral work.

***Developments in EAL/D/ESL*** The elevated status of EAL/D been reflected in a teachers' resource to assist students from other cultures in the teaching of English under the Australian Curriculum covering Foundation to Year 10 (Australian Curriculum, Assessment Reporting Authority, 2014, p. 6). This new term more aptly described students from diverse cultures who commonly had more than one language (or dialect). English was generally not accurately termed as their second language. Students in the senior levels, Years 11 (Stage 1) and 12 (Stage 2), were catered for by the SACE subject offerings entitled Year 11 ESL and Year 12 ESL or ESL Studies, but were expected to adopt the ACARA term EAL/D in the future.

EAL/D students were assessed according to their written and oral abilities using the Language and Literacy Levels which started from Foundation to Year 10 and are from

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<sup>7</sup> The Australian Curriculum is led by the Australian Curriculum Assessment Recording Authority (ACARA).

Levels from 1-14 (Department for Education and Child Development, 2016a). These levels were:

*primarily an assessment, monitoring and reporting tool to be used to inform programming and planning for all teachers...[They] describe the development of language and literacy needed across the year levels to access and demonstrate curriculum knowledge, skills and understandings for all learning areas. The levels focus on the productive aspects of language and literacy (spoken, written and multi-modal texts)* (Department for Education and Child Development, 2016a).

From my experience, refugee senior students' abilities were aligned with Levels 5 or 6 which corresponded to mainstream primary classes in Years 1-2. EAL/D teachers armed with such knowledge and with the breakdown of genres or texts into specific areas of mode, genre, field and tenor for each level, could adjust their teaching and support. Subsequently, government and Catholic schools could also apply for government funding (leading to a regular support teacher) if there was a preponderance of students at the high risk level of literacy (Government of South Australia, 2016a). The genre approach, introduced by Cope and Kalantzis (1993), for use in ESL teaching was advocated by DECD.

However, whilst the first national survey of school EAL/D educators published in the Draft ACTA (Australian Council of TESOL Associations) Report in 2014 revealed some positives, there were nonetheless many serious concerns with decentralised school autonomy management, lack of quality specialist trained EAL/D teachers and programs delivered. Where school principals were supportive of EAL/D inclusion and its implementation including funding distribution, there were positive outcomes reported by the educators taking the survey. However, frequently this was not the case and the students did not receive appropriate or quality teaching and support. It was reported that: 'Responses centered on increased accountability, increased learning time, professional learning for teachers on language, EAL/D pedagogy, racism and cultural awareness, funding and teacher capacity' (Australian Council of TESOL Associations, 2014, p. 24). The second national survey of school EAL/D educators has taken place in 2016 and the results when published would indicate if the overall effectiveness of EAL/D teaching and training has improved (Australian Council of TESOL Associations, 2014).

***Opportunities in Other Language Learning.*** Language learning has not been made a compulsory feature of the curriculum in secondary schools unlike for the primary sector

in this state. In South Australia, the decision about which language a school offered was made by the principal in consultation with the governing council. Schools are expected to teach one of the South Australian endorsed languages within the Australian Curriculum: Aboriginal languages, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Modern Greek, Spanish and Vietnamese (Department for Education and Child Development, 2016b). A policy to support Australian Curriculum implementation was released by DECD (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development). It made explicit the requirement that languages in South Australia be taught from reception to the end of year 8 and languages were optional from Year 9 onwards (Department for Education and Child Development, 2013a).

### **Arrival of Southern Sudanese Refugee Secondary Students**

*Statistics on Sudanese Students in South Australian Schools.* Both ESL/EAL/D and language subject offerings are now accepted as essential and legitimate components of the Australian curriculum. In South Australia, the government, Roman Catholic and independent sectors were committed to these subject area ("Association of Independent Schools of SA Inc, (AISSA)," 2014; Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2016; Catholic Education, 2014) Whilst ESL has been widely available as a subject area in Years 11 and 12, it frequently was offered as ESL support rather than as a stand-alone subject in the junior levels. Generally, the teaching of Year 11 and 12 ESL and ESL Studies operated within the one class as a career path for tertiary studies that refugees such as the South Sudanese students could undertake.

From an examination of DECD 2015 confidential data on Family Languages of the Sudanese secondary students from 2005-2014 (Marriner, 2015), it appeared that the students were multilingual (mainly in Dinka, Arabic, Swahili and English, in some cases) but with little or no literacy in any of these languages. However, there had been a difficulty in classifying the linguistic situation of new arrivals from Sudan as Dinka was only included in the statistical classifications from 2006 onwards, even though many such students had already arrived in this state.

In South Australia the schools' distribution of the Sudanese secondary students (ages 12 to 19 years) in 2011 was close to even, with the government schools' enrolments of 84 and 89 in Catholic schools but only 17 in the Independent school sector (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). However, these numbers might have been somewhat

misleading due to the generally reported ‘younger ages’ (from my personal classroom experience and observation) of the students as reported during the secondary school enrolment and class process. Furthermore, the figures sourced from the 2011 Census for the secondary school data included those born in both the northern and southern parts of what was then southern Sudan (Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne), 2012, p. 1).

Whilst the young South Sudanese refugees had received some form of primary education before their arrival, it had frequently been interrupted and was of poor quality. Similarly, previous secondary schooling had been reported as ‘rare’ and the level of English proficiency, the sole language of instruction for mainstream Australian schooling, described as ‘low’ for the students let alone for their mothers and fathers (Foundation House, 2005; Sudanese Online Research Association, 2011).

***Initial Concerns about Southern Sudanese Refugee Students.*** Government sources and various studies documented the distressed psychological and medical state of the southern Sudanese refugee immigrants upon their arrival in Australia and South Australia (Henley & Robinson, 2011). What had been called ‘acculturative stress’ (Joyce, Earnest, De Mori, & Silvagni, 2010) operated across all areas of their daily lives. Psychological distress from memories of the past war-torn years, together with an almost constant experience of life on the run and later the violent life of the refugee camps, was very real especially among the adolescents. Many children had seen violent atrocities and had family members killed or missing forever (Mickan, K, & Davies, 2007). The resulting behavioural problems were often long-lasting and manifested as disturbing and traumatic flashbacks or as stress and anxiety (Joyce et al., 2010). Apart from the physical scars, Deng Adut, now a ‘respected lawyer and refugee advocate’ in Sydney, experienced the psychological terror of constant flashbacks of his involvement as a child conscript soldier in the SPLA in Sudan (Lehmann, 2016, pp. 15-16).

The authentic story of Kudamba Abas, ‘Missing my father’, remembering his first arrival in Australia, clearly revealed the overwhelming fears of one South Sudanese student:

*I felt very scared. I did not want to leave the place I loved, the place where I was born. I felt so sad and so scared. I did not know how to speak English or how to write or how to spell ...I decided I did not want to leave Africa and I ran away from my mother... I felt so sick that I vomited... When the plane landed in Melbourne, my mum said, 'Ah, we*



*are in Australia now!' I just wanted to cry. I want to go back. I want to see my dad. I don't know my dad* (Sandy, 2013, p. 40).

Moreover, many experienced feelings of discomfort, disturbance and alienation once they reached the new country. Cocker (2004) highlighted the metaphors of physical pain and bodily illness that the refugees used to discuss their social and cultural losses. Such words provided the refugees with a way to talk about and understand the pain of their refugee experience. They also experienced a loss of identity and felt the social and cultural losses. These problems of key social losses of family kin, tribal affiliations, stable eldership and leadership have been documented (Westoby, 2008, p. 490). They would always be identified by others as being African.

The challenges in Australia were many and ranged from low literacy or illiteracy in English; disrupted 'everyday life skills' from living in refugee camps or 'life on the run'; unemployment; clash of cultures and religious customs. The 'greater sense of freedom in Australia' was seen as likely to cause 'inter-generational or gender conflicts within families and communities' together with different Western-style living in modern urban housing, different foods, accessing utilities and public services (Community Relations Section of DIAC, 2012, p. 12). Furthermore, reports prepared by the Departments of Education in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia explained the difficulties of South Sudanese refugee students with different styles of learning, and communication, let alone school expectations of adherence to punctuality, timetables and uniform rules. They also mentioned the fragmented families, with single mothers without the traditional South Sudanese extended family structure. Grandparents and, very frequently, fathers, were absent.

From my own personal encounter with South Sudanese secondary students and their families both in the classroom and from occasional visits to their homes, I saw first-hand the difficulties they faced. There were the daily living adjustments connected with: encountering racism; finding housing; unfamiliar neighbours; locating doctors; dentists; employment; schools; managing the shopping; trying different foods; taking different forms of public transport; buying cars and applying for driving licences and car registration; as well as finding out about immigration requirements for family members and welfare entitlements. As Deng Adut remarked, 'everything is confusing' (Lehmann, 2016, p. 18).

***Intensive English Classes.*** Since all instruction in Australian schools was in English, young people with little or no English needed to some degree master English before joining mainstream secondary classes. As mentioned previously, newly arrived South Sudanese refugee (or other immigrants) secondary students, aged between 13 and 18 years, with minimal English language could receive Intensive English support from language specialist teachers for up to one year before being assessed as eligible for entry to mainstream classes. These were known as NAP (New Arrival Program) Centres in South Australia (Department for Education and Child Development, 2015b).

The Adelaide Secondary School of English (Department for Education and Child Development, 2015a) was the only government school which offered:

*intensive English lessons across the curriculum; placement in a range of classes according to English language ability, age and educational background; opportunities to learn about the local community and global citizenship; an introduction to the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) through the Personal Learning Plan in year 10; support to move to a mainstream government, independent or Catholic high school and information and access to training or courses and a wide range of support services through the various student wellbeing programs* (Department for Education and Child Development, 2015a).

As part of their NAP program, students were introduced to the range of teaching and learning resources which were taken for granted in Australia but were unknown to students in South Sudan. Plentiful supplies of written textbooks, general and specialised books, media resources were available for long-term loans to the new South Sudanese secondary students in the School of English, as in all other secondary schools. Most schools who took in the refugee students had a special budget, authorised by the principal or deputy principal, for resources to assist the students in their new regulated and formal learning. There was access to the internet and ICT in computer rooms; libraries as well as in ‘break-out spaces’ especially designed for student use and peer group sharing of resources and learning. Some schools provided iPads or laptops for students to use in the classroom.

Once the NAP students (South Sudanese refugee secondary students in this case) were assessed as ready for mainstream schooling classes, the refugee parents, together with the Adelaide Secondary School of English school placement staff, decided on a suitable school for entry. School choice could depend on the location of where the family was housed and also on whether the parents preferred a religious school option (Wood, 2013).

For instance, one South Sudanese refugee mother chose the Roman Catholic school system for her large family, in line with her deep religious convictions, as expressed in this study.

*School Year Level Placement Issues.* Once the students moved into a mainstream school situation, the decision concerning which year level class each one was placed in became an important issue for the students and their families. In relation to school decisions on year level placement a study of African refugees resettling in Queensland suggested that there should be increased teacher awareness of students' prior learning in their home country and training to provide the gaps in subject literacy vocabulary.

There had been some discussion on the differing expectations and experiences of refugee students from Sudan, where school placement was based on ability. Students in Sudan could be teenagers and remain in the reception class, if their knowledge had not reached the required standard needed to move up to the next class level. Dooley (2009) reported that isolated withdrawal from mainstream classes and age-related class placements were not always favoured by parents or students in the US, UK and Australia.

For example, African women, including many South Sudanese, in Wood's study spoke of their difficulty in understanding school class placements according to age and the almost automatic student promotion to the next year level: 'In Australia it is all about your age, they are just pushing and pushing until then you can't do the exam...In our culture they can't go to another class, here it is all about age' (Wood, 2013, p. 208). A bilingual aide who worked in an intensive language school in South Sudan explained how the taken-for-granted age-based placement system in Australian schools was 'a shock to many of them (the students) because in Africa it is not a problem...you might be 15 and you may be in Year 6. No problem. And there still you can, you're considered, you're a child. But here it is different. So that is the big challenge' (Dooley, 2009, p. 11).

Dooley (2009) has suggested that secondary students such as the South Sudanese refugees ('challenged' in mainstream classes) could be placed in school classes according to ability (as in southern Sudan) rather than age. This could theoretically be possible within the current experiment at Fremont-Elizabeth High School (T. Williams, 2015) of scrapping school levels. In my judgement, however, this form of placement could well serve to further highlight their sense of 'difference' and further ostracise the students

from their highly valued social interactions with their peers. However, as an ESL teacher of such secondary refugee students, I have found that, with support, these students can catch up and age placements are important for peer group socialisation.

Overall the entry of the South Sudanese refugee secondary students into the Adelaide society and secondary schools presented many challenges. Adelaide itself had had an unstable learning environment for the funding and teaching of English as a Second Language and for the recognition and inclusion of community languages into formal schooling. The national report for the State of EAL/D 2014 highlighted the teacher concerns of racial and cultural awareness as well as funding and the negative impacts of decentralised school autonomy (Australian Council of TESOL Associations, 2014). Whilst the Australian Curriculum included 11 languages, the future place of and formal study for refugees' mother tongue languages were uncertain nationally and also in Adelaide, South Australia. The particular cultural cohort of students in this study had come from an unstable environment of war, disrupted learning and family life. The subsequent resultant effects on their learning impressions and experiences deserved to be investigated in depth as well as these students' perspectives.

## **Issues in Teaching Refugee Students**

Over the last decade teachers in secondary schools in Adelaide attended by South Sudanese students have gradually gained experience in understanding which teaching approaches have proved most effective with the students. The following sections discuss the most important of these.

### **Understanding Students' Cultural and Linguistic Differences**

Teachers who have some understanding of the cultural and linguistic differences between the Australian school and the families of the students in Australian classrooms can make the learning of the refugee students more meaningful and effective. They take the trouble to learn about their students' cultural backgrounds as part of their professional development and extend this by being willing to talk to the students themselves (Treehouse Theatre, 2015). In contrast, many teachers' expectations of refugee students are based on uninformed views concerning the low linguistic ability of the students and their lack of understanding of their particular cultural and linguistic needs. Furthermore,

most schools are under-resourced in terms of having staff who know how to teach English language skills well to raise the low literacy levels of many refugee students.

The importance of teachers' understanding of cultural differences to be found among students is well illustrated in the comments by Mr Peter Flowers, Principal of Blacktown Girls High School in Sydney's west, as reported by Ferrari (2014). The principal noted that refugee students whose first language was not English had had 'patchy schooling and, despite teachers' best efforts, literacy had not been improving' (Ferrari, 2014, p. 1). Upon further investigation, the principal came to realise that 'it's more difficult to get kids to understand content if they can't understand writing' (Ferrari, 2014, p. 1). He also recognised that teachers 'weren't confident in knowing how to deliver these skills' (Ferrari, 2014, p. 8). The cultural origins of this sort of student difficulty and the inability of anyone in the school to recognise the fundamental difference of literacy across languages is a telling commentary on the failure of teachers to understand the learning needs of refugee students. According to Dr Peter Knapp, an education consultant, 'the problem is many teachers came through schools in the 1970s and don't have the necessary knowledge of grammar and language themselves to teach it' ((Ferrari, 2014, p. 8).

### **Explicit and Personalised Teaching of Literacy**

Knapp championed what has been called the 'genre approach' to the teaching of writing, through modelling the way that text types, such as narratives, expositions, reports, descriptions and accounts of events are structured. 'Such an approach highlights different writing styles and techniques associated with different purposes', providing a balance between 'how to create a piece of writing and the technical knowledge required' to achieve this associated with different purposes' (Ferrari, 2014, p. 8). Other explicit and systematic approaches which have been used with some success include deconstructing written texts and scaffolding written exercises (Dooley, 2009), using cues from texts (Freeman & Freeman, 2003) and specifically teaching skills (Warriner, 2007) such as note-taking (J. Brown, Miller, & Mitchell, 2006).

A personalised approach to teaching has also been advocated as effective in the teaching of refugee students. Personalised reading and teacher-led class discussions have been reported as benefiting their language development (Dooley, 2009; Zufferey & Wache, 2012). Use of the RSD (Research Skills Development) framework could assist teachers to develop a systematic and personal approach to support learner autonomy (Willison,

2006). Allied to this is the concern that there should be sufficient time available in the ESL classroom for such personalised teacher intervention to be occurring frequently (Miller, Keary, & Windle, 2012; Windle, 2015). My own observations and experiences as an ESL and English teacher in Adelaide point to the need for more personalised teacher attention for refugee students. Finding sufficient time and funding for effective ESL support are regularly reported as pressing issues of concern in many schools.

One recent development which has been trying to deal with this need is the RAS (Refugee Action Support) program introduced as a component in one pre-service qualification for secondary school teachers. The third-year Professional Experience practicum required for the Masters of Education at UWS (University of West Sydney) for example, involves pre-service teachers acting as tutors for refugee students in after-school centres. This move has a two-fold benefit: firstly, the refugee students gain one-on-one personal tuition; and secondly, pre-service teachers come face-to-face with the actual learning problems of refugee students in Sydney schools (Ferfolja, Vickers, McCarthy, Naidoo, & Brace, 2011, pp. 80-81).

### **Use of Refugee Students' Prior Knowledge**

Recognising the prior knowledge of students and linking it directly to new learning being introduced is one mark of effective teaching. However, this approach has particular meaning and importance in the case of indigenous and refugee students who have had limited exposure to schooling and learnt little if any literacy skills (Dunn, 2001, p. 686; Hammond & Miller, 2015, pp. 83-84). In their case, the research studies discussed below have found that it is very important for teachers to recognise that the traditional and indigenous knowledge students learned through home and community is authentic and relevant to their formal classroom learning (Maher & Bellen, 2015, p. 16; Windle & Miller, 2012, p. 320).

Studies on Australian Aboriginal learners, for example, have shown the importance of the oral tradition of storytelling and dance in their daily life (Ross, 1986). This mode of passing on stories which relate closely to various key animals and the meaning of the Dreamtime is regarded as an integral feature of Aboriginal culture. In fact, Hare (2011, p. 17) explains that 'oral tradition is the primary means by which indigenous knowledge is stored and transmitted'. Utilising this source of knowledge among Australian Aboriginal students by discussing the meaning of stories with families in sharing circles,

and subsequently incorporating it into classroom learning, proved an effective strategy in Hare's study. He argued that 'knowledge must be respected and honoured if children and families, particularly those from diverse cultural and linguistic communities, are to bridge the gap between the literacy of the home and community and school' (Hare 2011, p. 20). These findings would seem to have relevance for South Sudanese refugee students and have been followed for adults as digital story-telling (Lo Bianco et al., 2009; 2008). The effectiveness of working with families and communities to bring oral traditions in the form of their stories, myths and legends into the classroom to assist overall literacy learning and motivation has been taken up and developed.

Another example of the constructive use of students' prior knowledge can be seen in the way Freire (1972) approached the teaching of literacy in Portuguese to adults who had never attended school because of their families' extreme poverty. Yet they spoke Portuguese as the everyday means of communication in their cultural community. He started with the word sounds that were familiar to his adult students as part of their oral speech traditions, related to the concrete everyday realities of their lives, to move their spoken language toward reading and writing its written forms. Gaining literacy for these people was an empowering experience since it meant the opportunity for more effective participation in community affairs and more control of their personal lives (Freire, 1972). Such an approach would seem relevant to refugee students like the South Sudanese who arrive in Australia with little or no literacy skills.

At the school level, a particularly effective example of using the prior knowledge of a Sudanese refugee girl, Atong, was reported by Liu (2010). In a culturally diverse primary school where nine per cent of the student population were South Sudanese refugees, Liu encouraged several students from different linguistic backgrounds to tell a story to the class in their home language, as the basis for subsequent English language activities. A working together session followed, in which the other children helped to paraphrase and re-tell the story in English. The development of the story-setting, characters (animals in this case), events, complication and resolution followed the shape of narrative genre, commonly used in primary and secondary teaching in South Australia (Government of South Australia, 2016b; Literacy Secretariat, 2013) as well as other states. In educational terms, the girl's knowledge of a story from her own cultural tradition, told in her home language during a class story-telling occasion, provided a bridge from her primary oral

competence in Dinka to learning literacy skills in her new language, English. Other important consequences of this use of prior knowledge in the form of home language were evident. Liu (2010) noted that the young girl's confidence and sense of identity grew as she felt empowered by the experience and follow-up activities in English. Her mother explained that such telling of stories was an essential part of Sudanese culture which relied more on the oral transmission of traditions rather than written forms. This pattern of Sudanese community life had been noted by Mrs Trudinger ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 21) many decades earlier. Here in Australia, a teacher who understood the value of cultures interacting in the classroom, had incorporated a Sudanese oral tradition (Dinka) into a primary classroom and used it for creating meaningful activities in written English.

Other researchers have commented on the value of using the prior knowledge of refugees through tapping into the rich resources of their oral traditions including folktales (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009). (Burgoyne & Hull, 2007) discussed several studies where employing a wide range of familiar cultural materials and modes in the classroom achieved positive results. Windle and Miller (2012) reported specifically on the use of authentic Dinka stories and themes, as well as music and film. Teachers in Queensland reported that class discussions on oral texts, such as rap, traditional poetry and folktales, helped African refugee students with low literacy (Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011). According to Dooley (2009, p. 15), drawing on students' social experiences and knowledge of popular culture, regardless of origin, has proved 'a base for conceptually deep and critical work'. Teachers using oral texts such as rap, traditional poetry and folktales, have reported that these greatly assisted African refugee students with low literacy in Queensland (Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011). Based on her experience in teaching southern Sudanese students, concluded that the rich resources which the refugee student can bring into the classrooms benefits not only their own integration, but the mainstream students and teachers' wider knowledge of the South Sudanese culture (2007a).

Others have reported success with incorporating traditional southern Sudanese dances or studying films of the war experience in Sudan, such as *Lost Boys*, based on the stories of young boys fleeing the war, and the subsequent *Lost Girls*, on the comparable war experiences of girls (A. Harris, 2011a; McMahon, 2005). Dance movement therapy was



also used as treatment for traumatised southern Sudanese refugee youths who had resettled in the US. The therapy tackled the memory of past stressors and events, together with using role play to empower and achieve some form of healing as a result (D. Harris, 2007). In all these ways, teachers have tried to create a bridge between the students' cultural learning in Australia, as a means of enhancing their learning in the new society.

Music is another area of prior knowledge that has been successfully used to improve literacy learning in indigenous languages. Research on a program called *The Song Room*, designed 'as a way to close the Gap' between the achievement of mainstream and Aboriginal children, showed an improvement in literacy, attention, motivation and engagement among Aboriginal students in areas like Alice Springs and the Kimberley region of Western Australia (Riddle, 2014). When *The Song Room* program was used in a study conducted in disadvantaged schools with numbers of refugee students in West Sydney, results showed that students overall had achieved a year's gain in literacy outcomes measured by the National Assessment Program of Literacy and Numeracy. Hip Hop artist Luka Lesson, an Australian slam poetry champion, featured in the video designed to bring the creative arts like music and art to these disadvantaged students with a view to improving their literacy (A. Taylor, 2013).

In another recent high school initiative called *Treehouse Theatre*, a refugee class in Western Sydney produced a short film entitled *Cast from the Storm*, in which teenage asylum seekers from the Middle East portrayed their coming to Australia by boat. The student actors, director and class psychologist spoke of the process of producing the film together. One of the outcomes discussed was the sense of relief and transformation from past traumas (Treehouse Theatre, 2015). Such successful ventures are valuable pointers to ways of particularising the curriculum to suit the learning needs and strengthen the sense of cultural identity of refugee students in the Australian school context.

### **Teacher Relations with Refugee Students**

Two-way and equal relationships between teachers and diverse cultural learners are emphasised in several studies. Freire described learners such as the poor illiterate adults he worked with in Brazil in the 1970s as 'oppressed' (Freire, 2009, p. 165) outsiders who must not be simply 'integrated' but 'liberated' to have their own critical voice and become 'co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher' (Freire, 2009, p. 172). His literacy-based learning activities then become a model for adult students' active participation in the

social and political life of their communities. Freire's work has also been cited by the American scholar hooks who claimed that 'authentic help means that all who are involved help each other mutually, growing together in the common effort to understand the reality which they seek to transform' (hooks, 1994, p. 54). An example was the *Sudanese-Australian Young Women Talk Education* video-based research of sixteen young women's (aged 18-25) thoughts (A. Harris, 2011a, p. 751). The researcher drew out from their experiences that these students require 'mutuality from the teachers' (A. Harris, 2011a, p. 751).

According to hooks, such interaction should be approached not as a potentially destructive context, like entering 'a danger zone', but should be thought of as a space for fruitful encounter, which holds promise 'through ideas,[to] reinvent myself' (hooks, 1994, p. 3). A revealing example came from a South Sudanese adult, Rebecca Akuch Derwei who expressed her horror with the way English language teachers go in and 'throw the papers on the table. That is the way of teaching here. It doesn't actually allow us to learn anything' (Malual, 2015, p. 35). She contrasts this with the African learning style of constant oral repetition and practice. In her view 'the teachers need to put themselves in the person's position and understand they [refugee students] don't know anything' (Malual, 2015, p. 35).

One study of refugee students in an Adelaide school included many southern Sudanese secondary age students focussed on the 'contestation' and socialisation of the students in a NAP class (Mickan et al., 2007). Transcripts of the student-teacher dialogue showed 'confrontation and resistance' as the students learned to negotiate the discourses and behaviours regarded as appropriate in the new schooling setting (Mickan et al., 2007, p. 20). As an ESL teacher of South Sudanese students, I recognised these behaviours as 'testing the waters' to discover what was acceptable. Actual student opinions of the class procedures were missing. However, one recent study involving six young people from Sudanese refugee backgrounds in Australia has stressed the 'strong relationships [with their teachers] built in smaller classes, particularly in NAP schools' were described as positive new experiences compared with the prior negative experiences based on fear of corporal punishment and teachers dealing with large classes in Africa. This study also emphasised the importance of teachers in Australia being prepared to 'commit to learning

about and understanding the prior experiences of their refugee background students, particularly in schools' (Baak, 2016, pp. 145,158).

### **Curriculum Issues**

Once they had completed the NAP program, refugee secondary students such as the South Sudanese, were placed in a year level class in a mainstream school and expected to study the subjects offered in the curriculum at that level. As discussed earlier, placement into a class in Australian schools based on their age level has been reported as a disturbing experience for South Sudanese students who were accustomed to being placed in a class based on their level of knowledge. It was particularly challenging in subject areas where their schooling had been intermittent and fragmented and their understanding of English vocabulary was still at the elementary stage. In the subject areas like music, drama and dance where they had a rich informal learning experience in their home communities and school activities depended less on English language skills, their obvious enjoyment in being involved in the class activities has been noted (Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011; Treehouse Theatre, 2015).

One area that took more direct account of the South Sudanese students' learning circumstances and level of competence in English was ESL, as it was then known. The support offered in the NAP program from the time of their arrival was continued as a mainstream school subject with a career path to year 12 SACE. Furthermore, ESL was accepted as a subject that counted for entry into tertiary studies and even attracted bonus points toward university entrance. The *ESL Standards Elaboration* had been written and updated by ESL teachers nation-wide (ACTA: Australian Council of TESOL Organisations). They collaborated on the document to better support and cater for students from diverse backgrounds, with one or more languages apart from English (Australian Council of TESOL Associations, 2015). Therefore, ESL teachers nationally have been made aware of the needs of this large and growing cohort of students nationally.

The program involved 'not just the teaching' of English (Warriner, 2007, p. 47) but learning the skills required for academic success at school. Skills such as reading for information and understanding and note-taking were very challenging for students who still had difficulties in understanding English (J. Brown et al., 2006, p. 158). They also needed guidelines to help with the writing of essays, reports and assignments in English.

In this way, ESL contributed directly to the students' success in other subjects. ESL or ESL support was commonly available to refugee students in the government and Catholic sectors, depending on funding.

The other subject which was specifically designed for the South Sudanese refugees was Dinka, which was the home language of many. However, since the numbers in any one school were small, Dinka was taught after normal school hours, at Community Ethnic schools up to Year 10, and at the School of Languages (Department for Education and Child Development, 2013c) for Years 11 and 12. Students from both government and Catholic schools were able to attend these classes in the School of Languages offers a SACE subject called *Language and Culture* (South Australian Certificate of Education, 2013) which allows students of Aboriginal and other immigrant languages based on oral traditions, to study their home language and its associated cultural patterns. At the Year 12 or Stage 2 level, it is a full year subject worth 20 points towards SACE. The subject outline is given below:

*This subject enables students to undertake the study of a target language that is not currently available through the Collaborative Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Languages (CCAFL) suite of languages.*

*Students should have some background and prior knowledge of the target language, and will have studied the target language for 400-500 hours by the time they have completed Stage 2, or have the equivalent level of knowledge.*

*They develop and apply linguistic and intercultural knowledge, understanding, and skills to interact and communicate appropriately and effectively in the language of study in a variety of contexts for a range of purposes and audiences.*

*Students develop and extend their ability to communicate across cultural boundaries (South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC), 2014).*

Studying Dinka within the framework of this subject contributed to the students' university entrance score (ATAR). Enrolments overall in *Language and Culture* have steadily increased from eight students when it was first introduced in 2010 to 42 in 2015 according to Lynette Bellwood, SACE Officer Curriculum, September 21 2015. The numbers of students studying Dinka within this subject increased from two in 2011 to 23 in 2015 from Thorl Chea, Student Services Officer, September 21, 2015. Despite the increased enrolment at the School of Languages and Dinka being showcased at an inaugural two-day Adelaide Language Festival run by the Department of Linguistics,

University of Adelaide (University of Adelaide, 2014), it has not been made available as a language subject to be studied in itself. Neither is it a potential teaching area for possible trainee primary or secondary teachers in South Australia.

The literature on the South Sudanese students' views and preferences for their school subjects is virtually non-existent in South Australia if not for the nation as a whole. The views of the students are crucial in ascertaining the effectiveness of their learning experiences in this country. However, one study of Sudanese secondary refugees in Victoria discovered that the subjects involving technical language like science, biology and SOSE (Studies of Society & Environment) including history, geography and economics topics proved to be too challenging and almost impossible for the students to pass (J. Brown et al., 2006, p. 157). Dooley's Queensland study of African refugee students pointed to 'gaps in content area knowledge' (Dooley, 2009, p. 7) as well as a lack of skills in the new language, particularly in relation to vocabulary. Windle (2015, p. 214) also explained that refugee students arrived with little background in subjects such as mathematics, science, geography and history, and their mainstream teachers had 'little training in language and literacy teaching' to help them bridge the gap of content and language which was missing in their earlier learning experiences. Consequently, most never succeeded in these subjects in Australian schools.

Subjects in the arts area of the curriculum based more on performance and active participation, with less dependence on language, were reported as evoking a much more positive response from South Sudanese students. As the earlier discussion of recognising prior knowledge makes clear, students had very positive experiences in music, art, drama in the informal learning situations of their home communities. Thus, they were more eager to embrace the opportunities to develop and extend their learning in these areas in the Australian schooling context. I remember noticing that my ESL students were more relaxed and less constrained when they were going off to such classes, as compared to their reluctance and concern when they went off to maths or science lessons.

The challenges faced by South Sudanese refugee students in adjusting to the curriculum demands of Australian schools have led Windle (2015, p. 224) to point to a more radical model of schooling for students who arrive in Australia with little or no English. He compared what was available in state school programs for refugees with the model that had been developed in some Australian cities to cater for the needs of fee paying

international students, aiming for places in Australian universities. These schools involved highly trained and specialised staff who not only were experts in their subject areas, but also able to support language and literacy development in that subject. ESL classes were available in small groups geared to the students' level of English language skills. In these circumstances, schools had greater freedom to adapt the curriculum to suit students' language needs and learning interests. Such resource-rich programs were possible, however, only when large sums of money were readily available to support them.

### **Fellow Students and Peer Group**

There appears to be little research on the effect of refugees in peer groups in schooling in their new country. A study of Hmong American students highlighted both positive and negative impacts of 'the neighbourhoods and peers at school' on academic achievement and success (Rezaei, Khatib, & Baleghizadeh, 2014, p. 9). The presence of similar peer groups was found to be supportive since without such common groups:

*the negative impact on academic achievement is substantially evident...their educational experiences are not only based on their families' immigration history and back ground, but are influenced by the circumstances of their environment eg. neighbourhoods, and peers as well* (Rezaei et al., 2014, p. 9).

Among Vietnamese refugee students in South Australia, Tran Thi Nien found that their restricted knowledge of and ability to speak the English language tended to isolate Vietnamese students from their peers in the mainstream schools (1993). Loneliness, fear, anxiety, feeling 'different', frustration and anger could sometimes lead 'to violent reactions and racism among students in the school' (Tran Thi Nien, 1993, p. 47). Friendships with their Vietnamese friends together with the subsequent regular use of the Vietnamese language helped preserve their sense of cultural identity and language maintenance (Tran Thi Nien, 1993).

In terms of friendships and peer group interactions, there appears to be very little research which covers friendships between refugees and those from other cultures in secondary schools either in South Australia or elsewhere. Given the collective culture of the South Sudanese, this failure to examine the nature and importance of the friendships, whether South Sudanese or South Australian, represents a gap in existing knowledge and understanding. In general terms, group membership, having friends and learning to use

English in social ‘out of school’ opportunities were all found to be instrumental in creating a real voice and sense of identity for students who were newcomers (Miller, 1999). In South Australia, Tran concluded that the Vietnamese students in mainstream schools and universities, once their English mastery had progressed, found it easier to develop friendships with peers in their various learning environments. However, Brown, Miller and Mitchell did discuss the importance of friends and sport in their study of South Sudanese refugees in Victorian secondary schools. They also stressed the ‘importance of perspectives of the students themselves and the taking of these views as a starting point’ (J. Brown et al., 2006, p. 160). Lejukole highlighted the importance of friends to the adult South Sudanese refugees settling into Australian society but said little about school friends (2008).

Another study advocated shared opportunities for NAP students and non-NAP (mainstream) students in art lessons although this study related to primary school students in South Australia (Due & Riggs, 2009). The researchers suggested that such coupling and intermingling of the two groups would enhance the refugee students’ sense of self-worth and identity. In a later study they also found that if the primary school NAP students could all play at the same time and in the same playground with the non-NAP students, there was a greater sense of harmony and new friendships forged (Due & Riggs 2010). The researchers indicated that learning English was not the only requirement to achieve the essential ‘fitting in’ for Refugee and Migrant Education in South Australia (Due & Riggs, 2009, p. 58).

From my personal experience in the secondary school, I did notice that the South Sudanese students enjoyed art, dance and drama classes. Such a mix was a given once the students were in mainstream schools, where ESL was the only subject where they could be separated from their mainstream peers. Nevertheless, I observed that the South Sudanese males and females of all ages in the secondary school gravitated towards making peer group friendships in school and cultivating early romantic liaisons. The annual secondary school formal was one such important social opportunity and occasion for which my South Sudanese female secondary students, like their mainstream counterparts, pre-planned their colourful and striking dresses and hairstyles endlessly, in and out of school. Their male partners were similarly attired in South Sudanese decorative fashion but without the traditional adornment of ‘ostentatious displays of colourful

beading translating this peacock aesthetic to their West [making] for flamboyant fashion' in Australia (Lehmann, 2016, p. 16).

### **Extent of Parental Involvement**

Parental engagement has been described as 'one of the most crucial factors in a child's education' according to Alison Standen, the Tasmanian head of the children's education charity, The Smith Family (2014, p. 14). Whilst this newspaper article was referring to all children and all parents, The Smith's Family's work is focussed chiefly on socio-economic disadvantage. The South Sudanese parents in Adelaide faced the additional dilemma of dealing with an unfamiliar schooling system in what was to them a foreign country. In practice, there seemed to have been very few systematic studies of refugee parent involvement in their children's Australian schooling.

However, the situation at home was vividly portrayed from the 'inside' in the words of South Sudanese refugee secondary student, Chol Pager, in his Year 12 Research Project. He documented the lack of family resources, 'particularly as students frequently do not possess the required computer at home'. In addition, then

*the potential support from family is further dissipated by the break-up of the nuclear and most commonly supported extended family in South Sudan. Students are 'robbed' of their role models and family stability. Some students live alone or what family members are available are frequently themselves suffering the trauma and loneliness of displacement. These parents are generally uneducated and are unable to assist the students with English and their school homework (Pager, 2012, p. 2).*

Stanton provided suggestions such as: enrolling the parents in 'early literacy' programs; providing computer courses; and engaging community organisations to coordinate 'and build bridges between schools and families' to better assist their children at home. The setting up of trust via careful dialogue with the South Sudanese elders and Australian community leaders and workers was suggested by Westoby (2008). Pager, the South Sudanese refugee secondary student, also advocated greater parental involvement and parent education programs to foster language skills. Increased use of the local community and its services such as library tutoring should in his view be encouraged (Pager, 2012, p. 8).

Whilst the South Sudanese valued education, it was not known how they felt about schools and learning in Adelaide. However, one recent study of Sudanese families in



Adelaide has provided information on the parents' level of literacy and previously disadvantaged 'schooling' in Sudan. The common difficulty for the adults was the lack of literacy in their first language, Dinka, combined with few oral skills in English (Wood, 2013, p. 210), hence the difficulty of developing functional literacy in English (Lo Bianco et al., 2009, p. 27). Such findings<sup>8</sup> are consistent with my observations when attending a South Sudanese mothers' voluntary English class held at the Community Centre, at Andrews Farm. Many of the mothers present revealed that they lacked written literacy in Dinka and that they were not confident to speak, let alone write in English. They indicated that they had been too busy bringing up their children after arrival in Adelaide. They also found that the style of teacher-student interaction was very different from the one-way instruction style of the little 'schooling' they had known in the Sudan. Such difficulties in speaking and understanding English made it evident that parents were reluctant to approach schools without some interpreter support being made available.

The entire structure, workings and expectations of education in secondary schools in Adelaide appeared in sharp contrast to the generally informal makeshift schooling the refugees knew in southern Sudan, made up of one room or roughly constituted buildings scattered through small settlements in the bush; with untrained teachers and few resources and/or curriculum guidelines. There have been many studies suggesting various alternatives and theories to assist learners from diverse cultures such as the South Sudanese. However, to date no research studies have been conducted in Adelaide in which the individual voices of the South Sudanese refugee secondary students have been 'heard'.

Whilst the language (including English as a Second Language) education climate has gained significant momentum in the Australian Curriculum, it has not served such newcomers as the Dinka-speaking South Sudanese refugee secondary students well in terms of widespread formal learning opportunities and career progression. Equally the Adelaide society and secondary schools possessed fixed learning structures, staff and learning expectations which were not sufficiently varied, equipped, and flexible to be accepting of these unknown refugee students' cultural differences, learning styles, severely and seriously disrupted life and learning backgrounds. The voice and views of

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<sup>8</sup> Similar literacy experiences with Dinka-speaking mothers in Melbourne were described in an interview, November 19, 2016, with Jenifer McKenzie OAM, Coordinator 'Dream Stitches' Migrant and Refugee Women's Sewing Program.

lone South Sudanese secondary refugee student in Adelaide, Chol Pager, was a sole voice 'in the wilderness'.

## **Adaptations to Life and Learning in the New Country**

### **Introduction**

What is meant by adaptation to life and learning? How can immigrant refugees, such as the South Sudanese secondary students adapt to Australia/South Australia, the new country's culture and way of life without significantly losing their own in the process? Professor Ananta Giri wrote of the need for a 'democratic' change or modification of both parties at group level whether at the formal governmental and social levels of mainstream society, not only the communities of newcomers, facing together new patterns for daily living and learning (Giri, 2012). In a personal interview, March 24, 2015, Giri, a visiting academic, discussed the newcomers or new arrivals and the challenges of learning in a new society. He stated that both parties needed to develop a discourse and find creative 'spaces' for such learning to take place. Language was also an essential co-realisation for both parties according to Giri, 24/3/2015. In the Australian context, this would involve learning to recognise those with bilingual and multi lingual skills who could use both English, as the common language of Australians from all backgrounds, and their own home language[s].

Adaptation of the South Sudanese young people to life in the United States was termed 'a good lie' in the film *The Good Lie* (Nagle, 2014). The main character, Mamere, refers to Huck Finn, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and how he told lies to save the life of his friend, Jim. Thus, it was acceptable to tell 'a good lie' to survive in a challenging new life context. The other characters in this film also revealed their painful struggles to conform to the new and foreign work values of Kansas City, Missouri. Whilst they described their adaptation as difficult, they also displayed a firm bonding and maintenance of their home family and cultural values in their daily lives as they adjusted to a different style of living and working.

In the Australian context, the Somalian Abdi Aden (Aden, 2015) who fled civil war in his country reached Europe and later arrived by plane in Melbourne, explained what it meant to be a refugee:

*I am sorry to say you learn to tell lies when it is unavoidable. Your pride can kill you. In your education as a refugee, telling the truth on every occasion is not only unwise, it is suicide. But I ask you to believe that lies do not make an untrustworthy person of me. The number one rule is this: Stay alive. Things might get better one day* (2015, pp. 27-28).

Despite Aden's struggles, and his eventual achievement of permanent residency in Australia his success as a community worker in Melbourne and his memories of the horror of the bloodshed and violence, he 'still love[s] Somalia all the same' (2015, p. 28).

The patterns of individual and group adaptation can give rise to observable cultural outcomes in the longer term. This form of adaptation was illustrated by Christopher Allen in his examining the evolving patterns of change over at least 150 years in Japanese art (2015). Allen described Japan's fundamental social changes twice in the past century or so, 'yet [the Japanese people] have retained such a strong sense of cultural tradition' (2015, p. 10). Assimilating, imitating, subtly transforming, were all part of the approach of Japanese artists, according to Allen, leading to a changed or altered end product but one which was still distinctively their own (2015, p. 11).

The following section discusses some key theories and previous studies on refugee and immigrant adaptation to the new country, including issues in gender and race. There is some description of the refugee community's interaction with mainstream Australian groups which seek to offer support for the new arrivals in their initial period of adaptation. Finally, evidence on the overall patterns of adaptation being adopted by the South Sudanese community in Adelaide and their contribution to their new society is considered.

### **Patterns of Individual Adaptation**

Based on his early studies of the adaptation of post-World War 2 immigrants, Smolicz (1979; 1999) proposed a four-fold typology of the ways individuals adapt to living in a culturally diverse society. Firstly, he found there were those new arrivals who wished to assimilate to mainstream Australian society and become recognised as ordinary Australians. Secondly, others, because of their lack of English and opportunities to interact with mainstream Australians, preferred to remain within the confines of their minority ethnic community, largely separate from the rest of society. Thirdly, a number who had the opportunity to work in mainstream Australian structures, or who had been educated solely in Australian schools, learned English and the cultural patterns of the

mainstream, while maintaining their home language and culture within the life of the family. As bilingual, multicultural individuals (at varying levels of competence), they could participate in the life of both groups. Lastly, in certain areas of cultural life, such as food or patterns of family living a hybrid mix of cultural patterns, taken from more than one ethnic group began to emerge as evidence of interaction between individuals of different cultures, most often among those who were bilingual and bicultural. These four types of personal adaptation in a culturally plural society are further explained in Chapter 3, where they are interpreted in terms of humanistic sociology.

These patterns of individual adaptation were evident in the University of Adelaide research studies across a range of different immigrant and refugee groups, such as Polish (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981), Vietnamese (Tran Thi Nien, 1993, 2016), Cambodian (Smolicz et al., 2003), Ethiopian (Debela 1995), Arabic (Maadad, 2009) and Filipino (Yu, 2014). Although there were examples of Polish participants who had assimilated to mainstream Anglo-Australian society and were activating few, if any, Polish cultural values (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981), this phenomenon was less frequently observed among the Vietnamese, Cambodian, Ethiopian and Arabic participants cited above. One important factor in this difference in adaptation related to the varying physiological features of individuals from the latter groups. It was the visibility factor which prevented them from 'passing', that is being accepted visually as members of the mainstream Anglo-Australian majority, defined by pale skin colour, type of hair and distinctive features which could prove relevant for the South Sudanese (Smolicz, 1994a, p. 21).

Given the lack of acceptance they often experienced from mainstream Anglo-Australians, many immigrants and refugees had little choice but to associate with members of their own minority ethnic group, where they would speak their own language and maintain many of their traditional cultural patterns in home and religious life. Under these circumstances, they did not activate mainstream culture to the exclusion of their home culture, although most recognised the importance of English and mainstream Anglo-Australian patterns of social behaviour in work situations and public life. In addition, the circumstances under which refugees departed from their homeland, often left them with a strong commitment to the culture and language of their group. The issue for them was more whether they preferred to remain separate within the confines of their own ethnic group, as those who knew little English and had no chance to work were forced to do.

Others sought to develop a bilingual, bicultural life incorporating both mainstream and home cultures into the pattern of their daily living. Often the younger generation which had been educated in Australia developed their own bilingual, bicultural friendship groups, which reinforced this dual system of adaptation.

There was strong evidence among the respondents in the Vietnamese, Cambodian, Ethiopian and Arabic studies that many were successful, through school and university studies, in achieving recognised professional occupations with status in mainstream Australian life, as well as in their own ethnic group (Maadad, 2009; Smolicz, 1979; Tran Thi Nien, 1993). Others became successful small businesspeople or market gardeners, often providing services that were not readily available in mainstream society generally.

According to Jupp, the Vietnamese refugees who settled in Australia had four goals: to survive in an alien land and then to prosper; to invest in their children's education; to help family and friends left behind in Vietnam; and to repay Australia and Australians for their kindness in accepting them (2001, p. 724). The central ingredient in activating these goals was the Vietnamese traditional regard for education (Jupp, 2001, p. 727). The high value and status of education seen in the traditional respect for the scholar, and including the role of parents in education, was 'valued positively' by both the parents and the students (Tran Thi Nien, 1993, pp. 39-40). It was this that enabled many to study Vietnamese as a school and even a university subject, alongside their pursuit of other professions, especially health, business and computer technology. At the same time, their on-going sense of pride in being Vietnamese strengthened their links with their homeland, through visits to family members still in Vietnam and the provision of support needed by them (Tran Thi Nien, 2016).

A 2013 ABC television program in the *Australian Story* series portrayed this sort of bilingual, bicultural adaptation in the case of Johnson Maker-Adeng, a South Sudanese refugee. The program portrayed key events in Johnson's life in Australia from his first day as a six foot five 21-year-old at school in Lismore through to his graduation in a double degree in Economics and Biomedicine seven years later. The transcript of the program ("Think Big," 2013) reveals the accompanying comments made by his family members, his school principal's admiration for Johnson's 'persistence' as an element of survival from the Sudan' ("Think Big," 2013, p. 6) and Lismore community leaders like the mayor and leader of the local refugee support organisation.

His mother and sister explained how Johnson took over the role of head of the family at six years of age, after the civil war came to their village and his father was killed. He ensured that the family kept on trekking together for the next three years until they reached Kakuma, the refugee camp in Kenya. After 12 years in the camp, Johnson was the one who made the decision to apply for refugee settlement in Australia and two years later he insisted that the family become Australian citizens. He quickly became the leader of the South Sudanese community that had been sponsored for settlement in Lismore. He continued to support his mother and sister, while he was studying. Following his graduation, he planned to return to South Sudan to meet the parents of the girl he was hoping to marry and make the necessary dowry arrangements to be paid in cows in the traditional South Sudanese way, which in Johnson's words were 'the price of love'. These actions represented his activation of traditional patterns of family life in South Sudanese communities, even though Johnson and his family were now living in Australia.

At the same time, he was studying diligently in the local high school to make up for the gaps in his education so that he could reach his goal of studying medicine. Gaining literacy in his fourth language, English, was a struggle, but he could go on to university studies in Economics and Biomedicine. He worked in the local grocery store to support himself at university. In all these areas of life he learned to master English, both spoken and written, as well as mainstream Anglo- Australian cultural patterns, particularly as they related to education and social relations. As his high school principal acknowledged, Johnson was successfully straddling both cultures ("Think Big," 2013).

As portrayed on the television program, Johnson's story was a remarkable example of the local mainstream Australian community reaching out to the newcomers and creating spaces for learning and interacting together. In the way suggested by Giri, 24/3/2015, Johnson and his family were among a group of South Sudanese refugees sponsored for SHP visas by the Sanctuary Refugee Organization, a community group in the Northern Rivers region of NSW. As its founder explained, 'from the outset there was an extraordinary level of welcome; an extraordinary enthusiasm from the community' ("Think Big," 2013).

A similar example can be found in a recent magazine article which featured an account of a successful farming enterprise by two South Sudanese families in the Latrobe Valley in Victoria. The families of the two fathers, referred to in the article's title as 'The Two

Abrahams', had their origins in traditional patterns of agriculture in the Bor region around the River Nile in South Sudan. On a visit to Latrobe Valley, they had been attracted to the open grasslands of the valley with the mountains beyond. They were reminded of the cattle grazing lands of their homeland and decided to make it their home and establish themselves as cattle farmers. Their adaptation of their homeland skills into the new context proved successful. At the same time, they pursued studies at Monash University, one in community welfare and counselling, the other in social and community welfare. He later obtained a Master's degree in International Relations and an Anglican minister. They and their families set out to overcome the initial reserve and concern felt by their neighbours at the presence of black families in their midst. Their openness and readiness to share their story helped them to gain recognition and acceptance in the surrounding rural community (Zable, 2015, pp. 16-17).

The research of Dobson represents a very different sort of study of the refugee experience of adaptation in Norway. His aim was to investigate the existentialist concerns and inner sense of "Being" (Dobson, 2004, p. 86) among refugees, as reflected in a group of refugees in one municipal area of a Norwegian city. The insights the data gave him enabled Dobson to consider the experience of exile which in his view, was the essence of "refugeeness" (Dobson, 2004, p. 13). His analysis was based on a set of ten "narratives of exile" (Dobson, 2004, p. 147) which he wrote based on his experiences of working with refugees in the Norwegian municipality concerned.

Dobson's findings pointed to an ongoing sense of loss and alienation among most of the refugees he worked with in Norway. Their sense of being a refugee was experienced as an ongoing state of being from which they could not escape. They had a sense of always being in exile, the sense of never feeling at home in Norwegian society. The cultural adaptation they were forced to make to survive in Norway (for example, in relation to the weather which was so different from their home countries), together with the difficulties of maintaining their home culture when cut off from their homeland, made their adaptations in Dobson's judgment no more than "cultures of exile". In his final paragraph, Dobson admitted to developing a theory of 'refugeeness' that seemed to be 'dominated

by experiences of separation, deprivation, melancholy, resignation and resentment<sup>9</sup> (Dobson, 2004, p. 335).

A very recent study related to the latest refugee issues caused by the war in Syria investigated the experiences of young Syrian and Syrian Palestinian refugee children being educated, sometimes in the context of refugee camps, sometimes in mainstream schools in Lebanese society. Maadad and Rodwell (2017) took into account multiple perspectives of the refugee children and their families, the Lebanese teachers and community leaders; and even politicians and bureaucrats and their views on provision for schooling and educational opportunities for refugee children. Maadad and Rodwell (2017) concluded that in the context of the immediate trauma and loss of becoming refugees, education and schooling was ‘vital to the liberation of the displaced, particularly the children, from the dehumanising compulsion to just survive’ (2017, p. 155). Their study addressed the ‘barriers to education and schooling of the refugee children’ so that they could ‘learn, imagine and build a better future for themselves’ (Maadad & Rodwell, 2017, pp. 155-156).

Trying to preserve an ethnic identity with a predominantly oral language tradition and little formal schooling was found to be the experiences of Hmong American refugees escaping death and ‘genocide’ in Laos and Vietnam (Chiang, Fisher, Collins, & Ting, 2015, p. 4). This study of secondary high school students highlighted similarities with the possible challenges facing the South Sudanese refugee secondary students resettling into South Australian mainstream schooling and society. The different cultural identity, illiteracy in their mother tongue and feeling ‘different’ in the secondary educational classroom all served as obstacles to the successful adaptation of the Hmong Americans. As with the South Sudanese students, the Hmong American high school students shared similar cultural values regarding the importance of the collective family and community network; and appreciation of the importance of education. The students experienced difficulties relating with teachers, who had low educational expectations of these refugee students. Overall they felt a lack of hope and trust with fellow students, teachers and school leadership (Chiang et al., 2015, p. 21). Such insights from the Hmong American students themselves revealed first-hand their concerns not only with their learning

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Ressentiment’ was used to describe Nietzsche’s ‘re-valuation of embodied experiences’ [such as frustration and violence]. These can become ‘creative and give birth to new values’ (Dobson, 2004, p. 98).



experiences but also with their perceived place in the new society. This study's focus on the South Sudanese secondary students' school learning and life experiences in South Australia may uncover similar feelings.

### **Dinka Literacy Learning in Australia**

The desire to maintain the Dinka language, as their mother language, has been a major concern and priority for the South Sudanese refugee immigrants in Australia according to Buckmaster, 2/7/2013 and other sources (Community Relations Section of DIAC, 2012; Guong & Lindemann, 2011; Hatoss & Sheely, 2009). The push for Dinka literacy among the refugee community in Australia is reflected in the production of written resources and publications in print and online, as well as the development of a Unicode keyboard specifically for Dinka.

*Australian Work in Developing Dinka literacy.* In 2000 the formation of DLIA (Dinka Language Institute of Australia) to promote Dinka literacy (Idris, 2004, p. 23) led to significant innovations and Dinka language development in both Victoria and South Australia, based on the original sources from the Catholic, CMS and SUM Christian missionary language work in Sudan (Table 2.1). It is interesting to note that the students were learning Dinka literacy in Adelaide, the city where Dr R Trudinger, one of the early missionary linguists, had grown up.

The State Library of Victoria commenced online web publishing to cater for the newly emerging multilingual communities including those from African countries (Vicnet State Library of Victoria, 2007). Cunningham, Research & Development Coordinator, Digital Content & Development, State Library, Victoria, had predicted the need for 'electronic multicultural library services' in the local CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) communities (2004, p. 16) [including] increasing numbers of immigrants from African countries' (2004, p. 2). Because of difficulties with Dinka orthography on conventional keyboards, Cunningham experimented and created a new Unicode keyboard layout enabling the Dinka language to be typed in its correct format (Lo Bianco et al., 2009, p. 29). Online resources for learning of Dinka have since been made available (Cummings, 2012).

A multilingual web service has also set up online storybooks in several of the newly emerging languages in Australia. The Wilbur series of storybooks also written in Dinka was funded by The Big Book Club Inc.:

*Wilbur introduces concepts about Australian culture and recreation in a fun and educational way. Suitable for children aged 0-5 years, it is the first multilingual children's picture book of its kind to be produced in Australia, with over 10,000 copies distributed free to new arrivals families since its release (Cummings, 2012).*

The recent Cyberspora ([www.cyberspora.com](http://www.cyberspora.com)) website provides online Dinka language learning classes. Sudanese community members are encouraged to submit picture stories ('identity texts') as well as songs, poems and Dinka Bible verses and hymns in Dinka and English (Hatoss, 2013, p. 225).

A number of books designed for children learning to read Dinka have also been developed. *The Picture Dictionary English-Dinka*, now available in Australia, provides some rare insights into the South Sudanese culture through the choice of images used (Turhan & Hagin, 2005). Many items such as the familiar animals: the zebra, giraffe, lion and tiger are reminiscent of life in South Sudan; with others related to what were required for daily living in Australia as toilet paper, towel; potty, key, stamp, light bulb, candle; scissors and pencil sharpener; ruler, glue stick and a soccer ball featured in the Sports & Games section (Turhan & Hagin, 2005). The fact that this practical dictionary is in English and Dinka recognises the importance of learning both languages, for the South Sudanese. Similarly, South Sudanese children's picture books based on Cows (mentioned earlier in the Family in southern Sudan section) have been published in both Dinka and English (Sudanese 'Early Learning is Fun' group at Sacred Heart Primary School, 2011). The memory of particular cows and their purposes in the culture was made clear in the children's writing in these books. Malual, mother and wife of one of the two Abraham refugee farmers, discussed later, has since written her own memories of southern Sudan and arrival in Australia to remind the children of their distinctive culture (2014, 2015).

The *Cooking Sudanese Food* publication written in English highlights the joy and communal participation in the recipes for a full meal and the practical information as to how to make play dough for the children (Anglicare Victoria Parentzone Northern, 2011). Such publications represent practical manuals for the daily continuance of the South Sudanese culture in Australia. The English text would encourage the adult community members to practise their reading, using familiar recipes from South Sudan, but in the

language essential for daily activities in the new country. These publications, written by South Sudanese family members and school students since their arrival in Australia, have enhanced the place of the Dinka language in the new country.

***Dinka Literacy Learning in Adelaide.*** Refugee students came with the ability to speak their mother language learnt from observation and participation ‘on the run’ in the families’ oral and collective culture. In Adelaide, there were existing structures for formal language learning that the Dinka community could tap into to ensure that the young people learned to read and write Dinka.

The DECD specialised language school offered the opportunity to gain literacy in Dinka in the context of South Sudanese cultural values. There were junior and senior classes after hours in the central city location, as well as some northern secondary school centres where the Dinka-speaking families lived. These students often travelled long distances from northern secondary schools to attend these Dinka Language classes after school hours. At Year 11 and 12 levels, the School of Languages offered *Language and Culture* (in Dinka) as a SACE subject with formal oral and written assessments that counted towards university entrance. As mentioned earlier, there were 23 students studying Dinka in 2015. This subject was taught by Ater Morwell Morwell, who had studied in Khartoum University and later settled in Adelaide. He serves his community as a committed elder, bilingual teacher of the Dinka and English languages (School of Languages and community centres as well as centring his continuing Dinka language research for the DLIA (Dinka Language Institute of Australia) formed in 2000 and now based in Adelaide.

Dinka language classes were also run by the South Sudanese community at several venues in primary and secondary schools on Saturdays. In 2015 there were 113 primary school-age students studying Dinka Sudanese at Nazareth Catholic College and 50 students studying Dinka Bor at Fremont Elizabeth High school. The Bor dialect of Dinka<sup>10</sup>, according to Cunningham, 11/6/2015, is being catered for in ethnic school classes according to Darryl Buchanan, Executive Officer in Adelaide.

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<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that Dinka Bor is the focus of Archbishop Driver’s efforts to support a primary and secondary school near the former CMS mission station in South Sudan in interview 6/4/2016..

Partial funding comes from the State Government of South Australia and varies per student per semester per the annual budget. There is also needs-based funding available on application (Government of South Australia, 2015).

Overall, the voices and attitudes of these refugee students regarding their preferences and learning styles for learning the Dinka language, are unknown and have not been heard in the research literature.

### **Family Adaptation, Gender Roles and Experiencing Racism**

Studies specifically on South Sudanese refugees indicated that among the most difficult adaptations that they have had to make in societies dominated by Anglo-Celtic cultures have been in family patterns and racial acceptance. Areas of concern have been gender roles, and being part of a small minority of dark skinned people in a predominantly white-skinned population. Ribeiro (2006, p. 13) documented concerns that South Sudanese families needed to be regarded not as nuclear units, but as collective units with extended family members. Different family marital relationships and cultural expectations could also cause misunderstandings in dealings with schools, community welfare and issues of family responsibilities.

Carrington's study of South Sudanese families in Adelaide pointed to a variety of family cultures in 'the shifting habitus of the traditional family (2002, p. 143). According to Wood (2013, p. 207), family structures for the South Sudanese refugees,

*involved a spectrum of social arrangements, from having immediate family members in Africa, to living independently as a sole parent, through to being married and living in de facto relationships. Many live in fractured family circumstances* (Wood, 2013, p. 207).

Williams explained how these enforced variations affected traditional family patterns: 'In most refugee and displacement contexts, the roles and responsibilities of men and women change because of the impact conflict and/or displacement has on family and community structures' (2008, p. 203).

The difficulties of family adaptation of South Sudanese refugees in Australia relate to two factors. In the first place, many South Sudanese people came as already fractured families in a special immigration program for mothers and their children in refugee camps. Most fathers had been involved in the fighting were either dead, known to be

killed or missing, or presumed dead. In the circumstances, it was impossible to recreate the patterns of family life they had known before they were torn apart by war. Yet it was clear that the South Sudanese community in Australia had been creative in making substitute arrangements wherever possible, as evidenced in the following examples which come from published stories written by refugees in recent years. Akoi Manyiel Guong revealed that 'Many [South Sudanese teenagers] like myself, had come without parents and they'd have to figure all this [how to manage in a totally different society] by themselves' (2011, pp. 80-81) or rely on each other as mentors. In some cases, young boys, like Johnson Maker-Adeng in the ABC Australian Story, *Think Big*, took on the role of the father ("Think Big," 2013). Sometimes an uncle or extended family member or elder from the community filled in the missing male role. This was the case for Mayen Deng who arrived in Australia at the age of four with her mother. As her father was a soldier in Africa and 'it was his job to protect the people. We went to live with my cousins...My uncle met us at the airport. Australia' (Sandy, 2013, p. 24). Young Nyakaka Ruot had already lost her mother in Sudan when she came with her little sister to join her big sister in Australia. She now lives with her big sister and her family. As she describes: 'We are all helping each other and taking care of each other. My beautiful mother visits me in my dreams...I think my mum is proud of me because I have done exactly what she asked of me' (Sandy, 2013, p. 39).

The second source of difficulty stemmed from the very different patterns of family life taken for granted in mainstream Anglo-Australian society, as opposed to the South Sudanese community. Anglo-Australian family life is mostly governed by individual value orientations where the interests and needs of each individual member are assumed to have precedence over the family group as a whole. South Sudanese family life was traditionally based on collectivist value orientations where the interests of the whole family group have a taken for granted precedence over the needs and preferences of any one individual (Secombe & Zajda, 1999).

These differences in family life were accentuated by the traditional structure of the South Sudanese collectivist family always being headed by a male whose authority was unchallenged. His role was to protect and provide for his family and ensure its continuity into the next generation. Where the father was not a practising Christian, he often had more than one wife, with children from each of them making up quite a large family

group. Women were subordinate to the male head and often appeared to be almost powerless. Their role was to carry out the duties of wife and mother, looking after their husband and children as narrated in an autobiography by a South Sudanese adult male refugee in Adelaide (Guong & Lindemann, 2011, pp. 2-6).

After this settling in Australia, the South Sudanese women continued to see their role as looking after the family at home. Even if they had wanted it, going out to work was hardly a practical possibility, given their minimal level of English and lack of any work experience outside the home. Furthermore, daughters, especially the older ones, were initiated into the role of looking after younger children and helping their mother with household duties and cooking. Joyce, Earnest, De Mori and Silvagni (2010, p. 92) found that female African refugee students at university were still expected to carry out domestic duties and look after family members. This finding echoed my own dealings with female South Sudanese secondary students. Girls from all year levels were expected not only to perform regular babysitting duties but also to wash and clean for their younger siblings whilst their mothers returned, often for extended time periods, to South Sudan to visit relatives. The senior secondary girls were often expected to stay at home and babysit for cousins' young children or even babies, as well as take family members to the doctor and dentist for daytime appointments. Their frequent late arrivals to school also caused a clash between the punctuality expected in the mainstream secondary school timetable in Adelaide compared to the non-negotiable family commitments and expectations. Despite the inconvenience these unexpected absences caused to their subject teachers and hence to the students' own difficulty of meeting assessment deadlines, I was surprised never to hear of any complaints or frustrations from the girls, with these extra family duties or obligations.

The smaller number of South Sudanese adult male refugees in the community found that the Australian context posed problems for them in relation to their role as head of the family. None of the traditional activities which they associated with their role applied in their new country. Furthermore, it was often difficult for them to find any sort of employment that could help them support their family. 'Walking the line' was the phrase coined by Marlowe (2012), to describe South Sudanese men struggling to retain their traditional identity within the context of adapting to the new society. Marlowe went on

to commend the work of the Sudanese community in Adelaide in using social networking as an effective means for the men to maintain contact and support one another (2012).

In the context of Sudan, it was acceptable for the male head of the family to enforce his authority with a certain level of violence (Scott et al., 2013), just as it was regarded as normal for children to be beaten for disobedience or failure to learn. The male dominance in family life with the strictly defined gender roles (Greany, 2008) and the lack of standing of the female figure (Milner & Khawaja, 2010) have often been blamed for such behaviour. However, it is possible that such gender-based violence has been exacerbated in the Australian context by the sort of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression that are the by-products of war trauma (Ayazi, Lien, Eide, Ruom, & Hauff, 2012) on the pent-up anger of frustration over life in Australia (Westoby, 2008, p. 492). The greater acceptance of violence in ordinary everyday life can occur as the result of war and the frustrations of adjusting to life in a new country.

Women in Australia were accorded equal status under the law and supposedly equal opportunities in education and employment, so that gender-based violence was a punishable offence. These different patterns in the status and role of women within the structure of the family have resulted in some groups, such as South Sudanese refugees experiencing cross-cultural tensions (Ribeiro, 2006, p. 13). Certainly, in my personal teaching experience, I found that among the South Sudanese secondary students, there was an area of silence in any discussion of gender roles and issues. This issue of gender-based violence among the South Sudanese community has been raised in public forums, where younger Sudanese men have taken the lead in condemning violence against women. A 2015 episode of the ABC TV program *Compass* featured a South Sudanese named Moses Ali, who had been a child soldier in the civil war in Sudan but eventually reached Australia as a refugee. Now working as a public servant, he conceded in the discussion that there had been problems in the South Sudanese community when its male dominated family structure initially encountered the legal requirements in Australia that women have equal status in the family, as in other areas of life. In his view, there had been fewer cases of domestic violence reported in the community in more recent times ("The Moral Compass," 2015).

A recent South Australian campaign against gender violence in the streets of Adelaide, organised by the YWCA, featured leading male community figures denouncing such

violence. Included alongside leaders like the Lord Mayor of Adelaide, was David Bol Amol, a South Sudanese, who was working as a project officer for Anglicare. The statement under his photograph read,

*Australia as a multicultural society welcomes everyone's culture but wants everyone to change the culture of violence against women in our communities. Despite what your culture claims on how to treat women, the obligation of all Australians is to eliminate violence for good! (Perri, 2015).*

These examples suggest the younger males from South Sudan who have been educated in Australia have recognised the importance of accepting the mainstream Australian recognition of the rights of women.

Several studies (Bloch, Sigona, & Zetter, 2008; hooks, 1994) have highlighted racism, in response to the “blackness<sup>11</sup>” of South Sudanese refugees, as a stumbling block to their acceptance in the wider society. Ethiopians in the earlier study of Debela (1996) had reported experiencing racism not only at the time of their arrival, but as a regular part of their daily life even after they were settled. In her analysis, Hatoss (2013, p. 99) reported a South Sudanese man's experience of ‘racial identity as a source of problems’. The two Abrahams mentioned earlier (Zable, 2015) reported similar difficulties when they settled in the Latrobe Valley, but they found a way of overcoming the racial suspicion:

*We were the first blacks many people saw, apart from Aborigines. If you were walking on the road, two or three of you, they kept a distance. They thought we would attack them. They thought we would destroy their way of life. We did not blame them, but went out into the community to explain where we came from (Zable, 2015, p. 17).*

The two of them talked to local community, church and sporting groups, as well as to teachers and students at the local school, explaining that after coming from ‘war torn countries’, they ‘needed a quiet place to settle’. People responded positively to their explanations, to the point where they and their families felt ‘part of the community’ (Zable, 2015, p. 17).

In the school context, Harris (2011a) recognised that where most students were pale-skinned, the fact of the ‘Blackness’ of the South Sudanese newcomers represented ‘new conditions’ for the whole school community. The refugee students experienced for the

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<sup>11</sup> I have maintained the approach of using these terms ‘blackness’ and ‘Black’, including the capital B, according to their usage here (Bloch et al., 2008; hooks, 1994) and in future references such as A. Harris (A. Harris, 2011a).



first time the situation of being a small black minority within a majority of “non-black” students, activating a ‘non-Black culture’ through having to relate to black students in their classrooms. For the most part, the non-Black students and teachers as well, were also on ‘new ground’ (A. Harris, 2011a, p. 758).

### **Australian Support for South Sudanese Adaptation**

In a number of ways, state and federal government departments, as well as voluntary organisations in Australian society have tried to provide forms of support for the South Sudanese refugees in their adaptation to Australia. Some of this support came in the form of information and advice from government departments. Voluntary organisations or church groups have tended to be more personal and face-to-face, offering concrete help to deal with everyday family needs or providing space and resources for refugee community groups to meet on a regular basis. For example, Deng Adut was sponsored by Christian aid workers and the Christian charity, Marist Youth Care which helped him find housing in Sydney (Lehmann, 2016, p. 17). African community groups were able to offer personal help and advice based on their own adaptation experiences. These can all be seen as examples of what Maadad and Rodwell called ‘the politics of hospitality’ from the people of the host country (2017, p. 155).

***Refugee Education.*** Websites appeared to be the most common way of providing general and practical assistance to refugees, including the South Sudanese. Community and Settlement Services feature educational referrals and information, as well as children’s services and how to access them (New South Wales Government Department of Education, 2015). Another government website is intended for mainstream Australians, particularly teachers, offering teaching ideas, with Lesson 1 entitled Supporting Refugees. In relation to face-to-face contact, the concept of teaching ‘inclusivity’ was favoured (Block, Cross, Riggs, & Gibbs, 2014, p. 1349), providing ESL classes and support persons, as well as engaging within the community various organisations and the specific cultural community organisation. Ideally, the focus was on the teachers providing the relationship space for trust and suitable ESL-style teaching and learning materials and practices (Ferfolja et al., 2011).

Several criticisms have been made of some of these initiatives. The different learning needs and sociocultural adjustments of refugees are frequently ignored (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007, p. 1) in Australian programs. Whilst ‘school liaison workers’ can play an active

and supportive role in refugee students' learning, such 'intercultural knowledge should be embedded in school culture, curriculum and policy' (Matthews, 2008, p. 41). According to Block (2014, p. 1351), the gap in understanding through not obtaining the 'perspectives of students and their families' was becoming more and more marked, as providers took up the 'fashionable' challenge of providing, at a superficial level only, for the rapidly increasing numbers of refugee learners. At the most basic practical level, it has to be asked, for example, how many South Sudanese refugee students would own or even have access to a computer, as Chol Pager (2012, p. 2), has disclosed, so that they could make use of websites.

Other websites providing refugee education have been set up by voluntary organisations which receive government funds to assist specific groups of refugees such as the South Sudanese. The SAIL (Sudanese Online Research Association, 2011) association based in Melbourne offers a range of volunteer services designed to assist the settlement and learning of Sudanese refugees. ACAA (Abek Community Association of Australia) and the website: [www.derbyoverseas.net](http://www.derbyoverseas.net) provide social networking opportunities for the Sudanese, as well as songs in Dinka (Hatoss, 2013).

A rather different initiative aimed at secondary school students has involved Homework Clubs which have been set up by ARA (Australian Refugee Association) in most areas of Adelaide where the South Sudanese have settled. They are run by volunteers and assisted by retired teachers who tutor students in their homework at the school site after school. In my experience the Sudanese secondary students welcomed such initiatives and attended regularly. A simple afternoon tea was offered first, then the tutors arrived and matched up with the students. I observed a genuine spirit of friendliness and appreciation from the students as the regular and ongoing assignment tasks were tackled. The school principal would also visit from time to time to offer his support for the joint learning enterprise.

***The Role of the Churches.*** Earlier studies had pointed to the constructive role that churches can play in the adaptation of newcomers. In research on the Vietnamese community in South Australia, Tran found that 'church activities have helped to build up strong family and community bonds among Vietnamese Catholic people. They are an excellent means for language and culture transmission' (Tran Thi Nien, 1993, p. 64).

I have observed that the new South Sudanese families in Adelaide quite frequently join the Catholic, Anglican and other denominations which already have Sudanese families in their congregations. The Catholic (St Francis Xavier) and Anglican (St Peter's) cathedrals in Adelaide hold special regular services for the Sudanese and other African refugees. St Francis Xavier cathedral holds an African community mass at 2.30pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month. For those who attend church going becomes a family pastime and links up with their regular church activities at home in South Sudan.

In the Uniting Church a Dinka-speaking congregation has been established, with a South Sudanese minister Amel Manyan serving this refugee congregation since March 2012 (B. Taylor, 2012). The Magill Church of Christ also has forged a GMP (Global Mission Partnership) with a church in South Sudan and sponsors and supports incoming refugee families (Blackett, 2016). The Church of the Holy Cross-Anglican at Elizabeth formally offers a regular Dinka Language Eucharist (in the Bor dialect), while the city-based House International Church has Sudanese-Dinka services listed on their websites. Lejukole underlined the importance of the role of churches in assisting South Sudanese adults to resettle and adapt to life in the Australian society (2008). Similarly, Hatoss observed the way churches in Australia were able to encourage Dinka language activities, associated with and integrated into worship in Toowoomba, Queensland (2013, pp. 212-213).

For many South Sudanese women in Adelaide, the newly established Corinthian Catholic community and school in the central western suburbs have provided a focus and meeting place for community events (Wood, 2013, p. 201). A common pattern for regular Mass goers in the group was to attend an English parish mass (Catholic) on Sunday mornings and go to a city-based Dinka service in the afternoon (Wood, 2013, p. 219).

Wood has argued at length that

*belonging to a faith community is vitally important in expressing their [South Sudanese families] religious beliefs. They gather as like-minded people in faith as well as socially and culturally, seeing total continuity in such matters. They support each other in the challenges of resettlement, in particular in bringing up children in a western society (2013, p. 202).*

The particular importance of memory for the families was also highlighted.

*Underpinning all these efforts is the memory of, and the continuing obligation towards, family in Africa. This does not imply however, a backward looking or offshore directed focus. At the same time, effective networks are in place to strengthen the position of individual families and of the Sudanese community in their new environment. Women play a vital role in this activity and are supported by the Corinthian Catholic Community which offers personnel and infrastructure to assist in meeting the diverse needs associated with resettlement (Wood, 2013, p. 202).*

**African Community Organisations.** The following groups all provide settlement assistance to for new African migrants (2014): ACCESA (African Communities Council of SA Inc.); African Intercultural Heritage Association in Mount Gambier SA (promotion and preservation of community and culture); and The South Sudanese Community Association of Australia Inc. SA Branch, based in Kilburn, a suburb of Adelaide. Their help is particularly relevant because it is based on the personal experience of their own adaptation and affirms the qualities and strengths that the refugees brought with them.

The information such groups provided was based on a recognition of ‘the strengths refugee students and their families bring, such as resilience in the face of adversity, empathy, strong family values, a sense of justice, a desire to give back to their own communities and to their new country, and hope for the future’ (Luizzi & Saker, 2008, p. 1). There was also the appreciation that the refugee students do bring in these ‘strengths’ from their home cultures which ‘help them to succeed in their lives’ (Luizzi & Saker, 2008, p. 1). These resources have become available online for school teachers’ professional development in recent years. However, whilst they have served as valuable information for school teachers, it needed to be more specific and follow-up studies will extend these insights for teachers in various education scenarios.

### **Achievements in the Adaptation of South Sudanese Refugees**

What have the South Sudanese refugee community and its members in Adelaide and other parts of Australia achieved in their adaptation to life and learning in Australia? Television and print media, such as ABC documentaries and reports in local and interstate newspapers, have proved a good source of understanding the way mainstream Australians view the adaptations of these refugees both as individuals and a community. In the years immediately after their arrival, there were a number of newspaper articles and television news reports dealing with the criminal activities of some southern Sudanese youth (Fewster, 2008). These appear to have featured less frequently in Adelaide in recent years. Instead there have been more articles focussing on the achievements and

contributions of individual members of the South Sudanese community in mainstream occupational structure, sporting teams and church groups.

Two ABC television programs have portrayed what has been achieved by members of the South Sudanese community. Each focussed on one particular individual, interspersing background filming of their current situation and surroundings, with interview commentary in which they could describe their experiences in their journey from the terrors of civil war in their homeland to achieving success in Australia. One was a program in the ABC series *Australian Story* on Johnson Maker Adeng, which was filmed over seven years from the time of his arrival in the local high school and his graduation with a double degree in economics and biomedicine. He was shown planning to return to South Sudan to meet his proposed bride's family and negotiate the wedding dowry. His story has already been discussed as an example of individual adaptation.

The second program was in the ABC *Compass* series featuring migrants and refugees. The episode entitled 'The Moral Compass' featured the story of Moses Ali, a former child soldier in South Sudan, who had arrived alone in Australia. Although he had been involved initially in some trouble with the police, he received a lot of help from his community and newly made friends to adjust to life in Australia. He spoke of his happiness in having a family and employment as a civil servant, claiming that he felt 'like an Australian' ("The Moral Compass," 2015) now.

Their voices proudly related their progress from dire life circumstances to stability and some recognition at last in the new country. However not all South Sudanese university graduates are successful in finding employment and instead face discrimination 'on the basis of race, skin colour, accent, having an African background and not having a Caucasian name' exposed in a recent study in the ACT (El-Gack & Yak, 2016). On the other hand, the moving forward to adapt and have a relevant perspective for the welfare of the community as a whole was seen in the following individual examples.

Mention has already been made of Amel Manyan, the woman who was ordained as the first South Sudanese minister in the Uniting Church in South Australia (B. Taylor, 2012). She served a Dinka-speaking South Sudanese congregation. David Bol Amol, who worked as an Anglican project officer in South Australia, has also been noted for the public support he gave to the YWCA's "Adelaide campaign against violence toward

women” (Perri, 2015). The two Abrahams succeeded in establishing themselves both as cattle farmers in the La Trobe Valley and in linking themselves to local community groups and the school (Zable, 2015).

The story of Arop Akok Deng Chom was rather different. He became ‘the first South Sudanese man in Australia to complete his bricklaying apprenticeship, ten years after he fled to Australia’ (Stevens, 2015, p. 5). He was happy to offer advice ‘to all new arrivals in Australia’ based on his own experience. ‘This,’ he claimed, ‘is the best country in the world where you have a lot of freedom to choose whatever you want to do in life’. As with the two Abrahams, Arop’s sense of achievement in what he had done was matched with a sense of belonging and feeling at home in the new country. It was this aspect that was stressed in another newspaper article on Lopez Lomong, a former child prisoner and one of the Lost Boys of Sudan, who had become an Olympian runner in the United States. Having come to Adelaide for a temporary stay, he explained that what he liked about the city was that he felt ‘safe’; it had become for him ‘a sanctuary’ (Jervis-Bardy, 2015, p. 10).

Furthermore, the portrait of Deng Thiak Adut, ‘a Sudanese refugee and former child soldier turned criminal lawyer’, by Sydney artist Nick Stathopoulos has won the distinguished Archibald Prize People’s Choice Award in Sydney (Brooks, 2016). In his autobiography ‘Songs of a War Boy’, Deng Adut described his own colour ‘as very black and [I am] proud of my dark skin complexion’ (Adut & McKelvey, 2016, p. 253), although he admitted feeling different in his early days in Australia. Adut’s personal observations, together with the prestigious portrait win may be taken as some shift in the public appreciation of what is aesthetically beautiful in terms of physical visibility and race. As further recognition of his significant work, Deng Adut recently has been named as NSW Australian of the Year (Whitbourne, 2016). Such an example could represent a small move towards a future more positive approach in mainstream society in accepting such of newcomers (Giri, 2012).

All of the achievements described above were the result of young South Sudanese making the most of the education opportunities which they found in their new country, whether it be in bricklaying, or in theological, community, welfare and sporting studies. This willingness to take advantage of opportunities to learn was a tendency within Sudanese communities in the south according to Buckmaster 2/7/2013. In his work as a Roman

Catholic missionary in the Rek area, he had observed students in the mission schools. He emphasised the importance given to education in South Sudanese culture. He considered that the students he knew saw education as being of prime importance in their lives, even though schooling opportunities were few and under-resourced in southern Sudan. Those who did have the chance to attend school were thus highly motivated in their studies.

The high value placed on education in their home country appeared to have been transferred to Australia when the refugees arrived here. Some researchers have commented on the ‘very high aspirations’ evident among the southern Sudanese refugee students, in Australia (J. Brown et al., 2006). They saw that they could not only improve their lifestyle and position in their new society but also ‘improve the situation’ of their family and community in South Sudan as Perry found in the United States (2007a). The story of the two Abrahams, who have recently made the effort to return to South Sudan and provide not only essential food, but also new classrooms for their community back home, was evidence of a similar readiness to give back to their homeland culture. In Sydney, Deng Adut has acted to repay his debts to both Australia and the South Sudanese diaspora. His John Mac Foundation, honouring his late brother, has supported education for refugees coming to Australia and the reopening of John’s school in Goi in South Sudan (Adut & McKelvey, 2016, pp. 285-286). Zutt (1994) had noted this tendency to want to ‘give back’ to their homeland in the early years of the refugee crisis in Sudan even before any had been accepted into the Australian humanitarian refugee program.

***Personal Feelings Towards Adjustment.*** Stories on resettlement, in the autobiographical writings of the hopes and dreams of the South Sudanese children reveal the extent of their acceptance of their new life in Australia. Whilst they missed their home country and were homesick, they appeared to appreciate the better and safer life in Australia (Sandy, 2013, p. 55). Such feelings were expressed even by young children who had experienced extreme trauma in their own country of South Sudan, combined with the uprooting from extended family in general and separation from at least one parent upon migrating to Australia.

South Sudanese refugee parents have contributed to this form of adaptation by sharing their memories, even to the point of writing down their memoirs to tell their children in Australia their adaptations and stories. They remembered that ‘in Kakuma, the church was the only place where you could get help’ so they advised incoming refugees to seek

help from the Church in Australia (Malual, 2015, pp. 36-37). The parents also suggested that in their churches they ‘seek advice from friends and relatives. The more you ask, the better you will become. Start this new life and come to the community. Don’t feel alone. This is our home. You are no longer in a refugee camp’ (Malual, 2014, p. 19). This approach acknowledged the struggles and difficulties but suggested that as refugees ‘you have to start from scratch. It will take time because change is a process but things will get better’ (Malual, 2014, p. 19). Perhaps the most valuable advice was proposed by the same refugee mother from South Sudan on the back cover of her book:

*Whilst we were running for our lives, when we were foraging for food, when we had nothing but the clothes on our back, we still had our culture and no-one could take that away from us* (Malual, 2015).

### **The Need for Qualitative Research**

The sources discussed above were largely silent on the South Sudanese student friendships within their culture and with peers, their relationships with and attitudes to the local community and the relationships within the South Sudanese community. Little reference was made to their emerging lifestyles in Australia, their involvement in part-time work and sporting clubs, and most importantly, their views on their education experiences in Australia.

The gaps of understanding exposed in this review of the information and previous studies overall were frequent, extensive and substantial. They covered significant areas in the topics covered in this chapter concerning the southern Sudanese secondary students’ learning and life experiences from southern Sudan to Adelaide. Perry (2005) too suggested that the southern Sudanese refugee secondary students’ viewpoints, their attitudes, feelings and perspectives were largely absent from research studies, although a few personal stories and writings were emerging from adults who had made good. Whilst the bare skeleton of data was available from the government (for example the Australian Bureau of Statistics), historical sources surveying the Australian migrant experience, their arrival and education opportunities, the ‘insider’ stories and voices of the South Sudanese refugee secondary students were silent as to their relationships and mode of living in their homeland; their experiences of learning of their mother tongue, Dinka, and their perspectives on adapting to schooling and life in Adelaide.



In particular, the southern Sudanese refugee students' own views of their learning experiences, as they moved from oral-based transmission of knowledge and values to formal literacy-based learning (Fisher, 2003), are urgently required as real-life starting points for successful learning in Australia (J. Brown et al., 2006). This understanding of the South Sudanese refugees' learning experiences both prior to arrival and as new stakeholders in Adelaide's secondary education system and community could benefit not only their teachers but also facilitate their contribution as future Australian citizens of the world.

Qualitative research is one of the best ways of ensuring that the voices of the South Sudanese refugee secondary students are not lost (Preiss, 2013) and that their unique social, cultural and learning challenges in Australian schools are understood. With the qualitative method of open-ended interviews, a researcher can approach these students in a genuinely interested manner and provide them with an opportunity to speak about their experiences in their own way, to a sympathetic listener and respectful interpreter (Block, Riggs, & Haslam, 2013). The public voices of successful South Sudanese, as heard in newspaper articles and television programs, were helpful in suggesting insights and directions for future research with senior secondary students. Lopez Lomong, the Olympic runner, for example, stressed the collective spirit which led him as a six-year-old to work 'as a team' with the three teenage boys who rescued him. It was this that kept them safely together as they ran for their lives to reach the refugee camp in Kenya (Jervis-Bardy, 2015, p. 10). The next chapter discusses the two theoretical frameworks which have proved useful in qualitative research and were considered to be more appropriate for pursuing this study.



## **Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework**

### **Introduction**

To investigate the unique learning experiences of South Sudanese students in their African homeland and the Adelaide context of their re-settlement, the theoretical models of Humanistic Sociology and Symbolic Interactionism were used. They were regarded as complementary concepts making it possible to develop a framework for analysing and understanding the students' experiences. The assumption underlying both these models is the sociological principle laid down by Weber that 'individual action is the unit of sociological analysis' (Bendix, 1968, p. 494). In this sense, individuals are regarded as social actors in the particular contexts in which they live out their lives. It follows that the interpretation of social actions is based on understanding the meanings and purposes that individuals attach to their own actions, together with their interpretation of the contexts in which they are acting (Bendix, 1968; Kim, 2012). An outline of these two models used in interpreting the data follows. Rather than presenting a full review of each theory, only the key concepts which have contributed to the framework relevant for the study are discussed.

Humanistic Sociology, first introduced in Thomas and Znaniecki's 1918 study of Polish peasants in Europe and America, described the workings of culture as shared meanings which were conceptualised as systems of cultural values at both the group and personal level (Znaniecki, 1998). These were depicted as the products or creation of everyday dialogue and activities of the individual members of the group concerned (Secombe & Zajda, 1999, p. 3). These concepts appear to be useful in understanding the individual South Sudanese students' experiences of cultural learning within the everyday activities of the immediate extended family and the local community in the Sudan according to Buckmaster 2/7/2013. They are also applicable to analysing how they learned the Anglo-Australian based culture of the mainstream group which they encountered when they settled in Adelaide, South Australia.

Symbolic Interactionism can be seen to work as a sociological theory in tandem with Humanistic Sociology. First derived from the work of George Herbert Mead (1934), it proposed not only that people's actual selves were 'social products' but that these selves were also 'purposive and creative'. Language, gestures and objects or symbols provided meanings which were learned as the self-engaged in social interaction with others. For

Mead, the terms 'I' and 'me' were dimensions of the notion of 'self' in interaction with 'the other' in the outside world (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). The resulting process of interpretation increased the individual's self-awareness (Daanen & Sammut, 2012; Mead, 1934).

Herbert Blumer, a student of Mead's, first used the term 'symbolic interactionism' to describe the whole theory and encapsulated Mead's ideas by explaining reality as socially developed in interaction with others (1969). According to Carrothers and Benson (2003) two schools of Symbolic Interactionism developed subsequently: the Chicago tradition and the Iowa 'Movement'. The Chicago tradition led by Blumer emphasised the active 'I' dimension of Mead's theory while the later Iowa 'Movement' centred on Mead's interpretation of the 'me' dimension, which was influenced and shaped by interaction with others. Both the concept of a 'spontaneous' and dynamic self - taken up by Blumer (Carrothers & Benson, 2003, p. 163) and the concept of a fairly stable more controlled 'core self' (Carrothers & Benson, 2003, p. 164) would appear to be relevant to refugee secondary school students undergoing a very substantial change of living and learning in moving from southern Sudan to Adelaide, South Australia.

Thus, the theory of Symbolic Interactionism helps to explain how the process of sharing cultural meanings, as defined in Humanistic Sociology, takes place within group and social structures and points to the way social interaction can lead to cultural learning and even the possibility of cultural interaction (Maadad, 2009; Smolicz, 1979). Together these theories help in understanding the South Sudanese refugee students' learning experiences in their two cultural worlds of southern Sudan and Adelaide.

### **Key Concepts in Humanistic Sociology**

Humanistic Sociology as a theory 'assumes that the essence of culture resides in meaning - the complex of meanings that a group of people share as the basis of their common life' (Znaniiecki, 1998, p. 3) As the thoughts and activities of group members are ordered and shaped over generations, they form the objective reality of the group's social and cultural life. Children born into the group learn these shared meanings and activate them in their own distinctive way as they participate in the group's life. As they grow to adulthood, the actions and attitudes of each individual contribute to the sum total of thoughts and experiences which represent the social and cultural systems of the group (Smolicz, 1979).

The South Sudanese refugee secondary students in this study can be regarded as actors in this way in their particular social context and the various groups within it according to Buckmaster, 2/7/2013.

Znanięcki (1968) developed several key concepts to better understand culture as both a group and individual phenomenon. These were adopted and extended by Smolicz in his studies of the experiences of children from various cultural backgrounds in Australian schools (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981). Those concepts which seemed most appropriate for analysing the experiences of South Sudanese refugee students in Adelaide secondary schools are discussed below in more detail.

### **Cultural Values as Shared Meanings**

Znanięcki (1968) used the term ‘cultural values’ to denote the meanings shared by members of a group. In this he distinguished between natural objects or things and cultural objects or values (Smolicz, 1979, p. 22). A thing ‘has no meaning, but only a content, and stands by itself’ (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, p. 6), whereas a value has not only content but also cultural meaning derived from group activities in the past. Cultural meanings can be given not only to physical or material objects, but also to thoughts and ideas as ‘ideational objects’, which play an important role in the way group members think and act (Smolicz, 1986; Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, p. 3; 1989).

Values therefore make up the common and shared culture which underpins the day-to-day living of a particular group. Individuals do differ, however, in terms of which cultural values of the group they choose to make use of and how they apply them in the life of the group. Nevertheless, the commonality of these shared cultural meanings serves to bind and unite the members of the group as observed by Buckmaster, 2/7/2013.

Cultural values can be divided into more specific clusters or group systems of cultural values, related to various areas of living such as political, economic, religious, social and educational. In this sense, it is possible to speak, for example, of a system of linguistic values, made up of the particular meanings given to words, phrases and grammatical elements, in the language of a given group. These shared linguistic meanings or values make it possible for the group’s members to communicate with one another (Secombe & Zajda, 1999; Smolicz, 1979). On one level, these meanings relate to the spoken sounds of the languages. In a literate culture there is a second layer of meanings related to the

written forms (letter, word, sentence) which correspond to the spoken sounds of the language (Freire, 2009).

Smolicz considered it important to recognise the active role of individuals in adopting the cultural values of the group in their own particular way and adapting them for their own specific purposes. He gave the name 'personal cultural system' to this individual dimension of group cultural values (Smolicz, 1979, p. 41). As with the various group cultural systems of cultural values, personal cultural systems can be classified more specifically as, for example, personal linguistic, religious, social or educational value systems.

The choices which individuals make in constructing their various personal cultural systems 'to solve the everyday problems of existence' depend partly on 'the quality and accessibility' of the group cultural systems available to them as they are growing up (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, p. 13). Another important factor is the extent to which individuals decide to make use of their group's values. This decision reflects their positive, negative, or indifferent evaluation of the cultural meanings they have learned from their group. In a culturally plural society, the values of an immigrant or refugee group are often judged by young people born into the group in the new country in comparison with the values of the mainstream group which they have learned in the school and workplace contexts. Thus, the way in which individuals of the younger generation construct their various personal cultural systems directly influences the extent to which the cultural meanings of the home group's heritage are maintained, modified or lost.

The studies discussed in the previous chapter indicate that four areas of culture are particularly important for understanding how Dinka-speaking refugee secondary students from southern Sudan adapt culturally to living in Adelaide, South Australia. The sections that follow discuss linguistic, social, religious and educational values as they are conceptualised in humanistic sociology.

***Social Values.*** In Humanistic Sociological theory, individual people are regarded as social values, with cultural meanings related to their membership of particular groups, such as the family, the school, the church group, the sporting team or the music ensemble.

Each of these groupings can be regarded as a group system of social values (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, pp. 8-9).

Individuals, as social values within their groups, take on the cultural meaning of 'group member', often with a more specific meaning related to their position and role in the group. Thus, within the group social system of the family, young people have the meaning of son or daughter to their parents, sibling to their brothers and sisters, or grandchild to their grandparents. Within the group social system of the school, young people have the meaning of students to those adults who are their subject teachers, and the meaning of fellow-students to one another. When individuals are forced through war and immigration to move into a new society, they may find that the cultural meanings related to their membership of these groups are different in the new cultural context. For example, what it means to be 'a daughter' or 'a student' is not identical in the Dinka refugee and mainstream Anglo Australian cultural groups.

In practice, individuals participate in several different groups, such as the immediate family, the class at school, the soccer, basketball or netball team, singing and dancing group, the church group, the people they work with. From these contacts individuals build up a personal social system of their own, consisting of those people they know and interact with in the various groups. In this way, personal social systems are unique to the individual, and the people who are included may come from different groups, without necessarily knowing one another (Secombe & Zajda, 1999; Smolicz, 1979).

It is useful to draw a distinction between primary social values which refer to those linked to a given individual through close, intimate and ongoing relationships, such as a family member or a very close friend. In contrast, those with whom the relationship is more formal and distant or intermittent, such as members of the maths class, member of soccer team or fellow part-time worker, can be referred to as secondary social values. Over time, a person who began as a secondary value but becomes a close friend can be recognised as a primary social value. The distinction between primary and secondary social values goes back to the work of Parkes in defining these two types of relationships (Smolicz, 1979, Chapter 7).

In the case of the South Sudanese refugee secondary students, it is important to know which group or social systems, in addition to the family and school, they belong to in the

Adelaide context and to know who makes up their personal social systems, at both the primary and secondary levels. This information provides important clues to the nature and extent of their adaptation to Adelaide society. Although the family is the primary social group in the experience of most individuals in every culture, it can take many different forms depending on whether it is individualistic or collectivist in orientation. Individualistic family patterns are centred on the needs and interests of each individual member, as can be found in present day societies dominated by traditions derived from Anglo-Celtic culture. In contrast, collectivist family patterns are those where the wellbeing of the whole group takes precedence over any one individual's interest as can be found in most Asian, Mediterranean and African societies. Collectivist family patterns often also involve a strongly patriarchal orientation where the authority of the male head, the father, is rarely if ever challenged. South Sudanese refugees find themselves moving from a society based on strong collectivist family values to Australian society where individualistic values in family life are often taken for granted by the dominant Anglo-Australian group (although collectivist family patterns do survive in a minority of ethnic groups) (Hudson, 1995; Jupp, 2001; Maadad, 2009; Secombe & Zajda, 1999; Smolicz, 1979; Tran Thi Nien, 2016). Such collectivist paternalistic families also tend to have clearly defined age and gender roles for each individual.

***Linguistic Values.*** According to Humanistic Sociology the language used in linguistic systems by the members of a group in communicating with one another is made up of linguistic values, that is the meanings given to words, phrases and grammatical forms (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, p. 5). Children growing up in families who maintain their ethnic language, hear these linguistic values of the group spoken by parents, older children and other adults in their home and community. As they imitate these sounds and begin to use them in communicating with those around them, they are constructing their own personal linguistic system. This was the situation of refugee children born into Dinka-speaking families in the southern Sudan where informal participation in oral traditions served as the basis of all language learning (Duyal, 2012; Foundation House, 2005; Guong & Lindemann, 2011; Ribeiro, 2006). The term 'personal system of linguistic values, attitudes and tendencies' highlights the way individuals come to make their own choice of words and use them in their own distinctive ways as observed by Buckmaster 2/7/2013. A tendency can be defined as an act of communication and attitude as a conscious intention to reactivate the values of meaning known and espoused by the



cultural group (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, pp. 6-7). For some there were fragmented opportunities to gain an elementary knowledge of Dinka literacy by learning the meaning of written letters as linguistic values.

Contact with members of another language group, such as a neighbouring tribal community, attendance at school, church or mosque, may result in children beginning to construct a second, and even third, personal linguistic system. For example, refugee children who learn a Dinka linguistic system at home, may begin to construct Arabic personal linguistic systems through regular attendance at prayers and services in the mosque. Those who are able to attend an Arabic school extend their Arabic linguistic system by learning to read and write the language. Children with Dinka personal linguistic systems who were forced to flee to Kenya to escape the horrors of war, developed Swahili personal cultural systems as a result of living in refugee camps. Sometimes they had the chance to extend their Swahili personal cultural systems through learning basic literacy skills as observed by Buckmaster, 2/7/2013 and other sources (Community Relations Section of DIAC, 2012; Guong & Lindemann, 2011).

When the Dinka-speaking refugees arrived in South Australia, they were confronted with the need to learn English, the linguistic value system used as the common language in their new country. The children and young people learned personal linguistic systems in English through the South Australian school (Burgoyne & Hull, 2007; Ribeiro, 2006). They then had a choice (according to family circumstances) of adding English to their mother tongue Dinka, suffering the loss or deterioration of Dinka or even adding another language depending on the opportunities available in the school.

***Religious values.*** Religious beliefs and practices are another area of cultural life where particular groups have developed their own distinctive religious values. Objects such as church buildings, temples or mosques, sacred books and writings, artefacts like statues and tombs, crosses, and crucifixes take on meanings specifically related to the group's religion. In addition, particular words and ideas like faith, redemption, revenge, reincarnation or redemption are given distinctive and important meanings in statements of religious belief, while religious practices like midday prayers on Sunday Mass and services or fasting and meditation are important means of regularly reinforcing these religious meanings and their implications for everyday life (Smolicz, 1979).

Usually it is possible to be an active member of only one religious group, Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, Jewish or Sikh, for example, at any given time. This is because their core belief systems and often their religious rites, are not compatible (Smolicz, 1994a). Even more importantly, most religious groups expect their members to show allegiance to their particular religious values and to reject beliefs and practices that run counter to their established values. In some religious groups the sanction of excommunication and exclusion from membership is invoked against those who persist in deviant beliefs. Moreover the rivalry between exclusivist religious groups has often been the cause of wars; in the Sudan, the religion-based civil war originated in the enmity existing between the Christian groups in the South and those of the Islamic faith in the North (Community Relations Section of DIAC, 2012; Ribeiro, 2006; "Think Big," 2013). In their link to rivalry and exclusion, religious values are different from linguistic values, where the learning of a new language does not necessarily involve the denunciation or loss of any language learned earlier (Smolicz, 1992, p. 4).

The religious beliefs and practices that have come down through generations of Christian and Islamic, Jewish and Buddhist communities, for example, constitute each group's religious values. Children learn religious and moral values from the stories of parents and grandparents, and the example of their lives in participating in the religious rituals and festivities of their group according to Buckmaster, 2/7/2013 and Guong (Guong & Lindemann, 2011). Over time young people develop their own personal religious systems of belief and practice. Contact with rival religious groups, such as the arrival of colonial Christian missionaries in many places in Africa, have proved challenging for traditional community beliefs and practices. Individuals have to decide to follow the new religious values or cling to the old (Achebe, 1958; Lema, 1981). In the former case, individuals must construct new personal religious systems based on the religious values of the new group they have joined. There is also the possibility that contact with a secular society which puts little emphasis on religious beliefs and practices, could lead newcomers to adopt a more secular position for themselves.

Any change in religious allegiance may well have implications for an individual's personal, linguistic, and social systems as well. To take one possible example, a Dinka Christian's decision to become a Muslim would mean learning Arabic in order to participate in religious prayers and services and read the Qu'ran. The individual's

personal social system would also change dramatically with almost certain repudiation by Christian family members and friends and the incorporation of Islamic individuals. Exposure to competing systems of religious values in a new society can result in a range of immigrant responses (Maadad, 2009, p. 18). It is important to elaborate these possibilities, since little is known about the personal adaptation of South Sudanese refugees to the new religious values they encounter in the Australian context (Foundation House, 2005; Sudanese Online Research Association, 2011)

***Educational values.*** The process of education, by which individuals learn new knowledge and skills, as well as new understandings and meanings, is an area of life like religion, where individuals can encounter competing cultural values. Group educational values, as the taken-for-granted meanings given to education, differ widely across societies. In some cultural contexts, education is predominantly informal learning, where children learn from the adults they are associated with in everyday activities. For those in other cultural contexts, education means formal attendance at school, at set hours and over a number of years, some or all of which may be compulsory. In the early years of Christian mission schools in many parts of Africa, such as the Kilimanjaro region of East Africa, these two educational approaches existed side by side (Lema, 1981).

Within a given society there may be socio-economic, ethnic, religious or special interest groups for activities like sport and music which further differentiate educational meanings (Smolicz & Moody, 1978). For example, schools and educational programs provided by religious groups, such as Buddhist, Islamic, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran or other Protestant organisations, incorporate their particular religious values, in the form of their religious beliefs and practices, into their students' learning. For some ethnic cultural groups feeling that their survival is under threat, education means primarily the transmission of their cultural and linguistic heritage to the next generation of young people (Smolicz & Secombe, 1977).

Some families and communities in the middle socio-economic range, see education in very instrumental terms, as providing the basic knowledge and technical skills needed for secure employment in a skilled trade. Others of higher socio-economic status regard education as an economic asset, providing the means for a luxurious and highflying lifestyle. In contrast, there are some sub-groups for whom education is an intrinsic value, to be pursued for the personal development and enrichment of the individual in body,

mind and spirit and for the way this can contribute to the culture of the group. Such differences were reported in a recent comparison of educational values in Australia, and Singapore in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Smith, 2014).

These examples illustrate some of the range of different educational values that may be found within and across societies. In this case, it is important to ask what happens to personal educational systems. In the trajectory of the lives of some young people, the educational values they learn at home are confirmed by those they encounter at school, in higher education and in their eventual professional occupations. As a result, their personal education systems are fully established within this one set of educational values.

Other young people find that the educational values of their home are at odds with those of the schools they attend or with other educational values they encounter in special interest groups or in work situations. Young immigrants, such as the South Sudanese refugees, often face even greater differences in the educational values they are exposed to. In these cases, personal educational systems may show considerable variation, as individuals make choices among the educational values they have experienced and decide the extent and type of learning they wish to pursue. It appears that these values have not been investigated to date.

### **Personal Cultural Systems in a Plural Society**

Smolicz and Secombe (1981, p. 20) provided a table which set out a typology of four forms of personal adaptation to the challenges and possibilities of having access to more than one culture in a plural society. On the one hand, there were the Anglo-Australian cultural patterns of mainstream society and the Australian school; on the other hand, the differing language and cultural patterns of the newcomers' home and family life. The adaptations are conceptualized, in terms of humanistic sociology, as personal systems of cultural values that individuals construct for themselves from the key cultural values they encounter in the groups they have contact with.

Some immigrants were anxious to assimilate to English and mainstream Anglo-Australian patterns of life as quickly as possible, even though some residual aspects, such as an accent, often remained. Smolicz and Secombe called this first form of adaptation 'conformism', based on the value orientation of 'dominant monism', since the personal

cultural systems of the individuals concerned were made up mainly of cultural values from the dominant group.

Others, particularly wives and mothers, who were not working and had little contact with mainstream society, maintained the language and cultural patterns they had brought with them to Australia. Their lives were focussed on their family and their own ethnic community's organisations, often quite apart from mainstream Australian society. 'Separatism' was the name given to this second sort of adaptation, which had as its basis the value orientation of 'external cultural pluralism' where the pluralism was observable and evident in society. Under this orientation, personal cultural systems were made up mainly of values from the minority ethnic group.

Other immigrants found themselves working alongside mainstream Australians, or had all or most of their schooling in Australia, while their family life remained centred on their parents' ethnic culture. They had the opportunity to learn both cultures and make use of each in the appropriate context. The term used for this third form of adaptation was 'dual system interaction', in the sense that it involved some degree of bilingualism and biculturalism. It was based on the value orientation of 'internal cultural pluralism' in which the pluralism was evident within the individuals concerned, in that they had dual personal cultural systems in the various areas of life, one based on mainstream cultural values; the other on the ethnic minority values of the family.

The fourth form of adaptation involved the merging or hybridization of cultural patterns from two or more groups. This 'synthesis type interaction' resulted in a single new amalgam, recognizably different from either of its sources. This form of adaptation is most often seen in particular areas of culture, such as food or family patterns, or historically in the development of a language like English, and some particular forms of art and music. In this situation, individuals have a single personal cultural system in an area of life in which there is a mix of cultural values from various groups. It should be noted, however, that this sort of hybrid is not usually possible in an area such as languages, where such a mix would be regarded as interference.

From cultural data provided by immigrant or refugee participants, through spoken or written comments, it is possible to identify which of these personal adaptations they have been making over the period of their settlement in Adelaide.

## **Interpreting Cultural Data**

Where individuals write about their life experiences in a memoir, or diary, personal statement responding to open-ended questions, or alternatively talk to an interviewer who later transcribes their remarks, researchers have access to what Znaniecki called 'cultural data' (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, p. 4). These consist of information about the individuals' personal thoughts and feelings concerning their past experiences, their current situation and their actions within it. These comments from individuals provide insights not only into the culture of the groups they have participated in, but also into their own personal cultural adaptation to their situation.

*The Humanistic co-efficient.* Znaniecki maintained that the role of humanistic sociological researchers was to interpret cultural data from the perspective of those who participated in the research by providing their personal views on the issues being investigated. Researchers who set aside their own personal judgements and perspectives about a cultural situation, in order to understand it through the eyes of the participants, were using the humanistic coefficient in interpreting their data (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, p. 4). They were recognising that the data belonged not to them as researchers, but to the participants who had shared their cultural experiences as the basis for research analysis. In this way researchers could gain an insider's understanding of the cultural group being studied and the actions of individual group members. Applying the humanistic coefficient to the cultural data provided by South Sudanese refugee students was expected to provide new insights and understandings of their learning experiences in their homeland and in Adelaide, where they had settled as refugees.

*Definition of the Situation.* A particular example of the application of the humanistic coefficient is provided by the term 'definition of the situation'. Understanding the participants' views involves recognising their definition of the situation they find themselves in. The phrase is used often in Thomas and Znaniecki's study of Polish peasants who emigrated to Western Europe or America. However, it originated in the work of Thomas, as Znaniecki acknowledged in the discussion following Blumer's 1939 critique of their joint Polish peasant study. As Secombe (Secombe, 1997, p. 93) explained, Thomas defended the importance of the term by quoting his own writings:

*A document prepared by one compensating for a feeling of inferiority or elaborating a delusion of persecution is as far as possible from objective reality, but the subject's view*

*of the situation, how he (sic) regards it, may be the most important element for interpretation. Very often it is the wide discrepancy between the situation as it seems to others and the situation as it seems to the individual that brings about the overt behaviour...if men (sic) define situations as real, they are real in their consequences (Blumer, 1939, p. 85).*

Take, for example, refugee students who find the Anglo-Australian culture of the school to be strange and alien in the emphasis that is put on individual independence and performance. This definition of their situation is likely to lead them to maintain strong ties within the comfortable security of their own family and community and to avoid contact with Australian young people of other backgrounds apart from the school. Other refugee students in contrast are attracted to the pop culture of young people in Australia, and particularly the independence of young people to enjoy themselves outside the restrictions of family life. Such an assessment of their situation could lead young people to minimise family contact and even to break all family ties and find a way of living in the mainstream Australian community.

### **Key Concepts in Symbolic Interactionism**

Mead's theory focusses on what happens when individuals as active agents in their context, interact with one another. He sees symbols as meanings 'arising in the process of interaction between people' (Blumer, 1969, p. 4). He seeks to understand how the process of creating meaning through social interaction actually takes place. The focus of Mead's symbolic interactionist theory is social interaction which involves individuals in interpreting, or giving meaning to, the actions of others before making a response of their own (Blumer, 1969, pp. 8-9).

This process can be seen to complement humanistic sociological theory, helping to explain in particular how individuals develop what Smolicz (Secombe & Zajda, 1999; 1979) termed their 'personal cultural systems'. It highlights the creative way individuals such as the South Sudanese refugee students incorporate meanings in various areas of life into on-going personal, linguistic, social, religious and educational systems.

### **Creating Meaning**

According to Charon (2010), central to Symbolic Interactionism is the concept of individuals as active, social and thinking human participants who can define their

personal situation for themselves. In Mead's theory, however, the capacity of individuals to define the situation for themselves refers to the ever-changing and transient assessment they make in order to continue 'the extended connection of actions that make up so much of human group life' (Blumer, 1969, p. 19). Thomas and Znaniecki's 'definition of a situation' involves an evaluation of a situation which is broader in scope and sustained over a period of time, such as an individual assessing his career possibilities, or the desirability of a divorce or an immigrant weighing up prospects of achievement in a new country.

The essence of Symbolic Interactionism, as Prus (2010) pointed out, is that the individual capacity for defining self and situation depends on interaction with others in human groups. In this sense, 'life in groups is constantly an "intersubjective" experience," made meaningful through community based linguistic exchange' (2010, p. 514). Individuals are creating meaning when they give a name and a function to objects in the life of their group, and as they develop viewpoints, which reflect the group worlds they inhabit. This process is facilitated once individuals are familiar with the group's language and can use its meanings in their communication. Thus in Mead's theory, meanings are regarded 'as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact' (Blumer, 1969, p. 5).

Perhaps the most important and complex example of meaning making relates to the individual's sense of self. Mead's conceptualisation of this process represents one of his most distinctive and insightful contributions to sociological understanding (1934, pp. 173-178). It would appear to be particularly relevant for an in-depth understanding of the sense of self to be found among South Sudanese refugee students in Adelaide secondary schools.

### **Self and Others**

In Mead's view, the actual role of individuals in the making of meaning includes creating their own sense of self. Self for Mead does not have either biological or psychological origins, but develops essentially as a social process through which individuals develop their own awareness of who they are. This sense of self is created out of their interaction with others (Morris, 1934). Further, language as 'an objective phenomenon of interaction within a social group' provides the means for this emergence of the sense of self (Morris,



1934, p. xvi). The presence of others and the possibility of interaction with them are thus pre-requisites for the individual's creation of a sense of self.

In his conceptualisation Mead distinguishes two parts of an individual's 'complete self', which he referred to as the 'I' and the 'me' (1934, pp. 173-178).

***The 'me' and the 'generalized other'***. In the course of social interaction individuals become conscious of their selves as being separate, or apart, from the others with whom they are interacting. In some contexts, like children at play, interaction involves acting in ways that fit the patterns and expectations of others. In this sort of interaction each individual is the object of the others' activities. Even though they may not personally know the other individuals involved in the interaction, they become aware of that part of themselves which is the object of the activities of others, that part of the 'self' which Mead referred to as the 'me'.

In such interaction, individuals seek to identify the action required of them by the others and to model their actions on others in the group. Mead's term for the others involved in this form of 'interaction' is 'the generalized other', suggesting that the level of social interaction involved remains rather formal and distant, lacking personal intimacy or depth of interpersonal understanding. The 'me' of 'self' can thus be seen as a reflection of social interaction at the general level.

***The 'I' and 'significant others'***. In contrast, individuals' awareness of the 'I' part of themselves emerges out of interaction with those whom Mead called 'significant others'. These are the people with whom individuals have frequent and intimate contact, such as immediate family members and close personal friends. In this safe and familiar context, they are encouraged to think of new possibilities of action for themselves in responding to interaction among people they trust and know. Moreover, the 'I's capacity for independent action has important social repercussions. Each action of the 'I' as a 'reflective social self' (Morris, 1934, p. xxvi) has the effect of changing 'the social situation to some degree, slightly for the most part, greatly in the case of the genius and the leader' (Morris, 1934, p. xxv).

In summarising these two social processes in the lives of individuals, Blumer (1969, p. 8) pointed to the ongoing complexity of the dual sides of social interaction in a group or organisation. 'At any given point...there are two concurrent processes in which people

are defining each other's perspectives and the individual, through self-interaction is re-defining his [*sic*] own perspective.'

Mead's distinction between the two sides of self, as related to different types of social interaction, has interesting parallels with the Smolicz (1979) distinction between primary and secondary personal social systems. While Smolicz provides insights into different patterns of primary and secondary relations across cultures, Mead links the two different social patterns with the different forms of self. The way in which Mead has distinguished the 'I' and the 'me' of the self, and their emergence through different patterns of social interaction with others, seems particularly relevant for understanding the sense of self revealed by the South Sudanese refugee students in reflecting on their life and learning in southern Sudan and Adelaide.

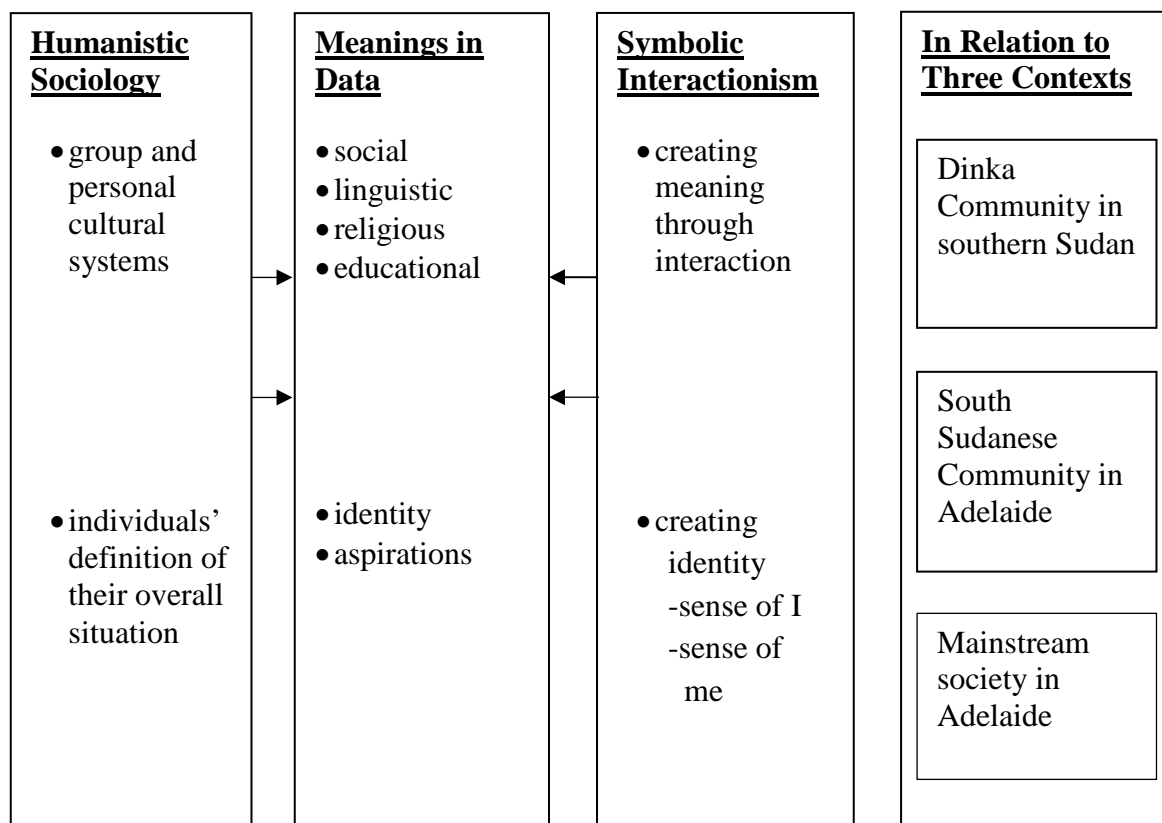
## **Conclusion**

The overlapping concepts of Humanistic Sociology and Symbolic Interactionism discussed above are those: which seem particularly useful in understanding the thoughts, reflections and actions of South Sudanese students in their overall life and learning experiences. The concepts drawn from Znaniecki are concerned with understanding how individuals make use of shared meanings or cultural values, which they learn in their family and community, in their own actions and how this process can lead to changes in the values of the group's cultural heritage. The concepts drawn from Mead's theory see 'meaning as existing in the process of interaction between people' (Blumer, 1969, p. 4). They help to clarify how this process of creating meaning through social interaction actually takes place.

Figure 3.1 below seeks to show how the concepts discussed have been used for the interpretation of data in the left-hand column, the concepts derived from humanistic sociology are listed, while the concepts from symbolic interactionism are given in the third column. Both sets of concepts are used to understand the meanings given by the South Sudanese refugee students to the life and learning experiences, which are represented in the second columns between the two sets of concepts. The concepts, in the top half of the diagram relate to social, linguistic, educational and religious meanings in the participants' experience. The concepts, in the lower half of the diagram, are important for the insights they can provide in relation to the South Sudanese students' sense of

identity and aspirations for the future. Together these concepts can help to reveal the way the South Sudanese refugee students are active participants in the social and cultural contexts of their lives.

Figure 3. 1 Concepts for Analysing Life & Learning Experiences of South Sudanese Refugee Secondary students



These concepts for understanding the South Sudanese refugee student data, need to be applied in three different contexts that the students lived in. These are indicated on the right -hand side of the diagram. The initial context to be considered was the student's southern Sudan homeland. The next context was the mainstream Adelaide society which accepted the students and their families as refugees. Their participation as students in Adelaide secondary schools where they were immersed in the dominant mainstream Australian culture, opened up the possibility of their assimilation to the culture of their

new country, and the issue of how far they would continue to participate in the culture of the South Sudanese community. Earlier studies of immigrants and refugees (Maadad, 2009; Martin, 1978; Smolicz & Secombe, 1981) have pointed to the importance of studying ethnic community life in Australia. Hence the South Sudanese community in Adelaide needed to be recognised as the third cultural context for the students' learning and living experiences. In this third family and community-based context, the refugees were in a position to make use of two sets of cultural values: firstly, those Dinka community values of their homeland which they wished to maintain; and secondly, those Anglo-Celtic values based on mainstream Adelaide society that they found useful to adopt.

The next chapter considers the research method adopted for studying the South Sudanese refugee students, as well as the procedures used for gathering and analysing the data.

## **Chapter Four: Research Methodology**

### **Adopting a Qualitative Research Approach**

This small-scale study aimed to investigate the life and learning experiences of South Sudanese-born refugee students attending Adelaide secondary schools. A qualitative research approach, which allowed the participants to describe and reflect on their experiences in their own words, seemed most appropriate. The data gathered could then be analysed in terms of the concepts discussed in the previous chapter to understand the nature and extent of their learning experiences and cultural adaptation. Previous Humanistic Sociological and Symbolic Interactionist studies had employed qualitative methods in order to better understand the how small groups of respondents adapted to living in multicultural Australia (Maniam, 2011; Smolicz, 1986; Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, 1989; Yu, 2014).

Studies in the Humanistic Sociological tradition have often sourced their data from written personal documents, such as diaries, letters and memoirs, as well as comments written in response to open-ended questions (Secombe & Zajda, 1999). Sometimes, where participants preferred to talk rather than write, oral memoirs have proved to be an effective alternative (Debela 1995; Maadad, 2009; Smolicz, Lee, Murugaian, & Secombe, 1990) . These were based on open-ended interviews which were audio-taped and later transcribed for analysis by the researchers. Studies based on Symbolic Interactionist theory, such as Yu (2014) have more often relied on open-ended, in-depth interviews.

In the case of the South Sudanese refugee secondary students in this study, whose exposure to literacy in English was comparatively recent, it was considered that a semi-structured interview was the most effective means of collecting data. As the researcher, I knew from my teaching experience that the students enjoyed talking and considered that open-ended questions would encourage them to describe their learning experiences in some detail and explain their thoughts and feelings about the benefits and dilemmas of their situation. The interviews were taped and later transcribed by myself. The data from the interviews were then analysed as written text.

### **The Researcher's Role**

In this study a key role of the researcher was to prepare and carry out the interviews. In each interview, the most important thing was to listen carefully and sympathetically to

the participants in order to encourage them to talk as openly and freely as possible (Dean & Whyte, 1958, p. 38). Attentive listening was also required for transcribing the interviews. This process was an invaluable opportunity to become thoroughly familiar with what each participant said. At the next stage of analysing the interview data, the researcher applied the humanistic coefficient by interpreting the data, from the perspective of the South Sudanese students themselves. In this process the concepts outlined in Chapter 3 proved to be most useful.

It is important to acknowledge that as the researcher, my experiences in teaching English as a Second Language as well as modern languages contributed to the way I approached the researcher's role. Previously, I had worked overseas in Singapore, teaching and mixing with many cultures. I had also recruited international students regularly liaising with overseas agents and visiting the students and their families in their own countries throughout Asia. Such close contact with other languages and other cultures has developed an openness to and interest in such experiences.

Most importantly, immediately before undertaking this research, I had for five years interacted with South Sudanese and other African students in an Adelaide secondary school, in my roles as ESL teacher and Co-ordinator of Refugees. It was such experiences which led me to investigate the learning experiences of the South Sudanese refugee students for my PhD research. Interaction with South Sudanese students had provided many opportunities to observe the aspects of their cultural background which impinged on their school learning. My observations, as the researcher, and reflections based on this teaching experience are discussed at relevant places in the analysis of data.

### **Ethics Approval**

Ethics approval for this research study was obtained from the University of Adelaide's Human Research Ethics Committee. The letter of approval for the project (H-290-2011) is included in Appendix B. Once this was granted, an application was then made to the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD), using its guidelines, for permission to interview South Sudanese students in government schools. The subsequent letter of permission (DECD CS/11/106-2.1) received from DECD is included in Appendix B. In the case of the Catholic schools, which needed to be contacted individually for permission to interview South Sudanese refugee students, a letter verifying a police check clearance was received from the Catholic Archdiocese and produced when contacting schools for research purposes.

Since the refugee student participants were aged between 11 and 16, it was necessary to have the written consent of their parents or guardians, as well as the participants themselves. Each student contacted was given a package that included an information sheet about the research and its aims, as well as details of how the interviews with the student participants would be conducted. There was an explanation of how they could withdraw if they no longer wished to participate. Copies of these documents are in Appendix B.

The consent form for parents or guardians and students to sign was included in the package; it needed to be completed and returned before the researcher proceeded with arrangements for the interview. These consent forms were kept locked away, in a separate place from the tapes and transcripts of the interviews. In this way, the anonymity of the participants in this study was safeguarded. For the writing up process, and in any resulting publications, participants were given an identifying code and number.

### **Gathering the Data**

The gathering of the data proved to be a complex process, involving a number of separate steps, starting with the preparation of a schedule of interview questions.

*Preparing the Interview Questions.* A semi-structured interview schedule was developed, based on open-ended questions. Through this approach, it was hoped to provide for some commonality across all interviews, in terms of the range of topics discussed, while allowing flexibility and freedom to individual participants to describe at length those aspects that were of greatest interest and concern to them. The questions were based on issues which the previous studies reviewed in Chapter 2 had suggested as most important for young immigrants, particularly refugees, attending secondary schools. The wording of the questions allowed for a number of cross-checks and balances in the course of the interview to clarify any ambiguity, ensure consistency of facts, and proper understanding of each participant's comments.

In December 2011, the questions were discussed in detail with the DECD's School Counsellor in regard to their suitability for the intended participants and also in informal telephone conversations with two young South Sudanese adults who had left school. Adjustments were made to the wording and order of the questions as a result of the pilot interviews. The initial set of questions was found to be too general, so that the responses themselves were too general or consisted of sweeping statements with insufficient detail.

Thus, I broke up the questions into specific topics and through the use of prompting questions, asked for concrete details together with initial personal observations from the interviewees. The actual questions related to the dot points listed under the various headings in Figure 4.2 at the end of the chapter. The final schedule of questions was included in the Ethics Applications to the University of Adelaide and DECD. A copy of the schedule of interview questions is included in Appendix A.

***Contacting the Student Participants.*** Potential participants for this study were identified initially through contacting various South Sudanese community groups in Adelaide, and through recommendations of friends, teachers, and colleagues, as well as a few acquaintances and people recognised as ‘knowledgeable’ in relation to the South Sudanese community. The next step was to contact the secondary schools, which the students were attending for permission to approach them and see if they were willing to be interviewed.

Initially I telephoned and spoke to principals of various secondary schools explaining the aims of the research and types of questions to be asked of the students. Two school principals gave permission for the study to be conducted at their schools and agreed to my meeting the students beforehand to explain the purpose and parameters of the study. Interviews were to proceed only if the students and parents gave consent.

The principal of the specialised government school for languages, referred me to the vice-principal to discuss details of time and place of the Dinka language classes together with the names of the teachers. I visited several classes and explained the study to the teachers and asked for the most acceptable manner of informing and conducting the interviews with the students. It was decided that I would be introduced to the students and then deliver a short explanation of the purpose and logistics of the student interviews and hand out the information packages to interested students for their subsequent perusal.

The Catholic college principal referred me to the school Community Liaison Officer to discuss the practical arrangements of firstly meeting the students at the weekly Homework Club held each Thursday after school in the school library and also to visiting an African Parents’ Information Night being held at the school on a regular monthly weeknight. The fact that I was a former member of the teaching staff and thus well known to all staff and students facilitated the process. I then visited several Homework Club meetings and spoke to students individually. A number of students were interested and



accepted the information package to take home and return the following week with the consent form signed. I also attended the African Parents' Information Night and was introduced by the principal. During the evening, I spoke to several parents and obtained written permission for their children to participate in the study. Not all of the students at the Homework Club remembered to return the consent forms during the Homework Club and it took a number of visits for me to obtain the signed consent forms. This was also the case for the government school which held its language classes after school.

Once the consent forms were returned, I was able to go ahead and confirm a time and place for the interview. Several follow up telephone calls and email enquiries were required to check the agreed time and the attendance of individual students. All of the students who were contacted by me responded favourably to participating in the study. A small number forgot the time of their planned interview and had to be recontacted. They were very apologetic and happy to arrange another time to be interviewed.

***Conducting the Interviews.*** In the end nineteen South Sudanese secondary students from two schools, the specialised government school for languages and a Catholic secondary school, were interviewed. In addition, interviews were held with two teachers of Dinka, one from the government secondary school and the other from an ethnic community school. Most of the students were interviewed once for around one hour. Two students agreed to a follow up interview in order to discuss their studies, their attitudes to their studies and to their teachers in more detail. The interviews with the two teachers, one conducted in secondary school staffroom and the other in the researcher's university office, proved to be rather longer than the students, as the teachers spoke in detail about issues faced by students and parents in the South Sudanese community.

Although each interview tended to follow the line of discussion which emerged as the interview progressed, there was a common set of topics covered in each case. Parents or guardians were invited to be present, but none accepted the invitation. This meant that I could focus on interviewing the students and ensuring that their voices were clearly heard and understood. The interviews were all conducted in English, since it was found that an interpreter was not necessary to assist either with the recruitment process or with the interview itself. The students had no difficulties in understanding my questions and in answering them in English in their own way, often in considerable detail. The interviews were all audiotaped for later transcription and analysis.

A number of ethical issues were taken into account in conducting the interviews. The first related to cultural sensitivity, both in terms of the content of the interview questions and the manner of approaching the participants in asking the questions. Another important concern for me was to provide for the safety and comfort of the participants in the course of the interview. The venue for the interview, for example, was agreed to by the student participants, their parents or guardians and the researcher. In practice, all interviews for both students and teachers (with the exception of the Ethnic School teacher) were held in their respective schools. Reception was informed of my arrival and was aware of my exact location, in a room that was quiet, but visible to the general public in the school.

No adverse reactions had been anticipated to the interview which provided an opportunity for participants to share their stories and reflect on their learning experiences. If participants had evidenced such reactions, every care would have been taken to relieve their discomfort and to suggest further counselling if necessary. Furthermore, I had checked the contact details for the parents or guardians of all participants, so that I could contact them immediately in the event of adverse reactions. I allowed the interviewees to peruse all the questions first to ensure they were fully informed of the questions themselves. At times when I sensed that the interviewees were unsure, or possibly uncomfortable, I reworded the open-ended questions. This meant that I followed the interviewee's sense of comfort and ease surrounding the various topics rather than rigidly adhering to the order and wording of the questions set. I had devised and used a list of prompting questions in order to facilitate the students' recall and provide a suitable referent.

In fact, my observations were that both the students and the teachers were grateful to have the chance to talk about their experiences to someone who showed a genuine interest in their situation. The students gave the impression that they felt privileged to be asked to participate in the research. They recognised that the interview was an opportunity for their views to be aired on a one-to-one basis, but also for their experiences to be made public through the research study. I felt that for them it was like 'their day in court'. All of them thanked me at the end of the interview and 'jostled' to be the next interviewee when I asked, 'Who is to be next?' in the government secondary class. Similarly, the two teachers showed, in my opinion and observation, that they not only wanted to broadcast their cultural views and learning styles but also, in some way, to effect change in the South Australian departmental processes of understanding and dealing sensitively with the unique South Sudanese community and the students' family issues.

An additional source of data became available in the course of this research study in the form of three SACE Stage 2 Year 12 Investigations<sup>12</sup> written by Dinka-speaking South Sudanese refugee students. These student investigations represented personal primary data, publicly available, on topics concerned with language and culture in South Sudan. They were analysed in the same manner as the interview data in order to supplement the overall findings.

### **Analysis of Interview Data**

***Preliminary Reading of Transcripts.*** A careful reading of all the interview transcripts was the necessary preliminary step to data analysis. This provided a good overview of all the data available, as well as the perspective of each participant in responding to the questions asked. It also helped to pinpoint any potential problems or difficulties in the interpretation of the responses given.

***Concrete Facts.*** From the initial reading, it was possible to distinguish between the concrete and cultural facts related to each participant. The table drawn up by Smolicz and Secombe (1981, p. 27) served as a guideline in this process. Concrete facts about the background of each participant, such as their gender, their school level, their year of arrival and languages known in Australia, are provided in Table 4.1 below. Two other Concrete Fact Tables on Group Membership are presented in Appendices D and E, respectively.

As evident in Table 4.1, there were two male South Sudanese refugee teachers, eight males and eleven female South Sudanese refugee secondary students. The majority of the students were in Year 12 (13/19) with three in Year 11, two in Year 10 and one in Year 9. The most common years of arrival were 2004-2006 (10/21) followed by 2007-2010 (5/21), then 2001-2003(4 /21) and lastly 1998-2000 (2/21). This overall pattern of Sudanese migration to South Australia is echoed in and supported by the available statistics from the Migration Museum of SA (2003). Languages known included: Dinka; Swahili which was most likely due to have experienced life in a refugee camp; Arabic from six students and one teacher, usually the result of living in Egypt; or northern Sudan; and English, derived mainly from attendance at a mainstream school in Adelaide. The 2011 Census (Community Relations Section of DIAC, 2012) and recent confidential data

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<sup>12</sup> The *Language and Culture* Investigation is the SACE Year 12 subject offered for speakers of other languages (for example, Dinka) not available as individual SACE subjects. This SACE subject was discussed in Curriculum Issues in Chapter 2.

from DECD (Marriner, 2015) confirmed the existence and place of these languages spoken at home in Australia by South Sudanese refugees.

Table 4. 1 Participants Describing Concrete Background Facts

Participant	Gender	School Year Level	Year of Arrival, Australia	Languages Known: D=Dinka A=Arabic S=Swahili E=English
<b>TEACHER</b>				
TM1	M	n/a	1998	D,A,S,E
TM2	M	n/a	2004	D,S,E
<b>STUDENT</b>				
NF1	F	12	2003	D,S,E
NM2	M	12	2005	D,A,S,E
NM3	M	12	2004	D,A,S,E
NM4	M	12	2003	D,A,S,E
LM1	F	12	2000	D,S,E
LM2	M	12	2004	D,A,S,E
LF3	F	12	2008	D,S,E
LF4	F	12	2003	D,S,E
LF5	F	12	2005	D,S,E
LM6	M	12	2008	D,S,E
LF7	F	12	2004	D,S,E
LM8	M	10	2007	D,S,E
LF9	F	12	2007	D,S,E
LF10	F	12	2001	D,A,S,E
LM11	M	9	2004	D,A,S,E
LF12	F	10	2004	D,S,E
LF13	F	11	2007	D,S,E
LF14	F	11	2004	D,S,E
LF15	F	11	2006	D,S,E
<b>TOTALS</b>	Students:8M & 11F Teachers:2M	Yr9:1 Yr10:2 Yr11:3 Yr12:13	1998-2000:2 2001-2003:4 2004-2006:10 2007-2010:5	D= 21 A=7 S= 21 E=21

The notation is as follows: T = teacher; S = student; M = Male; F=Female; N =Catholic college and L = specialised government school for languages.

When interpreting the thoughts and ideas expressed by a participant during the interview, it is essential to take account of the concrete fact background of the interviewee. In addition to gender, which was recorded in the notation used to identify each participant, knowing their year level and the time of their arrival in Australia, proved to be significant in interpreting what was said. In humanistic sociological analysis, it is important to understand who it is that is expressing a given opinion and what his or her context is.

**Cultural Facts.** In contrast to concrete facts, cultural facts refer to the personal thoughts and feelings, aspirations and opinions of the participants, as far as they discussed these in their interviews. These are important in revealing the extent and nature of the

interviewees' personal cultural systems in various areas of life, as well as their sense of identity and their definition of their situation. Whereas concrete facts can be challenged and checked against other reliable sources of information, cultural facts need to be accepted as statements of each individual's state of mind, at the time of the interview. Only the participants themselves are the arbiters of what they think and feel, although the concerns and thoughts uppermost in their minds may change in other contexts and at other times (Secombe, 1997).

The humanistic sociological approach to personal statements, such as those collected through interviewing a small set of participants, is to accept what has been said as authentic and trustworthy in reflecting what each participant felt and thought at the time of the interview. Where contradictions or ambiguities, not clarified during the interview become evident in the transcript, these are juxtaposed so that explanations and further evidence of their meaning can be investigated through a careful re-reading of the transcript. In discussing the participant's views, these ambiguities are fully presented through citing the actual words as they were spoken and recorded, together with the researcher's interpretation of their significance in the life of the individual and their relevance to the study. In this way readers have the opportunity to make their own judgements of the authenticity of the data, perhaps agreeing with, perhaps challenging, or even extending the researcher's analysis.

This approach follows Znaniecki's insistence that the views of participants must be accepted as genuine, until the researcher finds evidence to the contrary. Even then the discovery of an inconsistency or contradiction is not considered to be sufficient grounds for regarding the participant as a liar and/or rejecting the interview as a whole (Secombe, 1997, p. 86). Rather the interview as a whole is accepted by the researcher as an opportunity to explore the inconsistency at a deeper level.

Where there is evidence of seemingly contradictory values existing within the personal cultural values of a particular individual, such as in relation to her/his sense of identity, the researcher is able to make the interpretation that the person concerned has not yet fully resolved the issue at the conscious level. This may be explained by the individual's stage of development or the fact that the competing values are activated in two different contexts (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981, pp. 106-109). A number of earlier humanistic sociological research studies discussed examples of such contradictions found among the respondents.

When the qualitative research study involves a set of participants who have confronted similar life situations, such as the experience of civil war and consequent immigration as a refugee, there is another way to test the authenticity of their comments. Where the details given by most of the participants are comparable, they can be seen to support and confirm one another (Maadad, 2009). At the same time, it is important to allow for the possibility that individual experiences of the same situation and even more, personal responses to it, may vary significantly. The researcher needs to recognise and interpret such individual differences.

The social dynamics of the interview situation (Dean & Whyte, 1958) are another important influence on the data collection in terms of what topics and what details participants felt comfortable in discussing with the researcher, who was clearly identifiable as a white Anglo-Australian teacher. As a result, the researcher was aware of the need to look out for possible issues that were not discussed.

The specific cultural data provided by the 21 participants are presented and analysed in the three chapters that follow. As far as possible, cultural data are presented to the reader in the words of the participants themselves. Citations from the transcripts are indicated in the text by indentation and slightly smaller font and spacing. Their authorship is acknowledged in brackets following each quotation through the notation used to identify each participant in the study.

*Using Emic and Etic Approaches.* The focus of the cultural data analysis in this study was on understanding from their own perspective what the young South Sudanese refugees and two teachers said about their experiences and how they said it, in their own terms. This emphasis did not exclude, however, the possibility of using information from sources other than the participants' interviews, when these heightened understanding of what they said. Similarly, it was helpful to make use of conceptual frameworks that illuminated the comments of the participants and deepened insights into the experiences they described.

The two-pronged approach to analysis of qualitative data gathered in studies that recognise individuals as actors in their social and cultural contexts has been referred to by Kloskowska (1994, p. 43) as the emic and etic approaches (Pike, 1967). She adopted this distinction in the analysis of interview data on family ethnic background and sense of cultural identity among students at Polish universities (Kloskowska, 1994). Emic

analysis focuses on interpreting the participants' own thoughts, feelings and experiences as described in their own terms as personal statements. In contrast, etic analysis relies on the use of information and concepts that come from sources outside the participants' personal data. The point of adding etic analysis, however, is to understand the participants' comments at a deeper level (Kloskowska, 1994). The headings in Figure 4.1 refer to the theoretical concepts used for the etic analysis. The dot points refer to the topics of the actual interview questions used (Appendix A).

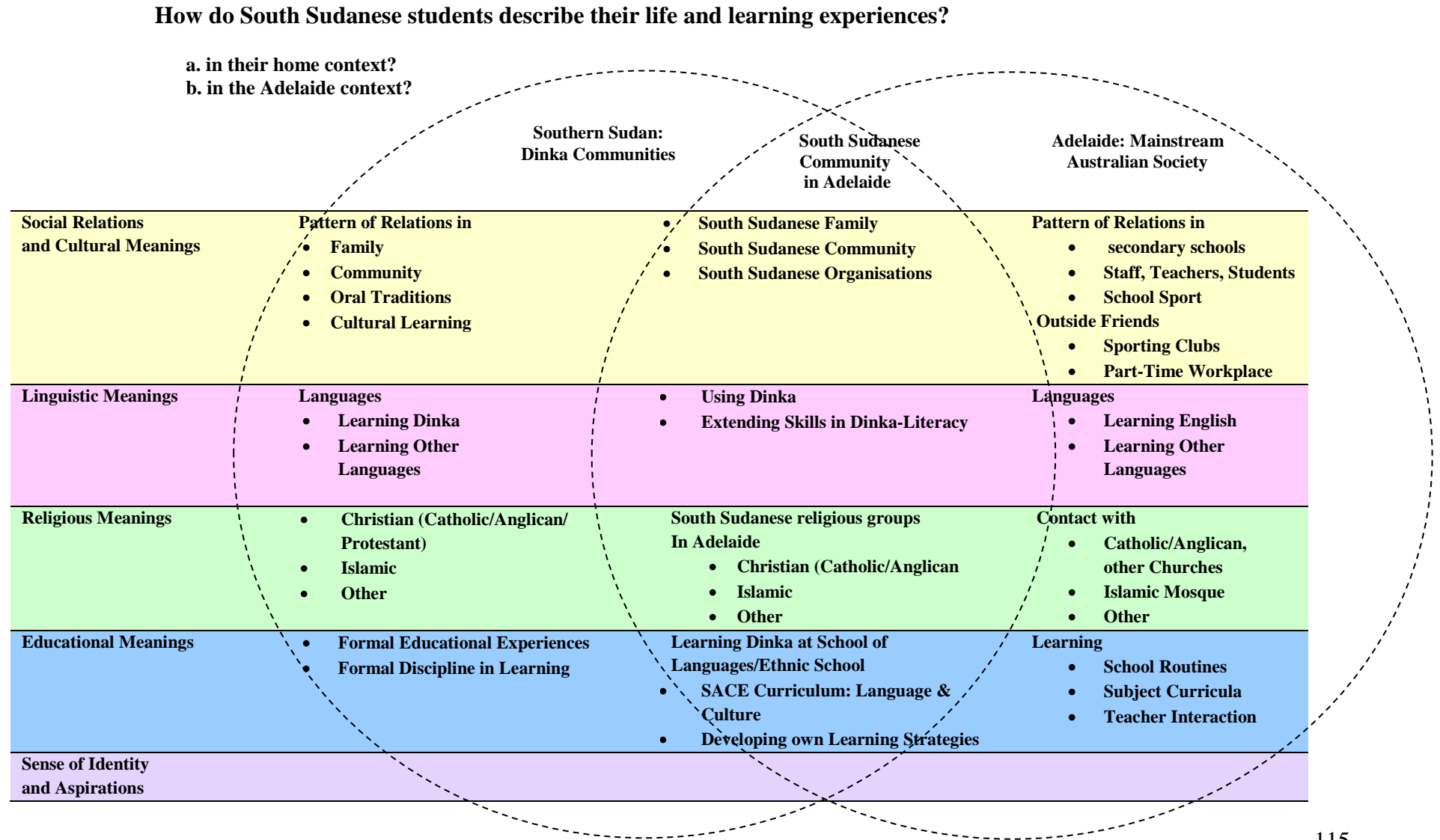
### **Model for Data Analysis**

Figure 4.1 seeks to illustrate how the etic analysis, based on concepts from humanistic sociology and symbolic interactionism, was used as the most appropriate way to organise the analysis of participants' comments. The two key concepts, as highlighted in Figure 3.1 were the cultural meanings which the participants learned and the social relations through which the learnings were achieved. The cultural meanings learned in the various areas of life are represented in the diagram by the horizontal bands of different colours for social, linguistic, educational, religious meaning and identity/aspirations. The vertical columns summarise the various social relations which played a key role in the participants' cultural learning, for example family, community, schools, religious and other groups. The two overlapping circles of the diagram take into account the three different contexts or milieu in which these social relations and cultural meanings exist. After starting with the two contexts of the participants' lives, insights from the two conceptual frameworks led to the creation of the third context of the South Sudanese community in Adelaide. The three contexts become the focus for the data analysis chapters that follow. The context of southern Sudan is considered first, followed by the Adelaide context. The final chapter deals with the context where the first two overlap in the social structures and cultural learning within the South Sudanese community in Adelaide.





Figure 4. 1 Social Relations & the Learning of Cultural Meanings: South Sudanese Students' Experiences





## Chapter Five: Social Relationships and Learning in Dinka Communities in Southern Sudan

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the interviews conducted with nineteen secondary students and two teachers, as they recalled their life and learning experiences in their homeland, the southern part of Sudan. The focus was on identifying the social relationships they described within the family and surrounding community and what the participants remembered learning as they interacted with members of the family, the wider community, religious and school groups. This discussion relates to the top band of the left-hand circle (Figure 4.1) in the conceptual framework diagram at the end of Chapter 4.

Table 5. 1 provides an overview of the *Participants' Concrete Facts on Group Membership* including family, community, schools and religious groups in southern Sudan (see Tables in full for Chapter 5 in Appendix E). In terms of the family group for the twenty-one participants, there were eighteen examples of extended families compared to one response each for the following: mother and extended family; father and extended family; and extended family only. In relation to school groups, eighteen participants attended local schools, one student went to a boarding school, another went to school in Egypt and one had no schooling. In the case of religious groups, fifteen indicated that they attended church, one went to the mosque and five did not report attending church.

According to the theories of humanistic sociology and symbolic interactionism described in Chapter 3, family relationships play a central role in children's learning of the cultural meanings they need for life in their community. The analysis looks first at the people whom the participants mentioned as members of their family. Then there is a discussion of the various cultural meanings, from moral values to words for communication and practical skills for survival, all of which they learned within the context of the family. Whenever possible the words of the participants themselves, taken directly from the transcriptions of the interviews, are used. In some instances, additions or clarifications of their words have been included in square brackets, to assist understanding.

***The Ever-present Reality of War.*** Before presenting the analysis of family relations, it is necessary to acknowledge the way in which the war emerged as an ever-present reality,

in their conversation about life in southern Sudan. It was the inescapable context which affected all aspects of their daily lives provoking fear and threat. As many as nine out of the 21 participants recalled strong and vivid memories of experiencing fear and danger because of the war. (See Table 5.4. *Participants Describing Cultural Meanings Learned through the Family in Southern Sudan*). Participant LF5 recalled that her mother lost two of her young children who were killed walking to the village on the way to school. Even regular church attendance was described by LM8, as ‘not really a good idea...small bomb in there [so] we pray once in a while’. Although NF1 spoke of the ever-present uncertainty, recalling that ‘you don’t know what will happen-you don’t know what can happen-whether your safety is at risk’, NM4, in contrast, had become reconciled to this constant fear of danger: ‘*I was kinda used to it. That was where I’d been born and I was fine with it*’.

In the following discussion of social relations and cultural literacy in the Dinka-speaking communities of southern Sudan, it is important to remember that these patterns of everyday living and learning took place against the backdrop of war that could explode any moment into violence from which they fled in terror.

### **Family Patterns in Southern Sudan**

The ever-constant war affected the nature of the structure and patterns of the family in southern Sudan in Table 5.2 *Participants Describing Family Patterns in Southern Sudan*.

Table 5. 2 Participants Describing Family Patterns in Southern Sudan

<b>Theme</b>	<b>NCC (4)</b>	<b>SOL (15)</b>	<b>Ts (2)</b>	<b>Total (21)</b>
1.Family Patterns in Southern Sudan	1F 3M	10F 5M	2M	21/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

The full numerical analyses of the social relationships and learning in Dinka communities in southern Sudanese families are presented in Tables 5.1-5.9 (Appendix E). Brief snapshot tables of the participants who commented on a particular topic are presented in this chapter, and numbered as 5.2-5.9 in Appendix E. The number of fathers recorded in Appendix E, Table 5.2 on *Participants Describing Family Patterns in Southern Sudan* refers to those whom the participants discussed in describing these patterns of family life in southern Sudan. In contrast, the concrete data summaries in Appendix D, Appendix E,

Table 5.1, as well as Figure 1 in Chapter 8, were based on whether or not the participants made any mention of their father. The totals here are somewhat larger than in Table 5.2, suggesting that there were around six fathers who had not been regularly involved in the life of the family, as the participants remembered it. It is possible that some of these may have been away fighting or already been killed in the conflict.

However, when asked to recall their early years with their family in Sudan before any form of formal schooling took place, most respondents talked in terms of relationships. They tended to mention parents and other family members in the course of describing family life and what they learned in the family. However, the mother was frequently singled out, and the father to a lesser extent as the more distant head of the family in southern Sudanese society (Guong & Lindemann, 2011, pp. 2-6). In a number of families, the father had more than one wife, and the various wives and their children were all part of the same family compound.

The interview comments then made clear how the immersion in family life made relationships with family members and cultural learning inseparable, in the ways suggested by Mead. This is also consistent with the influence of close primary relationships (Blumer, 1969; Smolicz, 1979, 1994b) and also of Mead's 'significant person' (Blumer, 1977) within the family. In the southern Sudanese context, this refers to the extended rather than the immediate family.

***Families with Two Parents and Children.*** The most common pattern revealed by twelve out of the twenty-one participants (12/21) was of a mother, father, children and extended family members often including other wives and children living together, supporting and caring for each other as one total unit. Whilst this was the predominant family structure, not all family members were referred to equally in occurrence and circumstance. The mother was a 'significant person', despite the polygamous nature of some families mentioned, and most commonly referred to as the lead nurturer and teacher. The father was mentioned less but appeared to be revered, 'feared' and seen as the head of the extended family unit (Guong & Lindemann, 2011, pp. 2-6). Participant LM11 summed up his daily early years in a collective family context:

*Also, my dad and my Grandpa used to tell stories and then my mum teaches me how to speak and dress and stuff. Yeah like my mum every day in the morning talk and talk every time got wrong like something was taken away [eg.my soccer ball]. I'd learn for*

*a while and then she'd test me...I did [have many family members] cos my dad had 3 wives so a lot of step most of them were my cousins. I looked up to my dad...yeah but not like a lot. We'd go like driving I'd be like the conductor collecting the money then he stopped that when we went to work [as] a contractor in Sudan. Every day I had to clean the front of the gate. If I didn't clean the front of the gate. I'd get hit Ooh (LM11).*

Whilst the fathers were mentioned, it was more or less fleetingly as many were 'away' (as in LF 13's case whose dad 'was a soldier') and were quite often associated with strictness and discipline. Young lives appeared shaped by the essential daily activities blended with the various members of the extended families and reinforced by physical discipline where needed. There was a sense of unquestioned authority and expectations coming from both parents allied with the cultural celebrations and events of daily life.

***Single Parent with Children and Extended Family.*** The next most common family unit, according to seven out of twenty-one participants, comprised a single parent with children and extended family. This combination of family members involved a single mother (six out of 21) or father (one out of 21) accompanied by extended family members. The data showed the key influence of one parent, yet this was inextricably linked and merged with the members of the extended family. Again, in the absence of the father, male family members, such as brothers, uncles and cousins all played a crucial role in the upbringing and learning of cultural and practical skills. Whilst NM2 described his mother as a central figure, his brothers and male relatives were ever-present and were highlighted in his earliest memories, combined with a firm sense of boundaries, structure and specific duties which he learned from them. NM2 recalled:

*my mum taught me little things like basic things like living and the like before I went to school. My mum had knowledge about living and surviving and stuff. How to grow plants...get water. How to cook a little bit. And to take care of myself. She gave the responsibility to the boys [my eldest brothers] to teach me farming and to do with farming...A lot of uncles would help...we'd just go with family and we'd share. At that stage of life, I grew up with my mum, had not my dad. There were good times and there were bad times. My mum would teach me. It's how you react that matters. First day school I told my mum I don't want to go back to school again. I'm going to get beaten. She said, don't do the wrong thing and you won't get beaten. It's the discipline you know (NM2).*

Participant NM3 echoed the above pattern of constant family support and learning the cultural mores, such as the harsh discipline which was an integral, taken for granted, part of learning in southern Sudan. His earliest family memories were:

*at my cousins at the time and my mum in Africa We have a large family. It's like a compound that you're all related. It's like a village but it's like a big family. That's where you learn from each other. My brother or my sister carry me when we were going to school. My uncle taught me how to do the cultural stuff [role model] pretty much. My cousin showed me how to behave and look after myself. I had relatives and family were quite educated and they helped me along...you'd get into trouble but only once (NM3).*

His last comment shows that in the context of the family, learning was made possible by the effective imposition of discipline.

***Extended Family in Parental Roles.*** The third group, represented by two of the twenty-one participants, where no parents were mentioned as living in the family, applied to LF 15 and TM2. LF15 discussed 'our house' in Kenya where she was from and 'everyone was happy' with no specific mention of her parents. TM2's case was made quite clear as his parents 'went to the bush' and he lived 'with cousins' amidst an atmosphere of constant danger: 'we had to be very careful [otherwise the] Arab [s] will come and kidnap all of them boys and girls'.

However as indicated, members of the extended family, for sixteen out of twenty-one participants, took on parental roles regardless of the presence of parents as in the case of Johnson Maker Adeng ("Think Big," 2013). They came from across the family spectrum and included combinations of grandparent/s, siblings, cousins, uncles and/or aunts overlapping into the three major family patterns. Due to circumstances of the war, family members, including the children, often had to take up nurturing and teaching duties ("Think Big," 2013). LM8 remembered being expected to 'look after my mum's little kid...how to hold him'.

Participant LF5 highlighted the nurturing role that was predominantly carried out by her grandmother, amidst her father's seven wives which included her mother. LF5 'stayed home with my grandma' and remembered her grandmother's 'stories about life and her kids...about life and how to treat others and yourself...she was clever smart woman well known. Hard in that kind of family must do everything the right way'. LF5's birth was especially valued as her mother had lost her other children whilst they were walking to the village during the war. Her mother was left childless and consequently had no status amongst the other wives and mothers. In fact, the extended family [what she referred to as 'They'] said 'that without me [LF5] mum wouldn't be alive. LF5 was subsequently restricted in her activities [for example, dancing and 'what other kids really do'] by both

her grandmother and mother respectively. All in all, LF5 summed up her earliest family memories as: 'I've been really looked after. And raised like a spoilt kid'. Participant NF1, like LF5 previously highlighted, echoed the close bond with her grandma despite having both parents. Her

*happiest time when I was with my Grandma. She said some really interesting things to use in my lifetime. She said something about marriage. Don't feel like you're ever forced. If someone in your family wants you to. It's not pressure or nothing. People think that marriages in Sudan are all arranged-but they're not. You have a choice (NF1).*

In fact, where parents were mentioned infrequently or not at all, relationships with male substitute heads who came from the extended family network were featured. Participants NM2, NM3 and NM4 stressed the importance of older brothers as role models and also uncles as teachers in their upbringing. NM4 remembered being taught English by his uncle. NM2 stated that his 'lot of uncles, would share... caring for cattle'. NM2 explained that it was 'my uncle taught me the cultural stuff' yet it was his male cousin who 'showed me how to behave and look after myself'. The male roles which prioritised the tending to the cattle were echoed in Anglican Archbishop Driver's interview observations as recently as April 6, 2016.

However, negative feelings towards fathers and sometimes brothers were commonly expressed in the interviews. As mentioned previously, LM11's father had three wives: 'none of them [were role models and whilst I] looked up to my dad. Yeah but not like a lot'. LM8 was clear in his choice. 'I don't know him [my dad] I choose not to'. He also expressed fear of his 'older brother kinda scared us back then scared of the consequences'.

In conclusion, the southern Sudanese families tended to have a collectivist pattern with the father as head - where this was available. Overall the warmth and comfort of the mother (Guong & Lindemann, 2011, p. 3) constantly supported by the extended family were personalised and highlighted in the personal voices of participants. The intricacy of the common pattern of multiple mothers/parents/children/relatives together with the firm cultural expectations were made evident and clear from the interviews (Malual, 2014, p. 27). The workings of the relationships with the extended family figures were most considerable in terms of numbers mentioned (16/21). These relationships were primary and between 'significant persons'. Adaptations to the climate of fear and danger (Sandy,



2013) indicated the two shared cultural group meanings; interpretation from social interaction and the essential learning from ‘others’. Although notions of the separate components of Mead’s ‘I/me’ selves were blurred, a number of the participants spoke of interacting more meaningfully with certain parents or extended family members. Here they demonstrated intimate ‘I’ and ‘me’ (Symbolic Interactionism) in the process of learning the cultural meanings of the family (Humanistic Sociology,) against the backdrop of war and uncertainty.

### **Cultural Learning through Family Relationships**

In this section the focus is on the memories of the South Sudanese participants about how and what they learned within the family. Their comments on the way their learning experience was essentially oral as they talked and interacted with various family members are considered first. What they recalled learning, is discussed in terms of moral values, linguistic meanings, creative activities and identity. Tables 5.3 *Participants Describing Oral Traditions of Learning in the Family in Southern Sudan* and 5.4 *Participants Describing Cultural Meanings Learned Through the Family in Southern Sudan* provide a summary. In the former table, participants discussed oral traditions of learning in the family, while in the latter table, they talked about the particular cultural meanings they learned in this way.

Table 5. 3 Participants Describing Oral Traditions of Learning in the Family in Southern Sudan

<b>Theme</b>	<b>NCC (4)</b>	<b>SOL (15)</b>	<b>Ts (2)</b>	<b>Total (21)</b>
1.Oral Traditions of Learning in the Family in Southern Sudan	3M 1F	5M 10F	2M	21/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

***Oral Traditions of Learning.*** The learning which took place within the family relationships was essentially oral, as was the transmission of knowledge through the community (to be discussed in the next section). The majority of interviewees (14/21) recalled the speaking, telling, visualisation and the ‘doing’ of their learning from regular interaction with their immediate and extended family members. Participant LF 14 watched the dances ‘and then go and join in’. LF13 felt that if ‘I’m good at if I just watch it and do it then I won’t forget. That’s how I learned in Africa doing things’. NM4

explained how the oral tradition functioned via the extended family network over generations:

*The older parents of the family mostly would tell us things and so forth...They found out through their parents kinda like going down the family tree. Most likely word of mouth, call each other and yes eventually everyone would find out (NM4).*

The informal learning, from family members, occurred whenever the opportunity arose. It covered the necessary everyday skills such as language, and essential survival skills including making a fire, cooking and for the boys, farming. The creative activities were also informally fostered and nightly stories with morals and details of family history, meanings of family names were all ‘told’ and were distinctive of the southern Sudanese way of life and learning. Even though LM8’s recollection was that his uncle ‘wrote stories’, he went on to comment they were in fact ‘spoken’. According to all the interviewees these stories (discussed below) were told in a warm and intimate manner, which highlighted the way they were both entertaining and ‘instructive’ (LM11, LF12). Mrs Lina Trudinger, had noted the importance of these stories based on animals and spirits as nightly storytelling rituals ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 13).

The two adult teachers emphasised the oral learning style as telling, repetition, the acting out, showing and repeating stories and carrying out duties by family members. TM2 described oral traditions of learning as ‘very strong in Sudan’, while Archbishop Driver observed in his interview that this was ‘the way they learn’ (April 6, 2016).

Table 5. 4 Participants Describing Cultural Meanings Learned through the Family in Southern Sudan

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1.Cultural Meanings Learned through the Family in Southern Sudan	3M 1F	5M 10F	2M	21/21

**Key:**NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Moral Values.** As NM3 put it, family members taught the participants ‘just cultural stuff...Coming from a large family, you are all related. That’s where you just learn from each other. Pretty much my cousin [whom] I used to hang around the most.... Yeah he showed me how to behave and look after myself’. LF9 recalled that she and her siblings were ‘taught to be kids and be mature. Different days’.

Discipline, in the sense of firm non-negotiable expectations of how individuals should behave with consequences for unsatisfactory performance, was an important way of reinforcing the moral values of the family and community. Aspects of discipline were discussed by 18 out of 21 participants (18/21). Punishment, physical rather than verbal, was expected from the adult members of the family, as well as from teachers (considered later).

The cultural meanings associated with moral values were passed on through time spent with the extended family, as NF1 recalled. LF5 remembered the advice which her grandma who liked to give her:

*She said some really interesting things to use in my lifetime. She said something about marriage. Don't feel like you're ever forced. If someone in your family wants you to. It's not pressure or nothing. People think that marriages in Sudan are all arranged-but they're not. You have a choice (NF1).*

Participant NM2 related how he learned moral values and expected patterns of behaviour by observation and listening to his family members: 'people show you. My mum would teach me...take me to a funeral and everyone's crying and I look at it...it happens all the time'.

Moral meanings and cultural expectations were often handed down within the guise of the traditional stories. Most featured morals, attached to familiar animals such as the fox, dogs, sheep or nature generally, but some related the real -life stories of family members involved in war and fighting. LM2 recalled his father telling him what he called 'realistic' stories about the south. 'Story about a tiger was going to eat him. [If] it wasn't for the light, he [would not have] escaped. Would've eaten him'.

In contrast, many of the students and one teacher smiled and laughed as they spoke of the stories told to them by parents or family members. Whilst the content had significance, so did the intimate context and dramatic manner in which they were told. NM4 remembered [smiling at]: 'stories about animals with morals'. LF4 remembered hearing:

*real [stories] from the oldest people about animals and people. Frog and the Fly. The Fly married a frog. One of the Frog's sisters [complained that Fly] used to eat and eat and doesn't wipe her mouth. Frog upset. The Fly said it is my home too and I can do anything I like...A lot were scary but you get over it...We all sit together [and] feel better (LF4).*

Participant LF5 remembered stories ‘about life and how to treat others and yourself’. LM11 recalled stories ‘about trust and honesty about this kid [who] he kept lying every day. The boy learned from his mistakes. Meant to be scary. My brother would tell me don’t worry, [it’s] so you wouldn’t do them’. NM4 recalled, ‘They would tell you stories when there was this guy he used to lie a lot. They cut off his tongue and then the theme of don’t lie then [or] you will get your tongue cut off, to scare you, things like that. Mainly stories at night’. The close family context of the telling was frequently referred to as enhancing the effect of the stories as in LF4’s comment above.

The comments of TM1, one of the South Sudanese teachers, made more explicit the moral lessons, life meanings and consequences of actions taught through the traditional Dinka stories. They concerned ‘things [such as] moral courage and to make decisions. The animals repeatedly referred to, were the Fox, Ostrich, Sheep and Dogs. The moral will be that one day you will pay for it. Never ever put other people’s lives at risk. Revenge’. The story teaches you ‘not to misbehave... get into trouble’.

***Family Roles.*** Cultural learning related to the complementary gendered roles and household responsibilities that constituted an accepted feature of family life in southern Sudan. Fixed gender roles and duties were recalled by over half (12/21) of the interviewees, as outlined in Table 5.4

Participant NF1 recalled that ‘there were [different jobs for the boys and girls in Sudan] like boys hunting. Girls stayed at home, collecting water and food and the mums would cook stuff’. NF1 described the ‘specific things you [had] to do at a certain age band. Making fire and cleaning was one of them’. The girls learned to attend to other domestic duties, as well as marketing and obtaining food. LM2 confirmed this pattern ‘My sister would take things, the corn, the ochre and cabbage to the markets’. LF7 learned how to cook and carry water: ‘[I] watch my mum, collect water, long time to get the water in bottles and jugs when I was little I carried the jugs. I learned how to carry [them] on my head’.

The males were responsible for the care of goats, cattle and agriculture. TM2 recalled that ‘the men would cultivate the crops, while LM1 claimed he was taught by his grandma ‘how to plant crops’. LM2 learned farming from the males in his family, stating, ‘My brothers showed me and my mum showed me how to do it’. NM2 ‘worked with his

brothers and uncles' just learning about agriculture and all this stuff' in a way that exemplified the oral traditions of learning. These accounts of boys and girls being prepared for their different roles in family life are consistent with the descriptions given by Guong and Lindemann (2011).

The practical skills involved in these gender roles appeared to be gained from observation and generally participating with the regular interaction with family members. These skills and other forms of learning and modelling were gained informally from spending time at the appropriate moment with a variety of family members. Rather than systematically organised activities, the learning was informal and transmitted through modelling and play, always within the interactive learning context of the family.

The importance of role models (12/21) was mentioned a number of times by both male and female participants, mainly in relation to older males in the extended family. NM4 typically looked up to his older brother: 'He used to look out for me mostly as parents were all gone. Most of the time he was kinda like my role model. I used to hang out with him. He is about 10 years older than me'. LF7 spoke of looking up to her father and LF13 to her male cousin, who 'was always helping me when I needed help'. Yet LM8 'chose not to look up to 'his father', while LF5 said simply that she 'looked up to my family'. The importance of such role models for South Sudanese young people in the process of learning to become adults was highlighted in Guong and Lindemann (2011).

***Creative Activities and Games.*** Creative activities were fostered and taught as a result of the informal learning taking place in family relationships and interactions. Music, drama, dance and art/drawing (despite their being of a 'primitive' nature) were all encouraged. Participant TM2 recalled the dancing and singing 'at home'. LM8 smiled when he remembered his art at home in Sudan: 'I can draw whatever. I used to love drawing cars ...we used to love drawing on the sand...my sisters Anok and Adoth used to show me'.

Creating simple toys, little huts and primitive objects for play were also common pastimes and examples of learning from the various extended members. Participant NM4 loved 'to just relax things with my hands, making toys and stuff like that. LM2 also used to take 'the clay from the ground and build cars' while NM3 enjoyed 'building little huts'. A number of interviewees like NF1 and LM8 spent any free time learning to explore, climb trees, run around and 'make fun games. My older sister used to teach [us]'. NM4,

too, remembered how they ‘made up a lot [of] games. We used to come up with chasey, play with bicycle wheels, spin them and then run after them stuff like that’. What came out most clearly in the participant interviews were the affection in which the interviewees recalled and held in such high regard these clear memories of their participation in these various art forms. Their comments were consistent with Mrs Lina Trudinger’s recollections of the merriment of these people and their delight in their children, singing and dancing and love of music played on a simple harp to all hours ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 13).

Learning to play sport, made-up games and exploring were also frequently remembered by the interviewees. Sport appeared to be mainly associated with the male participants. NM2 recalled learning how to play soccer from ‘people who show you. Boys, and girls sometimes, and it becomes competitive and it becomes more fun’. NM4 mentioned being taught ‘usually by older kids, your older brothers or someone older than you teaches you how to play soccer...you pick up on it and you practise and then you get good at it’. NM3 also enjoyed playing soccer. The participants’ comments are comparable to descriptions found in earlier studies, such as those by Guong and Lindemann (2011) and Turhan and Hagin (2005).

***Names and Identity.*** Names were explained by TM1, in a lengthy segment of one of his Junior Dinka language classes, as culturally significant to the South Sudanese sense of identity; not only to their sense of belonging to a particular group but also to the future of desired moral qualities. Some students in the class gave their surnames to TM1 and he methodically explained the real meaning and significant features, both inherent and expected. TM1 explained that ‘vocabulary and names have something to do with your lives’. For example, he described his own ‘totem’ of the alligator, the symbol of his clan/tribe. One student’s name (LM11) meant ‘River’ which TM1 indicated had a firm cultural meaning and symbolism for the student’s life. In a similar vein, NM4 was taught by his parents about his family name and family history in a way that was consistent with the account given by Guong and Lindemann (2011).

***Personalised Learning.*** As mentioned previously, the personal data from the participants emphasised the intimacy, strength and importance of the oral tradition continuing even here in Australia, despite the distance of time, place and storyteller (LM11, LF12). What humanistic sociology terms the ‘cultural data’ of the interviewees provide insights into

the personal cultural systems developed by these young people from the cultural values they experienced in the family and community life in which they were immersed. Their individual sense of choice explained their personal interests across varied content of cultural meanings but the method of oral learning was consistent across the group. Some students enjoyed the creative arts and others learnt more towards using the practical skills observed and practised with family members. However, the moral values of the southern Sudanese culture such as the sense of discipline which framed all other family values and their activation of family roles and duties were accepted and practised without question. ‘Significant persons’ (Morris, 1934) with whom they had close primary relations, such as the mother, dad, uncles or siblings facilitated the active learning through ongoing and regular interaction. The ‘I’ self of the southern Sudanese students perceived, participated, responded and organised the content of the cultural learning to develop the moral values and skills acceptable in South Sudanese culture (Blumer, 1969).

### **Learning Linguistic Meanings in the Family**

The language used as a means of communication at home, plus other languages learned from relationships with particular family members, can be regarded as linguistic meanings or values, in humanistic sociology. The participants who discussed linguistic meanings are summarised in Table 5.5 *Participants Describing Language Learning in the Family in Southern Sudan*. The languages discussed by the participants in relation to the home learning environment in southern Sudan were: Dinka (14/21); Swahili (4/21); English (4/21); and Arabic (2/21) in the home learning environment. Table 5.6 lists the participants who talked about their particular languages and the various social groups, apart from the family, in which, following Mead’s theory, they consolidated and extended their language knowledge and use.

Table 5. 5 Participants Describing Language Learning through the Family in Southern Sudan

<b>Theme</b>	<b>NCC (4)</b>	<b>SOL (15)</b>	<b>Ts (2)</b>	<b>Total (21)</b>
1. Languages and the Family in Southern Sudan	1F 3M	8F 3M	1M	16/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

Table 5. 6 Participants Describing Language Learning in Various Social Groups, Apart from the Home, in Southern Sudan

Languages	'School'	Church	Wider Community	Refugee Camp	Total
<b>Dinka</b>	NM4 LF5 LF9 LF10 TM1 TM2	NM2 NM3 NM4 LF14	0	LF10	*P= 9 *C=11
<b>English</b>	NM2 NM3 NM4 LF7 LF13 LF14 LM2 LM6 LM8 TM1	LF7 LF14	0	LF10 LF14	P=11 C=14
<b>Arabic</b>	LM2 LM11 LF10	NM2 NM3	NM4-Egypt	LF10	P=6 C=7
<b>Swahili</b>	LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LM6	0	0	NM3 LF3 LM6	P=7 C=8

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

\*The citations (C) are greater than the mention of participants (P) because some mentioned learning the language concerned in more than one social group.

The actual language/s learned depended on where the family was living at the time. The overwhelming majority of participant responses referred to spoken usage of languages rather than any written literacy. NM4 explained 'my language is mostly spoken. [There was] not really that much, in the way of printed materials'. One of the teachers, TM1, was the major exception as he had learnt formally to read and write Dinka from the Verona Catholic Fathers in the western region of southern Sudan and was also literate in English.

In the sections that follow, the participants' memories of learning these languages in the context of the family, reinforced by the wider community, are discussed for each language in turn. The informal language learning in the churches is discussed later with reference to Table 5.7 Religious Meanings as the 'formal' school experience in mission schools with reference to Table 5.8 Educational Meanings.



*Dinka*. The frequency of speaking Dinka at home was highlighted by 14 out of the 21 participants. Outside of the family context, the church provided another regular location where the informal language learning at home could be reinforced by providing the opportunities to gain elementary skills in reading Dinka. The four participants from the Catholic college who did not attend the Dinka language learning classes in Adelaide, spoke Dinka at home, at the church and at family celebrations in the wider community but all considered that their Dinka skills were declining. Participant NF1 fondly recalled that she used to ‘sing and pray in Dinka’ although ‘I’m kind of forgetting my language now’. NM3 described his exposure to written songs in Dinka at church: ‘I used to read Dinka but not [any] more. I forgot how’. This learning Dinka as an ‘immersion’ experience from family daily activities was reinforced by singing songs in church. However, even though NM4 (the only student of this group) recalled being ‘encouraged to speak my own language, Dinka at home, at church and at school, [it remained] really like a spoken language too’.

Students from the specialised government school for languages in Adelaide not only spoke Dinka, at home, at church and family celebrations. Of this group, three female students - LF5, LF9 and LF10 - mentioned learning the Dinka language at ‘school’ as well as at home. LM6 ‘learnt Dinka as a little boy’. His language learning commenced with teaching from his mum who read to him from the Dinka Bible in the home. LM11 explained that he learnt Dinka by talking every day with his mother: ‘I’d learn for a while and then she’d test me’. Participants LF12 and LF13 also spoke of learning Dinka from family in southern Sudan while LF14 stressed in the remarks the importance of the older generation in learning Dinka: ‘Speaking Dinka grew up speaking it. Pretty easy when you’re growing up. Mostly all the elders, grandparents’. The situation was rather different for a few of the younger respondents who never lived in southern Sudan. LF15, like LF9 and LF10, was born in the refugee camp in Kakuma, Kenya with opportunities to speak Dinka limited to the immediate family. In LF15’s view, ‘Dinka...it’s very important. [If I didn’t know it] I don’t think I’d have a language or anything... Learning to write in the culture don’t know much about it’. The subsequent enrolling of these three students in the after-hours Dinka specialised government for languages secondary class later in Adelaide and LF15’s comments illustrated the importance of knowing Dinka as part of their cultural identity and wellbeing as Ryle (2011, p. 33) reported in his study.

The fact that the learning of Dinka was not mentioned by five of the 21 participants (but two others, including LF5 and TM2, spoke of learning Dinka 'in school', the remainder is 16/21 Dinka) could indicate that the language was not remembered as having been significant or made available through learning opportunities in southern Sudan. Participants LM1 and LF4 were the only respondents who did not mention language learning in southern Sudan. However, LM1 spoke of singing songs in church, most likely in Dinka, but like LF4 had later spent time learning in school in the refugee camp.

**Arabic.** The learning of Arabic depended on the home location, which often changed with family circumstances. Arabic was associated with the family originating in northern Sudan or moving to Egypt. Only two males out of the 21 participants recalled learning Arabic from some members of the family. LM6 mentioned learning Arabic from his father who came from the Arabic speaking north: 'I learned Arabic as my dad [was] born in the north and then came back to the south so at age 2/3 learnt Arabic'. Another (NM4) learnt Arabic when the family moved to Egypt: 'I learned Arabic back in Egypt. I just listened to it and people around me and I eventually learnt Arabic ...but I can't read it. I only know the spoken language'. Two others (NM2 and NM3) noted the possibility of learning Arabic through the mosque, but made no reference to personal learning of Arabic. However, one female and two male students (LF 10, LM2 and LM11) mentioned learning Arabic at the 'school' and the other two (NM2 and NM3) at 'church'.

**English.** Four participants (two males and two females) out of 10 who spoke of learning some English learned this from family members while living in southern Sudan. NF1's father read from an English Beginners book. NM3 and NM4 learnt English from family members as well as at 'school'. LF7 recalls saying poems 'in English repeat and memory' at home to supplement what she learnt at 'school'. Such fathers had probably learned some English in mission schools before these were destroyed during the civil war. Their learning of English probably had occurred in the schools linked to CMS and SUM mission stations in southern Sudan. However, ten (seven male and three female) participants out of 21, recalled learning some English at 'school' and another two females spoke of learning at the refugee camp where resources were limited. Outside of the home and 'school', whilst LF14 recalled 'our songs at church being mostly in Dinka', for LF7, there were 'English ones' too. NM3 learned the English alphabet from his mother who attended adult English classes given by the church.

Only one teacher, TM1, included English use in southern Sudan. Upon retrospective examination of the data, it was noted that TM1 was significantly older in age and had been educated by the Italian Roman Catholic Missionaries at a mission school in West Sudan (Idris, 2004, p. 19). The other much younger teacher, TM2, was brought up by his cousins after his parents disappeared.

**Swahili.** Swahili was the language learnt by seven of the respondents in the context of the refugee camp. It was the lingua franca of the camp as well as whatever Kenyan officials they came into contact with. Most of these respondents were female. LF12 and LF13 learnt Swahili in Kenya. Swahili was learned informally by LF9, as ‘everyone speaks that language in the refugee camp in Kenya’. LF3 who fled with her family to a refugee camp in Kenya recalled how they were taught some Swahili: ‘Swahili we learn it from some friends in camp in Kenya [but also] Swahili teacher came and [brought] some textbook to read wasn’t easy as not our language, just learnt how to speak’. NM3 recalled how he learned to speak Swahili ‘without even writing the language from interacting with the people’ in Kenya. As discussed earlier, LF4 spoke of ‘school’ in the refugee camp but did not highlight specific language learning or use.

**Basic Home Literacy: Reading, Writing and Counting.** Some family members taught school skills such as the alphabet, writing and reading and counting in maths using small blackboards and simple texts. NM3 recalled learning ‘how to write properly the alphabet’ upon accompanying his mother to adult English classes. NM4 learnt his numbers and letters from his uncle who used a small blackboard. Explicit teaching and modelling were explained by NF1 as ‘copied. Learned best’. Her father ‘could speak English’ and used a book (called ‘English for Beginners’) to read to her younger siblings: ‘We would copy and write it down as well as saying it’. NF1 also learned reading, writing and copying from ‘her dad’. It appeared that written literacy was virtually non-existent apart from some copying and reading with the family members. As LF15 stated, ‘Writing in the culture...don’t know much about it’. According to LM6, ‘my mum gave me the instructions [how to make] a little boat making a sail like a little car’ by visualisation... Also ‘he would visualise with my mind and not let this [getting beaten] happen learning things’.

The learning of a language or as a linguistic system of cultural meaning is an important part of Humanistic Sociology theory. Language is passed down through the generations

as one of the key elements of a group's culture. In theoretical terms, it is possible to identify group and personal systems of linguistic values as well as attitudes and tendencies to the particular language content. The languages that these southern Sudanese students knew were learnt from interactive primary relationships at home, with the wider southern Sudanese community and elsewhere as the family had to move location to location and to refugee camps, for example. Languages can be viewed as systems of cultural values to be learned by each new generation (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981) or social products ((Mead as cited in Blumer, 1977). Oral tradition was the driver of the home and wider community learning, such as at church. Relationships of the 'I' and 'significant others' (Blumer, 1977) the family members, resulted in the individual's self-interaction: choosing to take on the words they heard in family conversations and using them when opportunities arose.

The students generally learned in a community context of Mead's social groups (Blumer, 1969) related to family with language learning accepted as: firstly, an essential tool for daily communication in their group; and secondly, for their own personal cultural development according to Buckmaster 2/7/2013 and other sources (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007; Guong & Lindemann, 2011). This was also extended to other languages and contributed to their own personal group basic literacy if available and learnt at home. However, their positive attitudes to Dinka were revealed in the importance that most gave to the possibility of learning or re-establishing their knowledge of the Dinka language, including its written forms, in the Australian context (Chapter 7, Table 7.7 21/21).

### **Linguistic Learning in the Wider Community**

There was additional evidence in the interviews that revealed the way participation in the wider community reinforced and extended the oral linguistic learning in the family. As the participants interacted with other young people, or with elders in the community in everyday activities, or in special events such as community, the family roles and expectations, the moral and linguistic values were reiterated and practised.

The discussion in the sections that follow consider first the reinforcement and extension of language learning in the wider community. Then the learning of religious meanings through mosque and church are discussed, followed by the educational meanings that the

participants remembered learning through schools in southern Sudan, before they were forced to flee the advancing civil war in rudimentary, or makeshift outdoor schools.

***Extending Language Learning in the Wider Community.*** The wider community such as at church gatherings and extended family celebrations served to reinforce and extend their learning of linguistic meanings through conversation and the songs they enjoyed singing. Memory, sounds and repetition were a feature of church activities like learning new songs, according to NM3:

*when you're teaching how to remember songs because they don't generally write it down. So, you do like when you're learning a new language. They had to teach the sounds of the words [so that would] stick over period of two weeks. They try and teach one song and that's where you have to try memorise (NM3).*

LF7 also spoke of combining watching, listening and doing as the basis for her learning English through repetition and memorising. Participant LF7 spoke of repeating and memorising to learn English, just as she had watched and copied her mother cook and her sister dance. LM10 echoed this emphasis on repetition: 'They would like say slower to understand and then repeat'.

Celebrations were important unifying events to the family and community as a whole. They provided the opportunity for much talking and interchange between extended family members as a whole. NF1 explained that their 'celebrations...had culture which made it a party...I think probably the people made it special. We were all outside ...so that's what made it a South Sudanese party'. NM2 described what happened on these occasions: 'People danced and knew each other. They all take care of each other and do their dances ... clear of each other sometimes separated due to tribal differences, but they do their dances. Different tribes but we were all one you know'. Participants LF3, LF4, LF5, LF7, LF10, LM11 and TM2 fondly recalled the parties: 'Yeah we had a lot of them like marriages with a lot of people'. NM3 described what he called the 'big celebrations' and 'massive festivals', like weddings, to which all family members were invited. LF14 described their life as 'pretty easy when you're growing up. Mostly all the elders, grandparents'. In LF15's memory, parties were always 'cheerful and everyone was happy. You just go...with the rhythm of the drums'

In accordance with Mead's theory of social learning, the participants learned spoken languages informally as a result of regular social interaction with 'significant others' in

the family but also ‘generalized others’ (Morris, 1934, p. xxvi) (such as ‘teachers’ or ‘people around you’, NM4). The wider community involved in family and church celebrations in Dinka or mosque services in Arabic also reinforced the informal language learning. Moving to other countries, such as Egypt, served as another learning opportunity. NM4 ‘picked up on Arabic’ from his parents and ‘kinda of people [speaking] around you a lot’, while those who went through to refugee camps in Kenya learned Swahili in the same way.

**Religious Meanings.** Religious values played an important part in southern Sudanese daily cultural life. Living mainly in southern Sudan, the students and teachers were almost all Christian. The one exception was LM2, a Muslim, who had lived in northern Sudan. The interview data indicate that regular attendance at religious services was a taken-for-granted part of everyday family life for almost all the participants. LM2 spoke of attending the mosque on a regular basis, adding ‘I’m still Muslim’. The other Christian participants described their various memories of going to church.

Table 5. 7 Participants Describing Religious Meanings in Southern Sudan

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1. Religious Meanings in Southern Sudan	1F 3M	7F 5M	2M	18/21

Key: NCC= Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

According to southern Sudanese participants, going to church, singing songs and celebrating together were regular and important social occasions, 18/21, Table 5.6. *Participants Describing Religious Meanings in Southern Sudan.* NF1 recalled going to church regularly: ‘we had bibles and rosaries. Sing and pray in Dinka’. NM2 remembered, with an enthusiastic smile on his face, that

*I used to go to church every Sunday from what I remember. You’d dress pretty good. The Church was big. We’d go there. Christmas people pray pretty much as they do here but the practice of the Catholics was more common there. They’d sing in different languages and they would learn depending on the church and all the different tribes and different languages had different churches more confusing if you go to different churches (NM2).*

NM3 remembered that: ‘every Sunday, cos we’re Christians, we have the family over and would all go together’. NM4 also recalled regularly going to Sunday school at church

and hearing the priest speak Dinka and read from the Bible. Participants LM1, LF3, LM6, LF10, LM11, LF12, LF13, LF14 and LF15 all mentioned regular church going, together with singing and repeating songs in Dinka. LF3 recalled that: 'all family are Christian and read the bible'. LF10's family were very devout and attended 'Church every single night...we lived day by day relationship with God is very serious pray for protection my mum raised all 9 of us'.

Dancing was another activity the respondents associated with going to church. LF7 enjoyed the dancing group at church. LF 14 also liked to watch the dances 'and then go and join in'. According to LF 13, 'we went to church. We danced [and sang in the] choir. It was just catchy'. Lastly, LM8 recalled that there was always the danger of bombs at church. As a result, he claimed that attending church was 'very often not a good idea'.

These comments made by the participants are consistent with the reflections of Father Ian Buckmaster in his interview, 2/7/2013. During his time in the Sudan from 1983 to 1988, he:

*found people in Sudan to be religious... In urban areas attendance at services is good which also reflects the importance of the Church in fostering a community identity which replaces the loss of tribal or clan identity resulting from being displaced because of violence or straightforward migration (Buckmaster, 2013).*

*However, the church could not always provide a safe haven from the unpredictable violence and terror experienced by the family members on a daily basis.*

*In humanistic sociological terms the Christian churches were cultural groups which provide religious meanings or values through the services and activities they offer. It is evident from the data that the Christian churches, or the Islamic mosque provided the group religious meanings for eighteen out of the 21 participants and their families. The students could create their own personal meanings and responses to the various communal activities associated with worship. One student (LF10) spoke of her family being very devout and viewing religion as providing a constant safety net around them in such uncertain times of upheaval and confusion. The family of nine prayed for daily protection and used daily Church worship to renew their relationship with God. LM2 from northern Sudan spoke of having friends and choosing to go to the Mosque as a communal and safe activity amidst the violence of daily life there. Not all students mentioned religious meanings. Most highlighted their enjoyment of the religious*

*celebrations - the singing and the dancing - at the churches rather than the religious content of the services or the activities associated with them. There were three participants (L4, L5 and LF9) who did not mention any learning of religious meanings. All were born in the refugee camp where there was probably no Dinka community church to go to for Sunday worship and become aware of religious values.*

**Educational Meanings.** A significant proportion (16/21, Table 5.8 *Participants Describing Educational Meanings in Southern Sudan*) of the 21 interviewees spoke of some ‘formal’ schooling experience and later schools in the refugee camps, boarding-school and either in what they called ‘schools’ without further clarification. Moreover, where this more formal schooling was offered, it was repeatedly disrupted due to the ongoing war. It was surprising to note that the female (Table 5.8, seven out of eleven) compared with the male participants (nine out of ten) reported formal school attendance. This finding was contrary to frequent references, both past and present, including Driver 6/4/2016, as to families ‘prioritizing their sons’ education’ ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 13). It was noticeable that in southern Sudan, the detailed impressions of ‘formal schooling’ came from the males, contrasting with the fuller accounts from the females in relation to mainstream Adelaide schools in Chapter 6. Most gave the impression that little overall learning had been achieved. These formal learning experiences were described as generally difficult, disciplined and even violent in many of the interviewees’ responses

Table 5. 8 Participants Describing Educational Meanings in Southern Sudan

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1 Educational Meanings in Southern Sudan	3M	7F 4M	2M	16/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

According to the participants, overall there appeared to be three broad types of informal schools which were quite varied in terms of place, organisation, subjects including languages, resources and the method of teaching. Firstly, there were the most common (to the participants) informal schools in Dinka communities, for example those based at the local church which usually offered both Dinka and English language classes. Secondly, there were the government schools which were organised and delivering systematic learning, including the Arabic and English languages. LF13 attended a government Islamic boarding school teaching Swahili and English and NM2 a



government school in Uganda which taught only English. Thirdly there were the 'schools' at the refugee camps where Swahili was the common language. Many of the participants attended this type of 'schooling' in Kenya where the resources were as limited as in the community church-based schools.

In the informal local or church schools, the learning was very difficult as it relied solely on memory and repetition. The teacher would speak and the students would listen and have to repeat or the teacher would write on the board; the students would copy the letters onto slates or on the ground. The resources were few, if any, and the classes were large (NM3 was 'in a class of 120 different people'). LF3 recalled that the teacher used to 'write on board and we copy'. Participant NM2 remembered the class learning as:

*they would listen to what the teacher says... The teacher would read first two or three pages for example. They did that because they didn't have enough books (NM2).*

NM4 highlighted the difficulty of relying on memory and repetition without class books and saw this as the reason for the older age of students in reception, if they failed the exams:

*It was quite difficult because when it came to exam time you couldn't go back to your book because maybe you spelt the word wrong and when you're trying to prepare for the exam and the exam was from year one to year eight... and everyone got an exam and if you didn't pass the student didn't move on to the next year (NM4).*

Participant NM2 also recalled that they had to pass each year level, otherwise they would stay in the reception class, regardless of their age.

Apart from one or two students, the physical nature of these informal school buildings was rarely described. Interviewees described the substantive content learning of the English language as minimal. However, participant NM4 remembered his fragmented experience of learning, in this case with reference to English, in some detail:

*I used to go to a small little school [at church] wasn't not officially school. They used to teach us simple little things like numbers and the alphabet like that for a while I was like five years old or after. [It was an] informal school. The first time I went to a formal school was when I came to Australia. [There were] Small little gatherings of kids, massive classes of different ages' and heaps [of students]. Just Lots. They'd split it up sometimes perhaps sometimes older kids those who can understand English a bit more. They'd be separate to the younger ones who didn't know as much. [The teachers] Yeah-they were to a certain extent probably informal teachers just taught general things like alphabet, numbers things like that. [The teachers] kinda checked if we were learning. In*

general, I think kind of. They might do a certain topic or session of the alphabet, after memorise this. Then next week... you have to read out loud to the class yourself. I think yeah (NM4).

The second type of schooling consisted of government schools which were more organised in terms of regular classes and learning materials. Participant NM2 attended such a school in Uganda when the family moved there. Whilst he reported that only English was spoken at school in Uganda, he described the makeshift school building only briefly, and did not discuss the content learnt there:

*Yeah it was a school with a room inside where we're living. It was quite developed, quite developed compared to my country which is Sudan. [There were] people who would actually migrate ... [to] attend the school... This was in Uganda. At school, I only speak English. If you don't speak English, you get in trouble if you speak your language (NM2).*

In NM2's case it appeared that his formal education in English only was of a transient nature. He had to help the family by caring for their animals and doing agricultural work; relocation was also necessary given the constant threat of war. LF13 attended an Islamic government boarding school. She recalled that it was organised with 'books and everything. [We] had to write with pencils. Can have 50 in the class and the teachers don't help out and expect you to do the work'. LM11 remarked about having to learn to speak Arabic 'fluently' in large classes in his government school in northern Sudan. Yet at home, his family spoke Dinka and not Arabic. LM2 described similar learning conditions in Egypt, where he attended a government school.

The third and most commonly mentioned informal school was that provided in the refugee camp at Kakamega in Kenya. Only six students (Table 5.6) mentioned learning specifically in the refugee camp, although another seven female students (LF 4, LF5, LF7, LF9, LF12, LF14 and LF15) spoke of learning being provided in Kenya. In the camp, participant LM6 recalled the building up of new school skills: 'There was a lot of memory involved at Kenya, quite a lot of reading out of books, making notes, copying the notes. Teacher had the book we used visual demonstration of what to learn. That's one of the skills now I have of learning. I make a map'. Yet NF1 recalled her experience in the refugee camp where school skills were absent. There 'was no writings or pamphlets. Everything was verbally said. I was in the refugee camp in Kakuma, Kenya when [learning to make] fire. That's where we were learning to do all this survival stuff. I've never been to Sudan'. However, other students spoke of learning to speak Swahili in

large classes without homework (LF5), very strict classes and learning to be ‘always quiet when the teacher is talking’ (LF9). These experiences are comparable with those reported by Buckmaster in his interview, 2/2/2013 and Perry’s South Sudanese adult respondents in the United States (2007b, pp. 62-65).

The interviewees’ memories of the formal school setting, teachers and the learning were mainly negative and intermeshed with details of the harsh physical discipline which they feared. NM4, like many of the students, recalled the strict punishment they received if they misbehaved or made mistakes. The consequences as he described it were:

*very strict corporal punishment. A couple of things I remember-kids getting punched by the teacher...Anywhere usually that doesn’t really happen. Most of the time it’s like this thing where you have to put your finger at the sharp end of the ruler and then they hit your fingers. Mostly the time because if you misbehaving. Following time, it’s like just put out your fingers (NM4).*

LM3 recalled that: ‘they [the teachers] have to beat you badly as [a] school rule. Teachers know your name’. LM8 feared punishment at school. He remembered his first day at school as: ‘I was scared [and] make up excuses, worried about being hit’. LF15’s memories of the formal Islamic boarding school she attended were harsh. She remembered being ‘beaten in the high school but not in the pre-school’. LF13 vividly recalled suffering from the very strict physical discipline, particularly if she made a mistake with her English and Swahili spelling and reading at night. She recalled she ‘had to read before [going] to bed and be hit with a ruler’. LM11’s first school day in northern Sudan was: ‘Horrible, they expect[ed] you to learn Arabic fluently and I couldn’t speak fluently so every day beaten up, not like sticks and stuff, don’t hit you in kindergarten [but] verbally. Idiots. I just took it. I felt really bad’. NM4, too, gave his reasons for accepting the punishment, describing it as recurring over the generations. We were ‘just punished as normal back then, [just as] most likely happened to the parents too’. Such observations were confirmed by Ribeiro (2006) and Driver, 6/4/2016.

An interesting sequel is my personal recollection of a young male South Sudanese Year 8 student who asked me quietly on the first day if I would beat him. I assured him and the class that they were all safe in the South Australian mainstream education environment, but I realised that the severity and force of the memory of physical school discipline had surfaced in the context of school in the new country. Such memories are in keeping with the observations of Ribeiro (2006), and Driver, 6/4/2016 as well as a

recent study by Baak (2016) which presented Sudanese student data describing fearful and regular corporal punishment meted out by teachers in their prior schooling experiences.

In contrast, according to the participants in this study, receiving harsh punishment was undoubtedly linked to the consequence of successful learning. NM2 admitted: 'To be sure the students were actually listening then the teacher would ask a question and if you were [not] listening you would get into trouble. Therefore, you had to listen to it'. Despite the difficulties of schooling and learning Arabic in large classes, LM2 expressed the view that he: 'learned stuff'. He felt that this worked 'cos you're scared. You have to get it right'. LM11's worst memory was in 'Year 2 [when he] came late [to school and he had to] squat for 2 hours. I learnt from it never come to school late'. These observations concurred with Archbishop Driver's impressions in the interview on April 6, 2016.

For some participants, the harsh and difficult memories of formal school learning were transformed into more positive experiences in a number of examples when encapsulated with the family network of informal learning and interactive experience. The more reinforcing and moderating effect of the family was mainly concerned with attitudes to schooling and learning. In other cases the learning of English, for example, was supplemented by basic home learning (Participants NM3, NM4, LM6, LF7, LF13, and LF14).

Whilst LF4 highlighted the rigour of maths competitions in the formal school setting, her major focus was the family support for learning and nurturing in the process of learning. NM4's experiences were similar. He felt that the education in Sudan [was a]: 'Lot tougher there than here is still corporal punishment. ...All I feel pretty good to the work was easy for me I had relatives and family were quite educated and they helped me along'. When LM8 was scared of being hit and making mistakes at school, his mother 'said I'd have to go to school. Why not give it a go'.

Overall the southern Sudanese parents appeared to regard school attendance as compulsory and the punishment culturally acceptable, regardless of the fear and dread their children faced. NM2's experience was common to many of the students. '[After] the first day I told my mum I don't want to go back to school again. I'm going to get beaten. She said don't do the wrong thing and you won't get beaten. It's the discipline

you know. Yeah'. Despite the regular memories of the physical punishments, LF 15 recalled the happy family learning experiences at the end of the school day and at weekends: 'church choir, dancing practice after school and Saturday mornings with the 'rhythm of the drums' rousing everyone to enjoy themselves. The common feeling was that punishment and discipline were essential to learning and represented the 'African way of teaching' (LM11).

As a sharp contrast to most of the students, TM2, one of the southern Sudanese teachers, provided a factual account, without any mention of the disciplined style of the formal teaching, and recalled more extensive learning of Dinka in a school context. '[I] learned a language in school...Dinka in Sudan'. The other South Sudanese teacher and elder, TM1, related, in a similarly clear and informative style, his thorough experience of learning to read and write the Rek dialect of Dinka in the 1960s at a boys' only school run by the Roman Catholic Verona Fathers' mission settlement in Thiet at Malek, Western Sudan. TM1 was the exception of the twenty-one participants. In a later interview in May 2015, TM1 recalled this significant learning of the Dinka language which also matched with the historical records on the work of the Verona Fathers in this area of Sudan. In later years TM1 was involved in further linguistic study in relation to Dinka and its development as a literary language that was taught in the 1990s in government schools in the south of Sudan.

The key question to be asked at this point in the discussion on learning educational meanings in the Dinka communities of southern Sudan, is how the student refugee participants in this study responded to the educational values they encountered in their homeland. Finding answers to this question would fulfil one of the aims of this research project – to fill the gaps of silence about what South Sudanese refugee secondary students have to say about their learning experiences, both in their homeland and in their country of settlement.

The positive attitude of the participants to the informal learning within the family and community were evident in the animation and delight with which they recalled their memories of learning from family members close to them. Whether it was learning the duties expected of them in family life, learning to play games and make play things, learning to sing and dance at community and church celebrations, the fact they had

successfully learned an activity that could be put to immediate use, and that learning from family members had been enjoyable and even fun, came through in the way they talked.

In relation to formal schooling, the participants spoke about the way their families prioritised its place in their daily activities despite the on-going need to survive and maintain their existence. As mentioned previously, LF5's grandfather, who was a 'well known person with shops in every town', for example, 'saw well educated people [in his travels to Egypt] and think this future good for his kids...[He] picked the oldest kids and then took them to school [to become] well educated'.

Regular attendance at school was encouraged, even insisted on, by family members. However, the tone of the participants' comments suggested acceptance of, even obedience to, family values, but without any enthusiasm. At the same time, the participants were not slow to paint a negative picture of what the compulsory school attendance enforced by their families meant for them. The rote learning, the frequent punishments and lack of success made learning at school unpopular. Nevertheless, while students were often reluctant to attend school, they accepted the often violent discipline and the large classes, as these echoed the unquestioning acceptance of education as a cultural value of their group. The participants appeared to view the discipline, together with the rigour of having to pass the year in order to be promoted, as making the school experience 'serious'.

On the other hand, the interview comments provided almost no evidence that the young people themselves saw any personal significance in their formal school learning. Only one comment, made in relation to the difficulties of being promoted to the next year level without having reached the required standard, suggested a rather more positive attitude. According to NM2, 'the older students in Year 1 could be 17 years old, even 18, and they wanted to get educated and they're going into studying at school'. However, the participants in this study, recalling their schooling experiences in southern Sudan, revealed no sense of personal drive to achieve any formal educational goals, despite their parents' insistence upon school attendance. These seemingly indifferent attitudes to school learning stand in contrast to the much more positive assessment made by Mrs Trudinger ("Dispensing by the Nile," 1943, p. 13) of the attitudes to learning among young students she knew in the mission schools of the 1930s and 1940s. Buckmaster 2/7/2013 also spoke highly of some of the students he knew some forty years later.

Two comments derived from the experience of Buckmaster in the western region of southern Sudan in the 1980s are helpful in explaining the seemingly contradictory attitudes of the research participants toward the educational values they encountered in their homeland. The first relates to the availability and quality of schools in southern Sudan during the prolonged civil war. In his 2/7/2013 interview, Buckmaster described the education system he knew in the Sudan as ‘chaotic...especially in the south’. The second is his astute observation on the importance of mastering literacy skills. He could see that for students in southern Sudan ‘the transition from informal education (‘oral tradition’) to formal education structures is difficult’. However, he believed that ‘once the children get a grasp of reading and writing and mathematics, then there is no stopping them’.

The conceptual framework of symbolic interactionism also helps to explain some of the contradictions. The strong emphasis on educational meanings came from primary relationships with adult family members; in Mead’s terms, this involves a relationship between the ‘I’ self and significant others. In the more formal settings of the school, secondary relationships as described by Mead’s ‘me’ self and the generalised other (Blumer, 1977) existed between students and teachers. The lack of discussion of teachers generally, except in relation to punishment, suggests that the relationships between teacher and students were not positive and constructive in ways conducive to learning. The way the participants described the teaching they received suggests that the school experience was not meaningful in terms of learning.

***Sense of Identity and Aspirations.*** Southern Sudanese culture as depicted by the participants was unique and distinctive of cultural meanings: social; linguistic; religious and educational at all levels. Table 5.9 *Participants Describing Family and Community Identity in Southern Sudan* presents those who commented on this topic.

Table 5. 9 Participants Describing Family and Community Identity in Southern Sudan

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1. Identity in the Family and Community in Southern Sudan	1F 3M	10F 5M	2M	21/21

**Key:** NCC = Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

It was clear that individuals made their own personal choices of cultural meanings, when and where it was possible to do so, given that the threat of constant war, and danger meant that families had to move without warning, often long distances to another country. The survival of family members became the shared group aspiration and chief motivation in their daily lives (David & Bolay, 2012, p. 68; Zutt 1994, p. 34). As a result of the constant wars, any systematic form of education and even regular church attendance were continually disrupted. Whatever appeared to contribute to the group sense of safety and physical survival (Sandy, 2013) was paramount and obeyed.

For these participants from southern Sudan their sense of identity and aspirations were implicit and rarely openly stated. They can be traced, however, through their various cultural activities and relationships with specific people. There appeared to be three overlapping levels operating: firstly, the family, contact with key family members; secondly, the wider sharing within Dinka-speaking communities; and thirdly, sharing and the identity connected with religion, in terms of being Christian as against the Muslim. All participants, regardless of their family status (Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.9) spoke of their affinity with immediate family and extended network. This meant nurturing, sharing of moral values, cultural patterns of family life and survival rules for social roles, as well as expectations of learning which were central to the majority of the southern Sudanese family experiences (Guong & Lindemann, 2011, p. 3).

Dancing, singing and enjoying their 'home-grown' (NF1) foods were all commonly reported as memorable parts of their lives in southern Sudan. Cultural celebrations in particular were seen as a distinctive and significant part of their lives as members of Dinka communities. Church-going, language classes, communicating in Dinka, and in some cases, reading the scriptures in their mother tongue, Dinka, were all rated highly by the respondents. LF15 explained the importance of the Dinka language to her sense of wellbeing and cultural identity, despite being born in Kenya and having no opportunities to learn Dinka in the refugee camp in Kenya. Similar comments had been reported by a South Sudanese participant in Perry's study in the United States. He saw 'literacy [as] more than simply reading and writing'. For him, it meant 'preserving his Dinka language identity' (K Perry, 2007b, pp. 66-67). TM1 told one of his Dinka language classes in Adelaide that: 'If you don't know your language, you don't know your culture...When language is out of use, you kill your language, your culture. It disappears'.



Religious identity whether Christian or Islamic meant a positive sense of belonging to the group of committed believers, and interested adherents who attended the worship services in the church or prayers in the mosque, and accepted the teachings they heard as a form of 'spiritual guide' for their lives. The regular attendance and associated celebrations further reinforced the practice of religious values in the family and wider community. Survival and safety were the overriding and immediate long-term concerns for all the refugee participants.

The only aspirations for the future that the participants mentioned in the context of southern Sudan, were 'running' together with as many family members as possible, from the horrors of war to safer locations where they could find shelter and food.

## **Conclusions**

The southern Sudanese family, its relationships and generational learning were held together by the oral traditions. TM1 described the workings of the family as a benevolent teacher and one which would sustain southern Sudanese society, despite the fragmentation caused by almost constant war and its impact on all aspects of life.

TM1 (adult South Sudanese elder and teacher) explained that:

*Families [are] our unit. Parents... give good experience and support their kids and what is necessary for their age and life relationships with relatives with what they call names respect duties of child within a family. Parents always expect loyalty and respect fully integrated with other family members... learn stories by the parents. Moral teaching (TM1).*

TM1 singled out the family's significance in learning most clearly through the statement, 'Best teachers are the families and elders and the grandmas'. This distinctive pattern of learning through cultural interaction between the southern Sudanese students, parents and extended family members explained the merging of the sense of family and personal identity: the close nurturing, respect, reliance and authority evident in family life (Guong & Lindemann, 2011).

Mead's emphasis on the 'I' and significant others' relationships (Blumer, 1977) proved important in interpreting the participants' development of their own personal cultural systems, derived, according to humanistic sociology, from the Dinka culture group values which they encountered in the family and surrounding community (Smolicz & Secombe,

1981). In contrast, it was evident secondary social values and relationships with the classroom teachers and church figures most often did not result in meaningful learning.

Blumer's conception of dynamic and simultaneous processes of individual self-growth and interaction with others is evident in this data in terms of social relations and meanings (Blumer, 1969, p. 8). The students gave evidence of choosing their attitudes and behaviours towards their parent, for example. Some chose to be close and others to avoid parental figures. However, most frequently it appeared that the parent who was 'available' to be the nurturer, coupled with other extended family member whom they liked, were regarded as positive and key persons in their learning and upbringing. The two processes of individuals interacting within themselves and also with others and the environment appeared to be operating in tandem in such cases (Blumer, 1969).

However, the key constant ingredient was the underlying machinations of the war or threat of war in the lives of the southern Sudanese students. War disrupted the immediate and extended family networks and workings of relationships. This in turn affected the individual's sense of safety and stability and the type of learning both within the family unit and outside in the nature of the formal school learning opportunities. However, despite this constantly disrupted environment, relationships were maintained wherever possible and the essential language and cultural learning necessary for the survival of the family and the Dinka community took place (K Perry, 2007b; Sandy, 2013).

Chapter 6 moves across the globe from southern Sudan to Adelaide, South Australia where the learning and life experiences of the southern Sudanese secondary students shifted to the effects of entering the mainstream Australian society and schooling in Adelaide. Students like LF13 felt: 'kinda sad to leave all my friends and family' and LF 3, on arrival, said, 'I miss my family and want to be with them'. Others showed a range of mixed emotions, such as LM11's 'No, I didn't want to', NM4's 'nervous new adventure'; LM1's, 'pretty excited' to LM6 who was 'surprised and happy to start a new life [away] from South Sudan'.

## Chapter Six: Mainstream Australian Society and Schooling in Adelaide

### Introduction

In this chapter the life and learning experiences of the nineteen refugee secondary students and two teachers from what is now South Sudan are examined, based on their comments following their arrival and settlement into mainstream Australian society and schooling in Adelaide. After significant dislocation experiences in southern Sudan and later on in the refugee camps, these student refugees faced further similar upheaval not only in their family lives but also entering the more stable, safe but totally unfamiliar social environment of formal schooling in Adelaide. The focus is on the interview data concerning social relations and meanings with respect to: Adelaide secondary schools; part-time workplaces; sporting clubs; and peer groups. This is the second context of the refugee students' learning experiences represented in the top band of the right-hand circle of Figure 4.2.

The analysis looks mainly at: firstly, the key social system of the school, but also considers part-time workplaces and school sporting clubs, from the perspective of the relationships the students encountered in each of these; and secondly, new cultural meanings the students learned in the mainstream schooling and life in Adelaide. Their actual words and phrases from interview transcripts are used for the analysis and discussion.

Table 6. 1 Participants' Concrete Facts on Group Membership in Adelaide (Appendix F) refers to data discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. The full version of the snapshot tables found throughout Chapter 6 is located in Appendix F.

*The Visibility Issue.* The issue of being 'dark-skinned' (Participant NF1); 'only African' (LM8, LF14); not Caucasian (LM1); or 'like the Indigenous' (LM11) formed a recurring thread which appeared deep-seated, although expressed differently, in all participants. The common theme running through their recollections was the 'shock' realisation of how different they were. LM1 spoke of his initial culture and racial shock arriving 'in a classroom and a lot of Caucasians, a lot of shock. We look different'. NM2 summed up a common theme of the negative feelings experienced when they associated with 'white kids' especially in school.

## School Social Relations for Learning School Meanings

The nineteen South Sudanese students and two teachers described their Australian learning experiences in terms of their first and subsequent school placements, and their immersion into living in Adelaide. The students and teachers, from the Catholic college and those from the government specialised language school who attended other day secondary schools during the day showed themselves to be critical participants in their new school contexts. Their attitude was serious and they were committed to learning achievement. They commented readily on the positive and negative experiences and relationships they encountered. Their suggestions for future change are discussed. The overall student and teacher responses which described school patterns in Adelaide are presented in Table 6.2 *Participants Describing School Patterns in Adelaide*. It can be seen that all the participants commented on this theme but the focus of their comments varied.

Table 6. 2 Participants Describing School Patterns in Adelaide

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1.School Patterns in Adelaide	1F  3M	10F  5M	  2M	21/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

***Early School Interactions and Immersion into School Structures.*** The initial ‘welcoming’ experiences at schools proved to be rather mixed, as recalled in the responses, from eight out of the 21 participants. At LF10’s first school ‘I get [got] all smiley- so welcoming’ and NM4 recalled he was ‘definitely yeah [welcomed]’ on his first day at primary school. He had been placed in a city primary school known for its multicultural approach and inclusion of new arrivals and refugees in its intake. NM4 considered that the school

*was alright. It was actually a school for refugee students who came to Australia, specifically made for them so we kinda had similar experiences to everyone...a lot of Sudanese, other people from different other nations had similar experiences and so forth (NM4).*

Participant NM2 was both 'excited and shy' as he felt 'different'. LF3 described a similar experience of 'mixed' feelings. Despite feeling she was made 'welcome - everyone was so friendly', she was not happy with her own behaviour. 'I put myself down, not other people'. Participant LF15 was another who found her school welcome was 'OK at first three months'.

Other participants found their first contacts with Australian students rather confronting. LF9 recalled arriving at her primary school where 'some (students) made me feel [like] an outsider'. She noticed that the students were 'all white. We were the first [Africans]. It was really hard only 2 months in Australia'. However, she really appreciated the school principal's intervention; 'She was very lovely. Incident lunchtime. Next day the girl came and apologised to me. Now I have more knowledge'. Arriving in Melbourne for her first schooling experience, NF1 was surprised that whilst the teachers were welcoming, the students were not at all friendly even though many were South Sudanese or from other African countries. These fellow students' attitudes 'shocked' her. She felt as if she and the other South Sudanese students were regarded as:

*horrible people. I was expecting the other way round... In my opinion I was thinking they [the other Sudanese or African students] would have been more friendly as we were from the same background but I was shocked... horrible people. I got a different reaction from my teachers and I was expecting it to be the other way round (NF1).*

Feeling 'different' from the 'white kids' in the school and class settings became a recurring theme in the comments of many students discussed later in this chapter.

The other important issue was the participants' memories of early immersion into school rules and structures. The school rules on dress and wearing school uniform upset a number of students. Rules on hair and jewellery, such as only a watch and cross to be worn, caused problems and consequently some students began to feel that,

*every way the teachers [were] sick of us. They don't believe in our culture not our language, hair, natural colour, even though other students have stripes and things. When I first came no bangles. Mum begged them [but] had to go to a jeweller and break them off. They [the school and teachers were] just too much (LF5).*

Participant LF12 agreed that she did not like her Catholic school being so 'strict about the uniform'. At another Catholic school, LF13 felt that 'it's just about the uniform', but another participant (LF14) also stated that her Catholic school was 'really really strict' about uniform and hair.

On the more positive side, participants were introduced to several support structures that existed in the school. Mentor groups, for example, had been set up for all students in the Catholic college from Years 8-12 to encourage a sense of belonging in the Christian sense between staff and students. Meetings were scheduled regularly at set times throughout the school week. Only one out of four South Sudanese participants mentioned these groups. Participant NM3 supported the idea behind these groups but recommended that ‘the teacher should really personally know the students before really judging [any issue] ... a matter of the language... [without knowing] the experiences [students] have had which have affected them’.

An after-school Homework Club had also been set up once a week with voluntary tutors from ARA (Australian Refugee Association) to assist all students with their homework and assignments. Six out of the 21 participants, who had this support available, mentioned the club as serving a purpose in their learning. NM3 was concerned that ‘students didn’t know where to get support they needed like they didn’t know there were homework clubs around or how to approach the support structure’. In contrast, participant NF1 highlighted the presence of several school personnel, including a Catholic sister whose help she appreciated. ‘Personally, I gotten [got] good grades just from going there. Has helped us with our learning’. NM4 initially attended the club but later changed his mind, stating, ‘I don’t really go to the homework club anymore...I just don’t have time. I didn’t do much there. I can do much of that myself’. Participant LF12, a student of both the Catholic college and the government language specialised school, was happy to attend. ‘[It] provides food and after that tutors to help you they have particular subjects they do’. Her younger sister, LF14, recalled that ‘people there [were] approachable. They expected everyone [to attend]’. LF13 knew about the club but only used it when she needed help: ‘I don’t go there. They help. So sometimes I just go get some help in classes’.

*School counsellors were mentioned by two students as well as by the two South Sudanese teachers, not always positively. LF14 decided to leave the Catholic college after an intense conflict with another student. She felt that the school counsellor,*

didn’t help [but] she made it my problem. [The conflict started when a student called her] names inside the school...one girl and I get angry I tried to ignore it then get physically into it. I don’t try to make this the first option. I told her she could stop it. I told her I was going to avoid her I kept asking her. She kept denying it. She called me a name mixed between Australian and Indian (LF14).

Even participant NM3 (a future school captain in the Catholic college) reported, 'I didn't even know there were counsellors when I was at primary school'. The two South Sudanese teachers discussed the serious and intercultural problems and misunderstandings between school staff and South Sudanese parents and their children, in both primary and secondary schools. This subject is explained in more detail in Chapter 7.

***Negative Relations with Teachers.*** The South Sudanese students felt strongly that their relationships with some teachers were characterised by a lack of trust and understanding, which effectively blocked learning successfully. Seven out of fourteen participants spoke in detail of their ongoing concerns with teachers who they felt did not understand their different needs or abilities but they did not feel this about all the teachers. High teacher expectations appeared to be a common problem which was raised by several students. As NM3 explained, the teachers 'expect all students to [be on the] same level'. He found for example, that some of his Year 8 teachers were surprised when he did not know several of the Australian native animals which had been listed for research. They were Australian animals that NM3 'hadn't seen before'. Participant NF1 found one teacher lacked understanding and made her feel 'stupid' when she asked that one of her assignments be re-assessed:

*My teacher...made me feel that I was stupid and didn't know what was going on but at the same time I told her-can you take into consideration...I worked hard for it [The assignment which was only graded a C]. Then she said no it's final (NF1).*

Participant LF7 did not like teachers who felt she's 'not intelligent enough make you feel as though they have to explain it to you more...Offends me when they're surprised that I do good work. Oh, wow really good'. LM8 observed, like several other South Sudanese secondary student interviewees, that some teachers engaged in 'slow talking' and made the students feel inferior. He described this experience as 'slower speaking used to happen at my old school'. Similarly, LF12, in another secondary school, asserted that the Literacy Extension teacher:

*treats her class like a reception class. She talks down and she speaks slowly and chooses metaphors. The activities unnecessary they're [the students] are getting A's without trying. My friends talk about it. The teacher is not as good as she's supposed to be. Sudanese, they catch up quick. They starting being rude 'cos of the way she started treating them. It's her manner like a teacher in the Primary school. People get frustrated...personally I haven't had teachers like that in high levels. I found it disrespectful to myself (LF12).*

Some memories were extremely negative such as participant LF10's recollection of the day that her maths teacher told her to 'just do it...I said I can't do it...I haven't studied. I looked so stupid'. LF5 described some teachers as so 'rude and they ignore you and so rude'. Racist observations were also reported by several students as were the feelings that there were 'teachers' favourites' in the classrooms: LM8 felt that the biology teacher always 'points me out. I just keep quiet. I'm the only African. My friends [ask] why is he always staring at you. He points me out and I'm the only one. It gets to me sometimes'. Participant LF4 described her maths class as 'divided into races. I don't like this and I speak out. He said I offended him'. Given many teachers' general lack of cultural understanding of the South Sudanese refugee students' interests and abilities, the 'resistant and confrontationist' examples of student-teacher interaction as documented by Mickan (2007, p. 20) in the NAP secondary class study in South Australia, are perhaps not so surprising.

Racist overtones surfaced in some of these relationships with teachers which were comparable to the racist barriers faced in the South Sudanese job seekers study conducted recently in the ACT (El-Gack & Yak, 2016).

Several interviewees felt that the teachers concentrated more on their 'favourite' students in the class. LF5 decided that 'IPP [Industry Pathways Program] I don't attend. She has favourites this teacher. She chats to her favourites and next lesson she'll help only them'. LF9 also felt that 'some [teachers] made her feel like an outsider [and] that the bad teachers separate the classroom not going to do anything about it'.

The perspectives of the two South Sudanese teachers, parents with their own children having been placed in schools upon arrival, were also revealing. TM1 expressed concern (as had NM3 and other students) of teachers' very high expectations of the refugee students, unaware of the low literacy of the family situation at home. He related that 'parents [are] illiterate [and] isolated from the education of their children...opposite style'. TM2 was horrified that teachers had not contacted him when his primary school-aged children experienced problems and were upset during the school day. He believed that in such cases, 'the school can be the obstacle. This year [there were] a lot of problems. I move[d] her to another school. I gave two contacts one for email [and to] ring me directly. For my kids'.



***Negative Relations with Students.*** Disturbing to the South Sudanese students was the poor and inattentive behaviour of students in classes which most respondents highlighted. LM1 was shocked and surprised that ‘in Year 8 boys muck around, but not now. In Year 12 no one mucks around’. LF5 recalled a public school where students ‘just do what [they] like’. The observed realities of being ‘dark-skinned’ and from a different race led to subsequent feelings of unease in the mainstream schools (with ‘white people’), classes and with their school and outside peers (‘white kids’). LF10’s recalled ‘the kid in year 7, a boy, physically harassed me. I was unconscious for a while it was during the teachers’ meeting. We were playing dodgeball he was supposed to go out [and] he pushed me’.

As a follow-up, many recounted that they were bullied and joked about by the other students, as they were ignored and under-rated by their teachers (Participants NF1, NM2, NM3, NM4, LF3, LF4, LF5, LF7, LM8, LF9, LF10, LF13 and LF14). The common reaction was ‘to keep quiet’ (LF13) or ‘put myself down’ (LF3). However, some few chose to ‘still speak out’ (LF4). LM1 remarked that in all his years at school ‘only Sudanese [had] helped me’. His friends in classes did not help him with his work: ‘All do their own thing’. LM11 experienced working in groups with students at his secondary school and classed them as:

*most of them are like Asian racism. I started being independent [of] white people it's like the indigenous. I'm here to learn. They're welcome to our country too (LM11).*

***Positive Relations with Teachers.*** These types of relationships with teachers were helpful and assisted the South Sudanese students’ learning. A number appreciated not being beaten which was the accepted and firm practice back home in southern Sudan. Several respondents had favourable experiences with teachers who were kind, helpful and an important ingredient in the students’ school lives and successful learning. Participant NF1 recalled valuing the advice given to her by some teachers. LM1 appreciated ‘teachers [who] helped me with grammar [which was] new to me...in a little corner where you go and practise’. LM2 remarked that [school was] good here. No more don’t get beaten here...The teachers were helpful’. LF3 agreed that ‘here like very wonderful, nice. It’s like having a difference. Student not [beaten]’. LF5 extolled one teacher for the ‘way she talks and explains to you’. Perhaps the highest level of praise came from LM8 who felt that at one school ‘the teachers were awesome. I felt like all the teachers loved me. What I loved about them...they just kept continuing they never gave up’.

***Positive Interactions with Students.*** For some participants, there were positive memories of isolated students who were supportive and helped them with their work. Participant NF1 was delighted to have her friend Elise in class ‘look at her work. Yes, I have to ask her. She says take a look at my work but don’t make it look like...don’t copy me. [She is] very friendly and helpful. She’s an ‘A’ student, very loud and sporty’. Even NM2 (who previously spoke of difficult times with ‘white kids’) concluded that although he ‘felt different of course. You are still different. Of course, my English was good, but not as good as theirs but they were [generally] nice...Not all of negativity’. Participant LF15 did have to adjust because when she was enrolled in a private Independent secondary school, she ‘was the only African and [there was] a Korean. At first...got used to it. The students were pretty nice’. Participant NM4 reported that whilst he had moved schools several times, he ‘used to make friends a lot. I’m [a] pretty social sort of person’. NM4 was an unusual case (two out of 19 students) as he had both parents, siblings and other family members living with him in Adelaide. Participant NM3 stressed receiving help from teachers (despite feeling ‘pigeonholed’ at times) rather than being helped by students or friends. ‘It really started with the other way round. I help them...with maths homework. Like that I could learn a lot that slightly easier’.

However, from my personal observation, the male South Sudanese secondary students regularly participated in athletic house carnivals and were always successful as the winners and contributing to the secondary school house point competitions. Furthermore, I also noticed the joy and physical pride and satisfaction as the female South Sudanese students prepared for and preened themselves for the senior school formals. Their male partners were also attired in matching coloured ties and handkerchiefs and the couples always insisted on being photographed during the formal school events. These appeared to serve significant examples of the students drawing on their own physical and cultural pride as a shared personal resource to both be distinctive yet play a role within the important mainstream school calendar events. It appeared that these were events which they knew intuitively they could do well in and take pride in.

***Conclusions.*** Social relations and meanings in Adelaide and mainstream Australian society were at the core of the new relationships and experiences for the South Sudanese students. The school was a dominant cultural system and the relationships revolving around and evolving in this new context were critically important for their positive sense of learning success. Student responses to relations with teachers ranged across the spectrum from very helpful to obstructionist and racist at times. However, the ‘visibility’

issue was an ongoing one and at the heart of all their making of and sustaining important relationships. The 'significant others' were their South Sudanese friends and relatives, certain teachers and special students who the interviewees met and liaised within their learning experiences. Most of the new relationships could be categorised as Mead's 'generalized others' (Morris, 1934). These were the teachers, peer group students in all the classes and in sport teams on the school sports field, counsellors, homework club tutors and mentor group staff. The students created their own individualised meanings out of these diverse experiences and relationships. It was surprising that the peer student groups were not as important in the mainstream school as expected. Similarly, playing sport at school in general did not lead to the formation of any friendships.

Relations with teachers appeared to be very important and crucial for the students' learning. These were highlighted and prioritised by all the respondents rather than the learning and personal relationships with the students. The student group from the Catholic college were more concerned with relating to and receiving help from their teachers rather than investigating the possibility of help (apart from NF1) from their school peers. The larger student interviewee group associated with the afterhours specialised government school for languages appeared to be more experimental with relationships and more critical observers of staff, teacher and student behaviour. The two South Sudanese teachers were more concerned about the internal breakdown of the school's communication with the South Sudanese parents. This is discussed more fully in Chapter 7. These teachers were also extremely vocal about Australian schools' style of teaching and learning which will be discussed in Educational Meanings later in the chapter.

### **Community Sporting and Workplace Experiences**

When questioned about their involvement in school sport, the interviewees reported generally positive reactions. Participant NF1 laughed in response to being questioned about sport at school. She told me privately later that she was not 'a sporty type of girl'. LM1 noted that after commencing one high school 'after a couple of weeks' basketball friendships started to develop mainly recess and lunch'. NM2 stated he enjoyed playing soccer at school, revealing that he 'learnt soccer from friends at home and enjoys soccer'. NM4 recalled that he picked up soccer 'at home from older brothers or someone older than you [and] liked playing sports here' but more so in his younger years: years 8, 9, and 10. He also 'picked up' European handball 'back in primary school'. NM3 used to play

school soccer and basketball and ‘currently I’m still playing for the school soccer’. LF3 chose to study netball for her research project (a compulsory component of secondary education in South Australia) because ‘it’s very nice as you get to know people [playing] in school teams’. In contrast participant LF4 felt that whilst her research project on basketball sport and playing basketball helped her to make friends and she won five awards at netball at primary school, [at] St Colombo’s ‘it was racist. I’d be the only migrant so I don’t feel right I don’t bother’. This was a common thread emanating from many of the interviewees, notably of feeling they were of migrant/refugee status, but also looking and feeling ‘different’.

Outside the school only one out of 21 students/teachers connected with their fellow student peers. Participant NM3 commented that: ‘I got a few friends nearby, some of come to the school [primary school]. These friends kind of tag along, just see just observe’. It appeared that these were friends not from his current school. However, they could have been South Sudanese.

Membership of playing sport ‘in the community’ was mentioned by LM6. However, sporting club membership outside the school was only reported by participant LM11. According to him, ‘I tried out for a club. I think they let me in like it was two suburbs away. Can’t get hit in the head or chest. Makes me feel like I belong. Really nice guys’. This was very significant for LM11, living only with his elder sister, and he described his early experiences on arrival in Adelaide as: ‘really difficult [as] no one liked me. I was like a loner. People did try and talk to me [but] I was shy and I didn’t actually speak well’. Participant LM11 was the only refugee student who reported making friends through playing sport. He played in the lacrosse club outside school and formed relationships which he described as important for him, as he lacked older family members in Adelaide.

Workplace experiences were varied. Two students described their experiences and relationships associated with the workplace. Participant NM2 highlighted the positive work experience for his PLP (Personal Learning Plan, a compulsory component of Year 10) in Hungry Jacks as a pivotal experience in his life. The experience:

*teaches you everything. Have to employ yourself. Teaches you standards. Manager saw me perform well and he tell the people at Hungry Jacks. I just told the Year 10s [at school] just what you do there. Can provide many things. These people can help you and provide you with many things, even give you a position there and you can put them down in your resume (NM2).*

## Learning English and Other Languages

This section discusses the linguistic meanings learned by the South Sudanese secondary students speaking and studying English and other languages in their Adelaide schools. A total of 15 participants discussed aspects of this topic (see Table 6.3 *Participants Describing Language Learning and the School in Adelaide* below).

Table 6. 3 Participants Describing Language Learning and the School in Adelaide

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1.Languages and the School in Adelaide	1F 3M	9F 2M	0	15/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

Learning the English language as the compulsory language of instruction used in all subjects in Australian schools, was vital for the students' future education, as well as their communication with their teachers, school peers, school personnel and mainstream society generally. Many also had the opportunity to learn one or more other languages through the compulsory second language programs offered in all Adelaide primary schools and at the Year 8 level in secondary schools. Opportunities to learn the Dinka language, mother tongue for the South Sudanese refugee secondary students, are discussed in Chapter 7, which deals with the South Sudanese community's adaptations to life in Adelaide.

**Intensive English.** As discussed in Chapter 2, Intensive English classes and support in the NAP (New Arrivals Program) were available and taken up by all of these students. Some of the mainstream schools placed these students into ESL classes or offered extra support or literacy extension in ESL classes and sometimes mainstream English classes. As LF13 remembered, 'we learnt English more than any other subject!' The South Sudanese secondary students studied either one or two of these English subjects. Many of these refugee students had acquired some knowledge of English, as shown in Table 5.5a. For the most part this was fragmented and unsystematic. In particular, few had any of the literacy skills in English needed to succeed in Australian schools. This was similar to the challenges faced by the Hmong Americans who arrived in the US illiterate in their mother tongue as had the Cambodians refugees in Australia (Chiang et al., 2015; Smolicz et al., 2003). Moreover, few participants had had the opportunity to gain literacy in their mother tongue, Dinka, so that achieving literacy in English could be regarded as their greatest challenge, as Buckmaster recognised in his interview comments, 2/7/2013. In

this sense the students were more disadvantaged than the adults that Freire was teaching in Brazil. He introduced them to the written forms of the oral words they already knew. These students were often learning the written forms of English at the same time as they were being introduced orally to new English words and syntax.

The students encountered some teachers who understood this. One spoke at some length about a teacher who helped him in his learning of English literacy. NM3, who like most the other participants lacked literacy in Dinka, praised the teacher who taught him how,

*to do the right cover check which was different from how I used to learn, so I found that good... When you're learning how to spell words we do 'right cover check' and that was quite helpful and that taught me how to spell a lot of words... not similar [to school in Africa] because the teacher would just write the word on the board and they expect you to remember it from that point on (NM3).*

Participant NM4 remembered positive experiences early on regarding learning English in Adelaide:

*Couple of simple lessons of English and a bit of advice like how to talk English and speak English. I can get better in English but I think my English skill is average. Still read a lot. English Communications I enjoyed the tasks such as movies and analyse sequences, produce text for [writing a] film review (NM4).*

Just over half of the interviewees (13/21) discussed directly learning English or ESL from their teachers. Most students and the two South Sudanese teachers were very forthcoming and acted as critical observers on teachers' styles of teaching, learning and specific subjects in the mainstream schools. These will be discussed later in Table 6.5.

***Difficulties Learning Literacy in English.*** Tackling the compulsory English language in school was difficult for the participants and compounded by their lack of literacy in Dinka. As NM2 had reported, on arrival into the mainstream schooling, 'of course my English was good but not as good as theirs...I didn't like oral presentations'. These South Sudanese students faced immense and interrelated challenges on three fronts. Their memories of difficulties with English were also linked to other difficulties in settling into Adelaide. LF9's memory of confronting an all-white class on her first day at school (mentioned earlier) was linked in her mind to the hard times 'only two months in Australia; no father and English' as the ultimate hurdle to be overcome'. LF14 recalled her early days in primary school when she 'didn't know much English at the time' and was not able to 'make friends-not enough people to talk to'. NF1 connected her negative classroom experiences of learning English in Melbourne with feeling 'lonely as [I]

couldn't speak the language [English]. But looking at my siblings they were with me. I had friends I already knew but making friends and the language was hard'. As with a number of other participants, she found oral presentations most difficult. She 'didn't like oral presentations. That was the hardest thing. I could not do presentations. Worst memory. There were good memories too, however, 'we had a Dinka translator. And that's how we would learn. My cousin was a good role model. Was helpful'. Her comments pointed to three things that had helped her through the early difficulties with English. The first was the presence of brothers and sisters and the friends she already knew -almost certainly southern Sudanese. The second was the presence of a Dinka translator in her English classes. The importance of his help is evident in her words, 'that's how we would learn!' The third factor was a cousin whom she regarded as a 'good role model'.

Participant NM3 felt that he was being 'pigeon holed' when he was learning English in the ESL classes and he requested entry into the mainstream Year 10 English class. He soon realised that being in the ESL class 'was beneficial to me as well. I got to learning and caught up to the amount of English I'd missed'. Typical of the more critical approach of some South Sudanese secondary students in my past ESL classes, who believed that 'things have to be interesting in English'. LF5 also reacted unfavourably to 'too much writing' [English] in classes. LF12 reported family support that 'mum is learning English and helps me with this'.

***Experiencing School Learning of Other Languages.*** In terms of other languages taught at school, nine out of the twenty-one participants learnt another language. These included Italian (six out of 21), Greek and Spanish (one each out of 21) or Japanese (two out of 21), which were offered as part of the compulsory learning of a second language in the primary school and Year 8. NM3 recalled enjoying learning Italian up to Year 7 (end of primary schooling in South Australia). 'I really enjoyed at it 'cos I've kind of found learning a new language easy to adapt to [due to learning the Swahili language] without even writing the language, just from interacting with the people when I was in Kenya for four years'. LF4, however, had a different experience of Italian in the primary school. She recalled, 'I've done Italian for six years and I don't get it'. LM1 remembered that 'I chose Italian in Year 8. No one did any work'.

The learning of other languages appeared to be more of a diversion or an experience of cultural diversity than achieving serious language outcomes. Participant NM4 related his experiences of,

[having] *done Greek, Spanish, and Italian at primary school. I did Italian for a while in high school. Quite interesting but never got to grapple with the language. It is fun and interesting* (NM4).

Participant LF12 described her Italian learning in primary school as ‘had a lot of Africans skipping classes and the teachers just walking around. Playing games and they taught Italian at that time’. LM11 recalled his language learning in primary school in terms of: ‘Japanese easy scribbles [and] then got harder’. LF7 ‘packaged’ up her Italian and Japanese learning at primary school as not as desirable from her perspective as learning ‘Dinka at school. I’d be really proud. I’d feel better, more than Japanese and Italian’.

Learning English was a challenge to most of the students particularly as they entered the mainstream schooling in Adelaide. This challenge was magnified by their general lack of literacy in their own language, Dinka, to serve as a prior literacy framework. The South Sudanese not only felt ‘different’ from ‘the white kids’ but also realised that their previous oral English proficiency was well below the level required to make friends as well as to manage oral presentations and written work. They made their own progress depending on the quality of their interactions with teachers, students and also with various family members who were either studying English at the same time (LF12’s mother) or who were ahead in terms of ability. The students neglected to mention receiving ‘explicit instructions and comprehension strategies; grammar, and genre knowledge’ as noted by earlier researchers (Dooley, 2009; Miller et al., 2012, p. 10) in their study of English or ESL in the mainstream schooling. Furthermore, the actual content of the English learning was rarely mentioned by the 13/21 interviewees who commented on this topic. These results were consistent with the Hmong American high school students feeling ‘different’ in classrooms, where the teachers were not realistic in their expectations of students’ abilities, and showed a lack of understanding how they learned (Chiang et al., 2015, p. 21). The students’ difficulty in making the transition from the spoken and informal command of the language to and formal learning had already been recognised by Buckmaster, 2/7/2013.

Learning other languages at primary school appeared to be a ‘side line’ or a cultural experience for the students. Serious language proficiency or advancing in oral or written ability were not reported by the nine out of 21 interviewees who discussed this topic. However, when asked further about this learning of other languages, most interviewees chose to compare these with their learning of the Dinka language which they saw as was more important to their sense of identity. The interviewees’ views on the increased



importance of learning the Dinka language, as their mother tongue in Adelaide, is discussed in Chapter 7.

Generally, the formal language learning in the mainstream schools, whether English, ESL or other languages, involved relationships with Mead’s ‘generalized others’(Morris, 1934). The fact that they had little contact with mainstream students outside formal classroom requirements limited their opportunities to practise their oral English skills in interaction with English native speakers. As mentioned previously, the interviewees were more concerned and vocal about the mainstream teachers’ styles of learning and teaching which are more explicitly discussed in the Educational Meanings.

### Religious Meanings

Table 6.4 *Participants Describing Religious Meanings in Adelaide* reveals that only seven of the participants discussed religious meanings and their involvement in worship services and other activities in church or mosque. This suggests a rather different commitment to religious meanings than the enthusiastic discussions by 16 of the participants about their involvement in services and celebrations and the centrality of the church in the life of community in southern Sudan.

Table 6. 4 Participants Describing Religious Meanings in Adelaide

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1.Religious Meanings in Adelaide	1F 3M	1F 2M	0	7/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Decreasing Church Attendance.** In Adelaide, the activation of religious meanings or values meant occasional visits to a church (including attendance at special religious events such as a South Sudanese service on Christmas Eve at both cathedrals in Adelaide). For the seven who discussed it, attendance at church (or the mosque, in one instance) did have some ongoing religious meaning. Participant NM4’s mother possessed deep religious Catholic views on education and insisted on her children being educated in Catholic schools in Adelaide. Her son, NM4, one of the early arrivals in Adelaide, explained that: ‘a church was usually for social gathering and so forth’. This rather non-committal response contrasted with participant NM4’s previous comments on his regular attendance at the church and the associated school in southern Sudan. NM2 recalled going

to church as a positive experience: ‘Yeah I had to go to church here but not catholic-church is Christian church. It’s quite good. [I] could [meet] different people [with other] cultural backgrounds’. LF10 claimed that she went ‘to church a lot [and had] so many questions [to ask]’. LM11, who lived here alone with his elder sister, went to church ‘once or twice a month. Go to both Australian and Dinka. I don’t understand the Dinka one too much. Understand the Australian one better’. Perhaps in his case, the contacts he made in the two churches helped to fill the gap of having almost no family to religion. Participant LM2, being the only Muslim in the cohort, attended the mosque and found that this provided him with a source of friends. He stated that ‘All the kids I was hanging around were Muslim’.

However, the church in Adelaide was not mentioned as being a regular or important event in most participants’ lives. Participant NF1, for example, had not attended church ‘for over a year’. Others appeared to have an instrumental view of the church in Adelaide as a place to: for example, initially meet or network with other South Sudanese and set up home in the new environment and culture. NM3 felt that ‘the church Sudanese church community was not really a feature but that’s when I first learnt the other Sudanese people here’. Participant NM4 explained that not long after arrival it was people from the church who helped the family:

*Kind of donations of furniture and such things like that to help us out...The first church we ...went to here was like a small Australian church. Then we discovered that there were other Sudanese churches. We went more to those (NM4).*

Going to the church for help in the new country in the arrival period, was consistent with the advice provided by Malual, herself an adult mother and refugee (Malual, 2015, pp. 36-37).

It would seem from the participants’ comments that the church and its religious values did not appear to have the long-lasting central importance in people’s daily lives as it did in southern Sudan. Perhaps removed from the horrors and threats of civil war, individuals and families did not feel the same need for God’s protection and help. Chapter 7 continues this discussion with a focus more on the ‘Sudanese churches’ mentioned by NM4.

## **Educational Meanings**

The mainstream school in Adelaide represented another cultural system in which the participants were challenged with new educational ideas and different experiences as part of their compulsory secondary education here. All the participants spoke at length, and with animation, on their experiences of formal learning in Adelaide. This is indicated in Table 6.5 *Participants Describing Formal School Learning in Adelaide*. While they discussed a whole range of different aspects, their responses concentrated on teaching styles as they related to their experiences of learning. These were important discussion topics for the participants (21/21), since they provided the opportunity for each to not only present his/her opinions but also to suggest change.

Table 6. 5 Participants Describing Formal School Learning in Adelaide

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1. Formal School Learning in Adelaide	1F 3M	10F 5M	2M	21/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

***Difficult Interactions with Teachers.*** Teacher attitudes towards the South Sudanese secondary students and their general lack of professional preparedness in relation to knowledge of culture and refugees were repeatedly (21/21) voiced in the interview data. One major source of criticism was that teachers were often ‘out of touch’ with understanding the particular needs and abilities of the South Sudanese secondary students. Some teachers had very high expectations of what such students could achieve and assumed that their performances would be on par with that of the mainstream school students. The result was, as LF10 put it, that you were ‘judged before you even [said] anything’. Other teachers were criticised because their students’ expectations were ‘too low’ or they totally ignored what the students had learnt and achieved in the past. These student impressions are consistent with concerns raised by teachers about their lack of training and the general use of unqualified staff in the 2014 national EAL/D report (Australian Council of TESOL Associations, 2014, p. 24).

The interview comments indicated a lack of communication and personal discussion between teachers and their South Sudanese secondary students as to any difficulties with the classroom work and what they were expected to do. Participant LF4 summed up the prevalent student observation of ‘teachers sitting at [their] desks’, while LF15 noted that that in some classes the teachers ‘just sit there and ignore the students’. LM11 explained that ‘a teacher that doesn’t explain, doesn’t help’ learning and understanding.

On the other hand, teachers were also criticised for the remarks they made. Sometimes these were addressed to the whole class. Participant LF10 recalled: 'I didn't like the way she [the teacher] said things in class. Teacher has a problem. Instead of yelling in front of the whole class, [she should] see the student later'. Speaking down, often in the form of speaking with exaggerated slowness to the refugee students, was also widely reported and criticised. Other remarks were addressed to particular groups or individuals. Participant LF7 felt 'offended', 'intimidated' and 'bad' when the teacher was 'handing out drafts and in front of the class, [says to African and Afghani students] I'm not here to correct your English. [The] whole class felt bad'. Participant LM8 also felt uncomfortable when the physical education (PE) teacher commented ironically on his absences by remarking "'Oh you're here'", like he wasn't expecting me. It gets to me sometimes'. The students' comments clearly found such comments hurtful.

Participant NM3 indicated his surprise that the teacher of his Year 8 class expected him to be on the 'same level' as the mainstream students and know, for example, the names of Australian animals. He felt that his prior learning experiences in terms of what he knew and what he did not know should have been considered. An earlier study had pointed to the importance of teachers being aware of the 'assumed cultural knowledge central to understanding of much subject content' and the possibility that some of their students did not have such knowledge (J. Brown et al., 2006, p. 157). This lack of teacher understanding extended to the students' home situation. As LM1 explained, teachers do not appreciate that 'parents [are] illiterate [and] isolated from the education of their children...There is no home support nor link. The extended families are large or have a single parent'. At the other end of the scale, participant NF1 expressed her anger when the teacher assumed she knew nothing in a way that made her feel 'stupid'. She told the teacher, 'can you take into consideration, I'm not from here [and] that English is my second language?' NF1 went on to inform the teacher that she spoke Dinka most of the time.

The participants were also critical of some teachers who were 'not strict' in classes since they felt this meant 'too much freedom and choice' as far as classroom management and rules were concerned. Such freedom in school was disconcerting to the clear majority (16/21) of the South Sudanese secondary students who, like participant LF4, compared the Australian approach to what they had known in southern Sudan. Here, she said, 'I can be rude to a teacher [and receive a] detention. Stay at home. Not learn your mistake, never get into trouble and everyone pass. We loved [the system] in Africa'.

In particular, the two teachers - TM1 and TM2 - criticised what they call the 'independent' teaching and learning style in mainstream schools in Adelaide. TM1 described what he called the 'South Sudanese approach' to teaching and learning as 'opposite' in style to the Australian method:

*We [the South Sudanese teachers] are the centre of the information [and we] create and give students as receivers...opposite to the Western style of teaching students. [In South Sudan] teachers share [the knowledge with the] students [not working] independently (TM1).*

Participant TM1 described his teaching 'secrets' as initiating and sharing the knowledge and teaching. He spoke of 'ensuring all participate; motivating; explaining and discussing; having a dialogue with the students; creating a friendly atmosphere; sharing jokes and funny words' and telling stories from southern Sudan. He went 'to the level of younger students' to whom he was known as 'uncle'. He drew 'attention to any [inattentive] student not listening and showed some anger' (common to a family 'elder'). For TM1 the 'role of the traditional teacher in southern Sudan was to be the fount and dispenser of knowledge'. In the South Sudanese tradition 'my approach is that I do 70-80% of the effort and work. Australian teachers don't do a lot'. He emphasised that the teacher is respected and viewed as an elder and family member.

As the researcher, I observed participant TM1 in his junior and senior Dinka classes. The students commonly addressed him as 'uncle' and he spoke, as their 'uncle', of the importance and seriousness of learning. TM1 harkened back to their familiar primary family 'teacher' relationships and the teaching through stories approach typical of southern Sudan. What the refugee students experienced in their Adelaide schools was far more abstract and theoretical learning, taught often in a very objective way, by teachers who were never more than 'generalized others' to their students.

***Difficulties with Formal Learning.*** The computer-dominated curriculum and mode of teaching and learning all posed special difficulties for the South Sudanese secondary students in mainstream schooling. The students lacked the necessary literacy, as much in Dinka, as in internet technology. Nor did they possess laptops and only rarely had internet access at home for homework and assignments, which specifically asked for such skills. Participants NM2 and NM3 spoke of the hurdles for completing secondary assignments without personal home access to the internet and laptops. NM2 spoke of the transition from using his pencil case in Year 8 to using laptops in all classes. Students had to cope with quickly learning the skills to keep up with the mainstream students in

researching and writing assignments. NM3 remarked that at home 'some students didn't have computers to work with or parents to speak English to help'. An earlier study by (Zufferey & Wache, 2012) had concluded that computer training was essential and preferably needed to be completed prior to course commencement. However, such training whilst desirable was not offered in Adelaide secondary schools that the participants attended. According to the participants, teachers wrongly assumed that home computers were available and that students had the skills to use them.

Learning in student groups, common to most classes in mainstream secondary schools, highlighted the difference that the students felt in terms of their 'appearance', abilities and understanding of what was required. Participant LM8 reported that: 'I do like working in groups [but it] depends [on] who I'm working with. I just play along'. Participant LF9 posited the following opinion about working in groups, 'Not if some are friends. Better to choose to interact with ... Majority like to work at home. If I'm listening to music when my friends there, [it's] much harder'. Small group learning opportunities for students from different cultures have been recommended in studies, for example (Burgoyne & Hull, 2007). However, this style of learning is often unfamiliar to students from other backgrounds (J. Brown et al., 2006, p. 158). Their study of eight South Sudanese secondary refugee students in Victoria highlighted the lack of 'friends' in the composition of such groups as one such difficulty. Many of this study's interviewees also emphasised the sense of feeling different and 'out of step' with mainstream students in a group context.

***Difficulties with Unknown Subject Areas.*** Specific subjects posed challenges for South Sudanese secondary students in the mainstream school education. For instance, maths and science were described as 'hard' and 'difficult'. Spelling (participant LM11), economics and accounting were also described as 'difficult' by many of the students. Maths was described by LF15 as 'one of my worst subjects. Learnt at home [and] never liked it. I just don't get it'.

Intervention teaching for maths and science could assist the South Sudanese secondary students. Previous studies have indicated that inclusion of science-based readings, activities, discussions on academic issues of personal interest, study and memory skills in such programs can improve students' grades, learning goals and motivation (Mangels, Butterfield, Lamb, Good, & Dweck, 2006). The lack of technical vocabulary support for such subjects as maths and science was another key area not currently addressed by

teaching staff and school curriculum writers according to Dooley (2009). It has been noted that such learners ‘needed substantial tuition in learning the concepts and also the language of mathematical operations’ (Burgoyne & Hull, 2007).

***Conflicting Expectations with School Discipline.*** All participants felt that there was too much freedom in the mainstream schools in Adelaide. They felt that the classes were not strict enough. LF5 explained how some students ‘read’ this as ‘they feel nobody [here] cares, [unlike the] schools [and] very strict smacking [at home in southern Sudan]’. The lack of discipline and meaningful consequences for the South Sudanese secondary students and teachers were widely reported (16/21) and these serious problems affected their learning. Participant TM1, in particular, expressed the opinion that ‘kids [South Sudanese] learn under pressure [and] seriousness. Otherwise [it’s] a joke [and] they don’t care’. TM1 further explained that if the teachers’ expectations are not ‘real’, students are ‘helpless when given assignments and yet the teachers keep putting students up’, promoting all students to higher year levels at the end of the school year.

Teachers regarded the ‘resistant and confrontationist’ styles of interaction with their South Sudanese refugee secondary students as a challenge to their class discipline and authority in the NAP program study by Mickan (2007, p. 20). However, in the same program, a recent study of Sudanese younger refugee students described their ‘strong’ positive relationships with their teachers (Baak, 2016, p. 158).

***Interacting with Other Students.*** Relationships and interactions with these students did affect the learning of the South Sudanese secondary students in the mainstream classrooms. Some interviewees reported relationships with ‘significant others’ who assisted their learning in general and their assignment work, as did several of the eight South Sudanese students in a Victorian study (J. Brown et al., 2006, p. 159). Apart from instances of racist behaviour reported in this study, the predominant impression included relationships with ‘generalized others’ caught up in a mainstream school learning system in which the interviewees described as having too much freedom and where the learning was not taken seriously. Participant LF15’s frustration was clear when she explained that other students’ misbehaviour interfered with her learning ‘Most of the students [are] annoying. They mess around too much, usually male Aussies’.

Participant LM2’s response was typical of both secondary students and South Sudanese teachers, as he recalled the effectiveness of the harsh physical punishment at school in

southern Sudan. He stated, 'The beating did work 'cos you're scared. You have to get it right'. LF12 agreed and her serious response was common to all the interviewees, that mainstream school students 'get lazy here. They [school authorities] could keep them back in that year level instead of putting them up'.

*Students' Tapping into their Home Knowledge.* The interview comments gave no indication that teachers were aware [or had been made aware] of the South Sudanese students' previous skills or levels of formal knowledge, even though it was superficially or fleetingly obtained in the disrupted school experience in southern Sudan of the informal context of the family. However, the students did talk about the way they themselves made links between their previous learnings in southern Sudan and their formal school learning in Adelaide. The South Sudanese students appeared to take the initiative for making their own links with previous skills or pastimes practised in southern Sudan in terms of choice of mainstream school subjects or research project topics.

Even in the case of choosing mainstream subjects, whether at the SACE level or in the younger years, several of the South Sudanese secondary students drew on their own prior knowledge or embryo skills arising from their home family learning in southern Sudan. To a certain extent, participants LF7, LM11, and LF15 related their choices of taking history in the mainstream schooling as being connected to the past stories told by their family members via the oral tradition. LF7 recalled a favourite story of a frog and a lizard and other; 'Very interesting stories. Helps [you to learn] to listen. I guess some things you can't forget'. Participant LF13 drew on her past enjoyment of the home cultural stories 'listening to the sounds' and speaking aloud for her mainstream debating interest in English. Psychology was another mainstream school subject which appealed to participants NM3 and LF14, from the vantage point of their past experiences in southern Sudan, as they felt that it had revealed insights into the study of people's behaviour. Both expressed interest in going on with studies in psychology at university.

The Year 12 SACE Research Project was a compulsory subject that many South Sudanese refugee students found very daunting initially until they decided to research topics connected to their past personal interests and skills. Carrying out such research projects appeared not only to be personally rewarding but also improved their final academic marks. As mentioned previously, sport was a popular choice but so were former and current personal interests. For example, NF1 studied the question, 'How has the South Sudanese marriage been adapted to Australia?' LM1 chose 'Muscle Development' for his



research project due to his personal interest and ‘knowledge and background with PE [Physical Education] helps’. LF13 chose ‘Fashion in the Community [Playford]’ for her research project. In my personal observation, she linked her choice of this topic back to her previous life in southern Sudan when she used ‘to like drawing houses in Africa, [as well as] flowers names on a little board [in] reception [kindergarten]’. These examples show how curriculum can be adapted to suit the refugee students’ prior (and current) interests and abilities as advocated by Windle (2015) and prior knowledge can be used as a current learning strategy (Dooley, 2009).

It appeared that the students themselves drew on their personal past strengths rather than having to be guided by teachers or other relevant staff. A number of other areas of knowledge were also specifically mentioned in this regard. Subjects like woodwork, outdoor education, sport, food and technology, dance, art and music were popular choices and in part related to the students’ previous pastimes and skills at home in southern Sudan. Some students spoke of these subjects as fulfilling their natural or past abilities such as being ‘practical...using my hands’ (participants NM4, LM8 and LF14) together with their having a familiar ‘base’. NM4’s practical skills with toy-making in southern Sudan were highlighted in his current enjoyment of woodwork as follows: ‘Just enjoy using my hands. To just relax [make] things with my hands back home. May be practical fixing things. When you’re a child, you like making toys and stuff like that...kind of [led to studying woodwork as a subject at mainstream school. Participant NF1 recalled her using her art skills from back home. She ‘used to draw with chalk on the floor or in the mud. Or we, instead of playdough, used clay when we were little. Maybe ideas from previous art works. And from looking around your home’. LM11 considered that his enjoyment of art came from his past when he ‘used to play in the sand and make faces’.

Participant LF3 stated that ‘Brighton [secondary school] music is very big. I like it’. NM3’s love of currently playing music came from ‘before I arrived in Australia, I used to be in a choir and play the drum’. Whilst LF15 said, ‘I do drama. I think that’s performing arts’, she later connected this study’s memories of home where she ‘liked drama and music’, and enjoyed: ‘Lots of dancing and singing and art. Lots of drumming. Very common traditional dance and cultural stuff. You can do it how you want to’. LF10 recalled her delight, excitement and crying in making a video on Sudan in primary school and ‘in the process of making the video, I made school concerts. [I’m] very into the arts’. Her memories and dramatic creative style of the stories told, as well as the traditional dances in southern Sudan were also in part utilised,

*in Year 7 I choreographed [the] whole Year 7 concert. [At home] you just pick up the dances. Copy people repeated over. Everything was oral everything was very dramatic. You want to know what's happening next. Emotion and character into them [the stories] Everything was oral. Everything was very dramatic. You want to know what's happening next. Emotion and character into them [the stories] (LF10).*

The observations showed how the South Sudanese students themselves made connections to enable future success with their school learning in Adelaide. The use of prior learning and the creative arts has been suggested and trialled successfully in several studies discussed in Chapter 2 (Use of Refugee Students' Prior Knowledge).

Furthermore, the South Sudanese participants studying subjects in the creative arts reported that they enjoyed the different and more open styles of learning in their traditional schools, as well as the chance to make use of familiar content or previous skills in their current learning. These students' enjoyment of the creative arts allowed and related also to the way these schools provided more personal avenues for expression than in more formal school subjects in Adelaide schools. The experiences described by the participants were comparable to accounts given by: firstly, Preiss (2013) who sought to give young South Sudanese primary school students 'voice' through writing their own personal stories; and secondly, Harris who used 'arts-based methodologies for assisting former refugee (South Sudanese) students to integrate and increase their language skills' (2011b, p. 754). Such links not only enhance the success of the personal learning experience and strengthen their sense of cultural literacy, but also provide avenues for psychological healing of past traumas, as documented in the following examples: traditional dance (DMT Dance Movement Therapy); drumming (D. Harris, 2007); rap (Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011); music (Jones, Baker, & Day, 2004); and film-making (A. Harris, 2011b).

***The Issue of Quality Teacher Time.*** All the participants reflected on the quality of their 'relationships' or interaction with teachers. Whilst the students did report learning skills from personal discussions with teachers and learning to understand assignment criteria, they spoke more of wanting personal 'acknowledgement' and personal time with the teachers in class. Participant LF10 described what she called their 'problem of communication' which she saw reflected on the way one particular teacher spoke to her. 'Communication was always the problem'. On the other hand, participant LM11 appreciated the way his 'favourite teacher would ask if he needed help. He asks sometimes ... continues then comes over'. Participant LF14 described her ideal teachers as being 'attentive [and] more understanding. They'll come and talk'. The worst teacher

is demanding for you to do your work'. The manner or style of teacher-student communication was seen as critical. For LF5 this was seen in the way one teacher 'talks and explains to you. She does treat me well'.

In the midst of learning challenges, including communication with teachers, several students formulated their own tactics to achieve learner success. One student, described how he took the trouble to develop a learning strategy which involved approaching teachers for help. A desired pre-planned interaction with the teacher could be devised. A prime example concerned participant LM6's favourite subject which was biology and learning from his physical education teacher:

*But it's not the way the teachers teach. It's my way of putting in the effort she talks slowly makes everything short I can understand more by taking notes I can see the summary. My uncle taught me the skills how could we break down the study into smaller parts learn visually writing down notes a mind map. [However,] my PE teacher told me a good thing he taught us for example to pass Year 12 you need to have 3-4 hours subject each night. He's breaking down your ideas into smaller parts (LM6).*

The difficulty of providing 'adequate teacher time' in the form of personal, directed discussions together with resources and scaffolding for student work were frequently raised concerns in earlier studies (Windle, 2015; Windle & Miller, 2012). The participants in this study spoke of seeking quality time including personalised help, a 'relationship' with teachers and to be recognised both for their prior abilities and /or their deficiencies in subject understanding. In some cases, the students reported personal access to teacher assistance. However, in many cases the students' voices were submerged into those of the mainstream classroom and remained unheard.

The South Sudanese secondary students found many challenges with the Adelaide mainstream schools' formal styles of teaching and learning. Teacher expectations of the refugee students did not take into account their learning experiences in South Sudan, which had been subjected to interruption (Chiang et al., 2015). Many teachers assumed that the students' English language and comprehension skills were fluent and on the same level (or minimal as for some teachers) as those of the local students. 'Teachers speaking too quickly' was also reported in Tran's study of the Vietnamese students in mainstream schools in South Australia (1993).

Not all mainstream subjects nor teachers were mentioned by all the interviewees. Their selection came from their own interpretations of the importance of the relationships they

encountered and the interaction with their individual sense of self with the ‘generalized others’.

### **Sense of Identity and Aspirations**

The South Sudanese secondary students were exposed to many new social, linguistic, religious, educational changes in their lives in the mainstream schools in Adelaide. How had their sense of identity and aspirations fared? The extent to which they maintained their cultural identity as Dinka or adopted a new identity as Australian, is considered in Chapter 7. What does become apparent in this chapter is that their relationships at school with ‘generalized others’ led to new dimensions in their identity and aspirations based in the school context.

In their Adelaide schools, they found printed written content in English for all the school subject areas they knew, as well as for new school subjects; formal teaching in English and different styles of learning. In the schools the refugee students encountered changing patterns of relationships to teachers, to their peers and to school personnel. The new school context in Australia forced them to reconsider who they thought themselves to be. Table 6.6 *Participants Describing Identity in Adelaide* reveals that all the respondents discussed in some way or other their sense of identity in the context of Adelaide.

Table 6. 6 Participants Describing Identity in Adelaide

<b>Theme</b>	<b>NCC (4)</b>	<b>SOL (15)</b>	<b>Ts (2)</b>	<b>Total (21)</b>
1.Identity in Adelaide	1F 3M	10F 5M	2M	21/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

A number of earlier studies had commented on the high academic aspirations found among many southern Sudanese refugees. Other research has pointed to the mismatch between the students’ current language and literacy abilities and their ‘high aspirations, hopes and dreams’ (J. Brown et al., 2006, p. 160). The evidence documented in this chapter suggests a number of participants had bridged this mismatch. They had vindicated Buckmaster’s judgement, in his interview 2/7/2013, that once the southern Sudanese students had mastered ‘literacy, there was no stopping them’. The comments of a number of interviewed participants revealed they were prepared to be active learners, keen to develop their own learning strategies and make the most of their contact with good teachers.

The way the students diagnosed their own personal learning styles is another example of the emergence of a sense of a school identity probably originating in some school discussion of types of learners. This external input may have, through year level workshops, or discussion of capabilities in relation to SACE, but it is clear that the students have picked up on this and considered these personal learning styles in relation to themselves. Participants LM1, NF1, NM2 and NM3, saw themselves as visual learners: LM1, LM6, LM8 and LM11 as practical learners; NM4, LM2, LF3, LF4, LM8, LF13, and LF14, as auditory and kinaesthetic learners. Whilst the previously mentioned Research Skills Development (Willison, 2006) framework has value in designating the different levels of autonomy of the learner, individual student assessment of their own ability, does indicate their present commitment to school learning as the emergence of what may be called an intellectual identity.

In Adelaide, this new identity opportunity was apparent particularly among the female refugee students who were eager learners. The traditional family structure in southern Sudan, discussed in Chapter 7, had undergone many changes and modifications in the community in Adelaide. Whilst all students described and critiqued their new mainstream school learning in Adelaide, the females, in particular, were more forthcoming and detailed. In comparison with the males' comments concerning formal 'schooling' in southern Sudan, those from the females had been briefer. This was seen at the time as not surprising in a country where education of males was prioritised according to Guong (Guong & Lindemann, 2011) and Driver in his interview, 6/4/2016. In the Australian context, however, the females had equal and new personal schooling and career opportunities. The interview comments suggest that they were seeing different possibilities for their personal identity. They could aspire to have other identities related to their abilities and career prospects, in addition to their previously taken for granted identities as wives and mothers.

The importance all students - particularly the females - gave to doing well at school as illustrated, for example, in LF7's remark that she resented teachers who expressed surprise at the quality of her work, as if she was not capable of high achievement. LF12 showed her appreciation of what good teaching meant to her: 'It's the level they're teaching at that keeps you going'. These two comments reveal the extent to which these respondents were personally committed to educational values, and achieving their best at school. Wanting to be a good student had become part of their sense of who they were,

in a way that had never been apparent in their comments on their school experiences in southern Sudan or the refugee camps.

The high aspirations for school achievement were limited to their hopes and visions of what they saw as possible with a good education. As in the case of Johnson Maker Adeng and his sister Priscilla, they were looking toward university study and subsequent professional careers. Such aspirations reflected a dream they saw being fulfilled by some young people, sometimes extended family members, a little older than themselves in the Dinka community in Adelaide or elsewhere. Other examples were the South Sudanese women refugees who wrote memoirs and cookbooks for children. Some participants had also thought of the possibility of using their higher levels of knowledge and skills back in their homeland.

## **Conclusions**

The net feelings of many of the South Sudanese student interviewees (and the two South Sudanese teachers as parents) amounted to feeling like ‘outsiders’ within the mainstream school culture. Participant LF9 felt like ‘an outsider’ because of interactions with students and teachers. LF3 described this as in a converse manner as emphasising their school learning was essentially confined inside to school rooms, with strict rules and regulations in a way quite different to outside classrooms in southern Sudan. Ironically, the refugee students felt ‘outsiders’ in the Australian ‘inside schooling’ context:

*Big difference new country not much new knowledge here everything can be easy [no consequences for bad behaviour or fail grades] inside the room [of the mainstream school] In Sudan different. [Here all learning]...can be inside the room, not outside like in Sudan (LF3).*

As mentioned previously, several students reported feeling different from the mainstream students and teachers. Their common recognition through their interactions with ‘generalized others’ (mainstream students and teachers) was that they did not ‘belong here’ (participant NF1). Johnson Maker-Adeng’s sister, Priscilla, explained that ‘their past experiences in Sudan were not that easy to really talk about. You know, our culture’s always ...[that] you tend to keep things inside’ ("Think Big," 2013, p. 4) when trying to explain what had happened in the past to others in Lismore, NSW. The NAP study by Due and Riggs (2010) also documented refugee students feeling like ‘outsiders’ and recommended bringing the mainstream and refugee primary school students together for as many occasions as possible. This was preferable to keeping the two groups ‘in

isolation' as a way of breaking down the refugee students' sense of being isolated outsiders.

The importance of recognising 'Blackness' positively pointed to the need for both teachers and students to risk making changes for academic success (A. Harris, 2011a, p. 758; hooks, 1994). The participants described their 'colour' as being an uncomfortable and unavoidable reality in mainstream interactions with other students, including the sporting teams. The coined phrase 'danger zone' (A. Harris, 2011a, p. 756; hooks, 1994, p. 3), where the students' cultural values, social and learning identities could be considered as changeable, was relevant and needed to be acknowledged by individuals from both mainstream and refugee groups. However, in this study, 'conflict' better described the contrasting cultural values, which could be resolved, unlike the more difficult area of attitudes towards visibility and skin colour. The inflated 'danger zone' was not reflected in either the student or teacher interview data. On the other hand, teachers of EAL/D nationally have expressed on more than one occasion their serious concern with issues of racial and cultural awareness in their classrooms in 2014 (Australian Council of TESOL Associations, 2014) since this study's student interview data was collected.

Subjects in the curriculum, such as creative arts and the research project did appear to link positively with the participants' past learning and pastimes. These furthered their sense of a new learning identity while fostering their South Sudanese heritage at the same time. Perhaps as bell hooks suggested, the students 'could forget that self [where I was forced to conform to someone else's image of who and what I should be] and, through ideas, reinvent myself' (1994, p. 3).

The challenges of the South Sudanese refugee secondary students entering the mainstream Australian society and schooling in Adelaide were numerous. They acted as crucial problem-solving tasks essential for their future learner success and identity as successful learners. Essentially, they came from the oral spoken southern Sudanese culture in Dinka to the formal written school culture in English and the vastly different learning styles, rules, expectations and subject content in the Adelaide schools. Studies have suggested that schools and teachers draw on the South Sudanese students' oral tradition language background to assist 'all Sudanese learners...unfamiliar with ways of operating in a culture that places a high premium on the universal daily use of the written word' (Burgoyne & Hull, 2007, p. 32).

The mainstream school was a social group system in which students can be regarded as having their own personal cultural values with respect to social, linguistic, religious, and educational meanings as well as their sense of identity and aspirations. The relationships with teachers and students were generally secondary or in Mead's terms, 'generalized others' (Morris, 1934). However, there were ongoing primary relationships, with family members mentioned as well as 'significant others', such as particular school friends and certain individual teachers who were named. Students made individual choices (as participant LM6) in the context of their various personal cultural systems. Overall, it appeared that the South Sudanese refugee secondary students were transferring their personalised patterns of learning from their family and network in southern Sudan to 'significant persons' whether in their family network or occasionally, in Adelaide schools. The findings reported here provide new understandings which help to fill gaps in the literature on the learning experiences of South Sudanese refugee secondary students.

The clash of family values and expectations from the school and mainstream community was at the heart of one of the adjustments that the participants had to make in Australia. Important issues including the permanent one of visibility, managing the difficult transition from informal spoken learning to written formal learning, in the overlap between the school and the South Sudanese community, are discussed in the following chapter. The focus of Chapter 7 is the third context which involved personal and group adaptation to overlapping cultural values and social relations in Adelaide.



# Chapter Seven: Changing Social Relations and Cultural Meanings in the Third Context of Overlapping Cultures

## Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the effects on the South Sudanese secondary students' lives and learning experiences when they moved as refugees from their homeland to living within mainstream society in Adelaide, as evidenced in their interview data. Whilst the previous patterns of family life in southern Sudan were continuously affected by wars, and relocation, issues such as immigration and visa status of students, unfamiliar formal schooling in English and feeling different caused further serious fallout as they adjusted to separation from their homeland and to the difficult changes confronting them in Adelaide. They found themselves moving between familiar family relations, being modified as they adapted to the experience of relating to mainstream Australians, at school, work and sport, and in negotiating the new concrete and cultural realities of living in Adelaide.

The focus of this chapter is on the ways South Sudanese secondary students adapted socially and culturally to their overlapping past and present experiences of being members of the South Sudanese community in Adelaide. The sector where the two circles overlap in Figure 4.2 represents this third context to be discussed in the following areas of adaptation: family structures; the concrete realities of housing, food, transport and government regulations; mainstream Australian religious meanings and practices; the opportunity to gain literacy in Dinka at school; and their sense of identity and aspirations for the future.

Two sets of cultural data have been drawn on for this chapter. The interview participant data are discussed first and the three SACE Stage 2/ Year 12 *Language and Culture* Investigations (identified as A, B or C) are used to complement and contribute to the interview data where relevant, according to the section being discussed. These SACE investigations, completed by South Sudanese secondary students as part of their final year of studies in Adelaide schools, provided useful insights into the overall adaptation which the South Sudanese participants made in dealing with the challenges they faced. What made them even more valuable was that the adaptations these students wrote about were mainly in areas not spoken about in the interviews. Regular reference is also made in the discussion to the tables in the previous two chapters as well as the tables relating specifically to Chapter 7 which are found in Appendix G.

***Present Memories and Future Dreams.*** At the time of the interviews when the participants were living within the South Sudanese community in the wider context of Adelaide society,

two ideas recurred often in the conversations. Now that the conversations have been transcribed, these two ideas are seen to be repeated in the text of the interviews. On the one hand, a number of participants explained how important the present memories of their past life in southern Sudan were to them. These memories meant that the social relations and cultural meanings central to their life and learning experiences in southern Sudan remained with them, in their consciousness, as an ever-present reality. On the other hand, the mainstream school experiences in Adelaide had given them hopes for a future that they had not dreamed of as possible in their homeland. They eagerly seized the learning opportunities made available through the school and developed an intellectual identity which included dreams of further study and professional careers. Following this path meant they needed to adapt social relationships and cultural meanings derived from mainstream Anglo-Australian society.

In humanistic sociological terms memories described by the participants represent positive attitudes which individuals hold towards the past, while hopes and dreams can be regarded as their attitudes towards future possibilities for their lives. Often these attitudes are regarded as intersecting forces at play in human consciousness pointing to different directions in which individuals consider their own current situation, decide on what course of action to take or how to respond to an opportunity offered. The personal cultural systems that participants activated shaped the way they construed the interplay of memories and dreams in their lives.

### Family Structures in Adelaide

Similar to the discussion of family patterns in southern Sudan, the interviewees mentioned family members as they described their new life and learning in Adelaide. It became apparent that the family patterns reported in Table 7.1 had changed substantially from what the participants had described in their homeland. It was possible to identify these different family patterns in Adelaide, and to recognise that for all of them, the extended family had taken on new significance (Table 7.1 *Participants Describing Family Patterns in Adelaide* compared to Tables 5.1 and 5.2).

Table 7. 1 Participants Describing Family Patterns in Adelaide

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1. Family Patterns in Adelaide	1F 3M	10F 5M	2M	21/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

***Family with Two Parents and Children.*** The pattern of two parents and their children was found in only three out of 21 participants. This contrasted sharply with the twelve out of 21 for the same family category in southern Sudan. In the southern Sudan context participant NM4 often spoke about both his parents and their supportive role on his life. In his discussion of living in Adelaide they were mentioned rarely but appeared to play a role in the background ‘as my parents’. Participant teacher TM2, a young father with his wife and two young children, made little mention of his wife but spoke more of his family as a firm unit. LM1 also had two parents but only mentioned their existence fleetingly in the interview. However, it appeared that both NM4 and LM1 moved with greater ease from the southern Sudanese to the Adelaide context with respect to schooling experiences, outside friends, outside sport (LM1 only), church (NM4 only), whilst LM1 chose to learn Dinka literacy after school hours. NM4 valued the importance of speaking Dinka and would like to use it more, despite admitting that he was becoming accustomed to speaking English. Both students had clear aspirations for their future study, careers and desire ‘to give back’ to South Sudan one day. They demonstrated the capacity to adapt positively to their new life in Adelaide, possessed balanced identities, based firmly it would seem, on primary relationships with Mead’s ‘significant others’ (Morris, 1934) in their homes.

***Single Parent with Children.*** This was the most common identified pattern. Sixteen out of twenty-one participants (16/21) were living in Adelaide with the mother as the single parent, plus one case of a single father (TM1) with children. These single parents struggled to maintain an organised family life. Mothers were frequently absent as they took English classes or had some part-time employment. As a personal observer, I found this to be the case when I tried to contact mothers during the day or late afternoon.

In this situation siblings were often required to take on new roles, such as helping with housework, childcare and homework, to compensate for the absent father and grandparents, or sometimes, in the case of the girls, to cover for the mother being away. I recall as a personal observer and teacher of the South Sudanese secondary students that mothers would return to Africa during school term time for extended periods (or have babies in Adelaide) and leave quite young children to care for the family, even if this meant that the students missed many school days.

***Siblings with Neither Parent.*** Two participants, LM11 and LF3 each lived with a sibling which acted as their family unit. The only family LM 11 mentioned was his sister and LF3 spoke only of her brother. In their situations, there was in fact no mention of extended family members

operating as replacement parents as happened in many other cases. These two were forced to rely on their own siblings. LF3 spoke of having her brother who had ‘finished uni. He’s a really hard worker. He can check my work’. Participant LM11 stated that ‘I just live here with my sister’. If he had any problems, he told his sister who he said ‘tells me off or I go to my friend’s place’.

***Reliance on Extended Family.*** Sixteen out of twenty-one participants (16/21) made up this group. Participant LF 15 remembered her arrival in Adelaide that she ‘was excited to be at a new place reunited with family. [They] threw a welcoming party and set up our first place. I felt welcome’. LF12 described her arrival as ‘fun and had hopscotch like in Africa: 2004 was a common year of arrival [so] had a lot of friends there Sudanese’. NM3 was helped out as his ‘cousin was here so he showed me around and I hung out with him and so it wasn’t really that different...I made friends with white kids at that time. There was Sam and a few other boys’. The fact that family members were already here assisted students like NM3 whose ‘cousin made him feel better’; otherwise he always felt ‘judged’ not only at school but in the general community. In comparison, it was interesting to observe that the key roles played by members of the extended families in southern Sudan continued in Adelaide for most participants (16/21). What appeared to make many of these welcomes positive and memorable was the presence of family members or South Sudanese friends who had arrived earlier (LF12) in Adelaide. Their roles of substituting for parents who were not present and available became even more important in the Adelaide context.

A couple of participants, for example, frequently mentioned the important place of uncles in their life here in Adelaide. LF5 spoke of how ‘it took her uncle three years to get everything together’ in preparation for her family to settle in Adelaide. Participant LF13 also highlighted the role of her uncle who ‘was working at the time and he’d come home late and take us shopping’. TM1 was not only a valued teacher of Senior Dinka but a role model (expressly to LF5, TM2 and class members from my personal observations) and in supporting the Dinka students to extend their learning and aspiration boundaries to achieve good SACE results and gain university entrance, yet linking their learning to speaking Dinka at home and reinforcing their home cultural beliefs and practices.

Moreover, participant TM1, the South Sudanese elder and teacher of Dinka, was not only concerned with ‘teaching Sudanese culture’ in his classes but acted as ‘their uncle’ to remind the students of the seriousness of their learning and respect accorded to family members in their

home culture. TM1 recounted his deliberate familial connection and emphasis in his teaching as:

*if someone talks in my class [in Adelaide, South Australia], I ask how do I feel and how they feel? I am there to do something. They really pay attention when I talk like that. I used to correct [and] remind them, I'm here like a parent. My role [is] not only in teaching them. Then, they know it's serious (TM1).*

One of his students, LF5, spoke of role models 'out of my family' and referred specifically to the Dinka teacher, TM1, who 'teaches you the lessons of life and culture'.

The one limitation on the role of the extended family in the Australian context relates to the fact that family members were displaced and scattered across different suburbs and even in different states. In keeping with the substance of the participants' comments and according to one of the three SACE Year 12 Investigations, the fact that members of 'the family' unit could now be living all over Australia had:

*weakened families and tribe member's relationships, as there is a lack of connection and communication. I, myself, have cousins and tribe members in Sydney and due to lack of communication and contact, I honestly do not know them as much as I would if I was living in a 'wut' [a family compound the size of two to three blocks of streets in South Sudan]' (Student Response 2, 2013, p. 6).*

However, in the survey conducted by one of the SACE students on family relations in Adelaide 'the youth still show respect to them [the elders] in a special manner using particular names which show respect. All relatives must be referred to as aunties and uncles and all youth must help any Dinka elder if in need of help' (Student Response 2, 2013, p. 6).

Another of the SACE Year 12 Investigations reported that the nature of the relationships within families had also changed:

*According to surveys conducted, Dinka youth crave the attention they see that is given to children in the western country. This is positive, as well as negative, as some Dinka parents find it awkward to show affection to their children as they are not aware of how to show their love to their children... most parents grew up distant to their parents (Student Response 3, 2013, p. 3).*

As a personal observer, I also noticed that in general the South Sudanese refugee secondary students did not look forward to school holidays. I recall asking one student why and I was told that the Australian parents 'care more' and provide special holiday experiences for their children, whereas the South Sudanese parents did not as a rule do this. Few of the participants' parents, whom I knew, would have had the knowledge, experience and money to arrange such events; moreover, most would have considered that providing for the needs of the students and

encouraging them to do well at school was the best way they could show their love and affection.

*The Family in Memory.* When refugees and immigrants are forced to change the place where they have lived, memory often comes to play an enhanced part in their consciousness. Sandy (2013) for example, reported the words of Abbas, when he first arrived in Australia. 'I did not want to leave the place I loved, the place where I was born...I want to go back. I want my dad. I don't know him' (Sandy, 2013, p. 40). Similarly, 'the memory of, and the continual obligation towards, family in Africa' was reported by the African community of Adelaide as 'underpinning... the challenges of resettlement' (Ryle, 2011, p. 33; Wood, 2013, p. 202).

What the interviews unexpectedly revealed was that for all the participants, the meaning of family went beyond concrete everyday realities and had an almost spiritual dimension that transcended distance and even death. NF1 repeatedly spoke of her admiration for her late grandmother's moral teachings, concerning her having a choice in life, particularly with respect to marriage. Similarly, LF5 recalled her grandmother's injunction to 'just stand up for yourself'. For his part, TM1 singled out grandmothers with the families and elders as the 'best teachers'. The memory of family constituted a significant force in cultural learning which is represented in Table 7.2.

All participants reflected back and forth in their memories of the moral values, family role models, values of hard work and 'discipline' learned from their family relationships and the constant struggle to survive together in southern Sudan. The two students, LF3 and LM11, who were alone in Adelaide apart from each other, spoke of their reliance on the invisible support, through memory, 'from my parents. Encourage[s] you' (LF3). LM11 craved the home and school discipline of his homeland and refrained from suggesting his brothers 'come here. It's easy like after two weeks you come lazy and play games. My dad [in South Sudan] would like [to be able to] check on me very day. I'm here to learn'.

### **Adaptations to Family Life in Adelaide**

The South Sudanese family and community experience as a total way of life in southern Sudan had become fragmented with the move to the new country. This was characterised by the breaking up of families, and the dispersal of extended family members as support networks, scattered throughout Adelaide and in other parts of Australia. Parents were separated from their children. Grandparents were still back in South Sudan. Only an assortment of family members was present in Adelaide to assist new family members and support the organisation of the South

Sudanese community These family members regrouped and became a new ‘version’ designed not only to support and orientate not only the new arrivals from South Sudan but also to help the South Sudanese secondary students with their assignments, provide a network of contacts and encourage attendance at community events. In various ways, the families and community were able to continue the oral traditions of learning and to sustain the South Sudanese cultural heritage in Adelaide. Table 7.2: *Participants Describing Adaptations in Cultural Learning in the Family in Adelaide* records those participants who described adaptation in family life.

Table 7. 2 Participants Describing Adaptations in Cultural Learning in the Family in Adelaide

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1.Cultural learning through the Family in Adelaide	1F 3M	5F 5M	2M	16/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts=teachers

**Changing Family Roles.** Cultural learning through the family in Adelaide was characterised by a reversal of the expected roles of males and females in relation to domestic duties at home. Participant NF1 appeared to enjoy reporting that her brother had to help at home in Adelaide. ‘Here we’re all equal and we do the same things. It’s not divided. He just has to do it. My mum tells him’. Participant LM1 explained that ‘I sometimes wash dishes. Younger sister does dishes. Expected to do things’. Previous cultural expectations were, he thought, ‘slowly beginning to decrease’. SACE Stage 2 Investigation A confirmed this change. ‘In Australia, the women mainly do the cooking, however other jobs such as washing dishes, laundry and changing babies nappies are divided equally’ (Student Response 2, 2013, p. 6). SACE Stage 2 Investigation B elaborated the way the new context was changing expectations:

*Most Dinka women come to Australia with their children but without the husband, therefore, they are the man and woman of the house. This means the women has to get a job to take care of their children as well as get an education if they wish. Even if a Dinka woman comes to Australia with their husband they still have the right to get an education and work due to Australia laws and rights of freedom* (Student Response 3, 2013, p. 3).

Changes in family patterns were also reported by SACE Stage 2 Investigations A and B. The number of wives permitted, the assessment of bride wealth in terms of cows and goats, the use of elaborate and jewelled traditional clothing and body decoration at special events have all undergone changes in definition and circumstance. Men’s traditional clothing at weddings has also changed dramatically. The animal skins always worn by men in South Sudan were most likely not worn in Adelaide because Australian customs regulations forbade the import of such goods:

*In South Sudan, Dinka man [sic] are typically covered in animal skin and painted all over the body when participating in the traditional dance, “lour”. After attending a few “lour” myself, I have witness[ed] people here just participating in the dance in just their casual clothes* (Student Response 2, 2013, p. 6).

Furthermore, the SACE Stage 2 Investigations A and B described the changes to cultural customs concerning the number of wives, arranged marriages, and bride wealth (Student Response 3, 2013, p. 3). ‘A bride wedding outfit in South Sudan will be slightly different to a Sudanese bride outfit here in Australia. A South Sudanese bride will have more ornaments, such as ivory and other jewellery, while a bride in Australia will have the traditional henna and basic jewellery’ (Student Response 2, 2013, pp. 5-6). Their wedding customs and far less decorative clothing were translated into Western style dressing in South Australia. As one SACE Stage 2 Investigation A commented, having more than one wife in particular, ‘was impossible...because of laws and the cost of living, one man cannot support two families’ (Student Response 2, 2013, p. 5).

***Understanding Silences on Family Life.*** The adaptations of family life were marked. Yet among the nineteen students only two mentioned parents (whether two, or one) when discussing their life in Australia. This was a marked change to the frequent mention of the mother and sometimes of the father in discussing the context of southern Sudan. Participant NM2, for example, regularly spoke of his mother in his discussing memories of life in southern Sudan. However, he made no mention of her at all in talking about his life in Adelaide. As a personal observer and former teacher of this student, I knew that his mother was in Adelaide with him. He had even mentioned to me, in almost an apologetic manner, that his mother had very little English and was not able to help him with his homework.

Similarly, participant LF5 had described her mother as coming from a very strong ‘female’ family in southern Sudan. Yet in her discussion of her daily life in Adelaide, her mother hardly rated a mention. This trend was evident in most of the interviews. Mothers, in general, were rarely referred to as meaningful participants within the new pattern of life in Adelaide. This appeared to form a significant pattern and change from the mother-dominated life in southern Sudan. TM1 summed up the problem here in Adelaide when he explained, ‘Parents [are] illiterate [and] isolated from the education of their children’.

There were other family matters, such as finding housing, managing household expenses, family conflicts including violence and a particular male sense of dislocation from their homeland and traditional male role, referred to in earlier studies, which were not mentioned in the participants’ interviews. Akoi Manyiel Guong’s strong sense of the community and



leadership he remembered in his past family life in Sudan contrasted sharply with life in Adelaide. In his autobiography, Akoi recalled the ‘clear rules and regulations and everybody, boys, girls, wives, husbands, aunts, uncles knew exactly what was expected of them’ (Guong & Lindemann, 2011, p. 3). Those who had come to Adelaide, especially those without parents, were faced with totally new experiences such as renting a house, paying bills and so on (Guong & Lindemann, 2011, pp. 80-81). There was also the generational conflict between the children and adult family members (Guong & Lindemann, 2011, p. 81), together with several serious incidents of violence (2011, p. 80). It may seem surprising therefore that the interviewees spoke little of such family concerns.

Whilst there was a recognition, from the participants, of missing home in southern Sudan and settling in difficulties in Adelaide, there was silence on internal family topics, especially where conflict was involved. Southern Sudanese male issues concerned with their changing roles and gender-based violence (Ribeiro, 2006) were not apparent in the participant data. These gaps in the participants’ interview comments on family life in Adelaide can be understood on several grounds. In the second part of the interview, the questions were focussed more on the students’ schooling experiences in Adelaide which meant participants were less likely to discuss family matters. Some may even have felt so ashamed of their mothers’ lack of education and literacy that they did not want to mention them. It is also possible that they were very conscious of the interviewer as an Australian teacher and did not feel it appropriate to speak of internal family matters in conversation with her. For their part, many of the mothers did not feel able to be involved with school matters because of their lack of English skills.

***Continuing Oral Traditions of Learning.*** The number of those discussing oral traditions of learning in the context of Adelaide as compared to southern Sudan declined by about a half, as revealed in Table 7.3 *Participants Describing Oral Traditions of Learning in the Family in Adelaide* below while juxtaposed with Table 5.3. However, most students acknowledged it as a method of learning and transmitting information originating in their past, while some also recognised it as an important ongoing present reality and a strength of their culture.

Table 7. 3 Participants Describing Oral Traditions of Learning in the Family in Adelaide

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1.Oral Traditions of Learning in the Family in Adelaide	1F 3M	10F 5M	2M	21/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

Six out of the 21 interviewees spoke of drawing on their past learning styles and skills for their learning in Adelaide. In southern Sudan, LM6 'would visualise with my mind how to avoid sleeping late and being beaten at school and how to learn things'. He related this to 'one of the skills now I have of learning, [in Adelaide]. I make a map'. LF10 recalled the showing of drama and dance, 'like a play. Can't remember. Given to us on paper', which led to her later choreographing 'the whole Year 7 concert' in Adelaide. The importance of memory and repetition were recalled by five as the way they used to learn, and still learned best. Participant NM3 remembered the painstaking memorisation of songs at church from first practising and learning the sounds of the words and then repeating 'over a period of two weeks'. This past learning style 'stayed with him in his learning and enabled him to catch 'up with the amount of English I'd missed' in Adelaide. In this sense the participants saw themselves as practical learners.

Regular encouragement or direct support with mainstream school skills and homework from a parent or family member were appreciated and stressed by eight out of 21 of the interviewees. Even though LM 6 appeared to be a very conscientious student, he was supported by his mum. She advised him to 'get this done on time. She put me on the limit. She'll say, this weekend, you're not going anywhere'. Whilst the participants responded to personal teacher involvement in their studies, extended family members were referred to as role models in learning, as they had been in southern Sudan, by eight out of the 19 student participants. NM4 still looked up to his older brother, as 'he used to look out for me' in terms of personal safety in southern Sudan, but now it was in relation to school learning. Learning by modelling behaviour on extended family members who had settled in Adelaide earlier, proved to be particularly helpful to some participants in adapting to 'Australian time', compared to the more flexible 'African time'. As participant LM6 explained, 'when we came here, it was really different to Kenya. Get up early in the morning [and] forget about [school] when you come home'.

However, there were adaptations evident to the patterns of learning in Adelaide. Relationships with 'family teachers' were fewer in number and, rather than parents, these were more likely to be extended family members, fulfilling parental roles. There appeared to be a pattern of transfer from parents' informal teaching in southern Sudan to extended family members taking over the role of mentors and home teachers in Adelaide. Moreover, the content and skills learned became more aligned to what the South Sudanese secondary students needed to know for their immersion into mainstream schooling and living in the new community in Adelaide. A number came to rely on extended family members, who were a few years ahead of them in study, for support in the completion of homework or assignments.

In these ways, memories of their past learning in family life, as well as the family, moral and educational values they had learned, stayed with these South Sudanese secondary students and teachers. This oral learning tradition had developed personal characteristics such as hard work, a disciplined approach, an unquestioning attitude to learning and spirit of unquestioning loyalty which were recognisable in the interview responses. Participant NM3 commented that in Adelaide his mother gave him ‘moral support’ with school work even though ‘she really didn’t have the language’, meaning English. He appreciated that his ‘mum taught me to really work hard as she would just sit there and watch me [to] make sure I did my homework at home’. In the same way, Participant LM8’s mother tried to help with homework ‘but she barely went to school’.

In Adelaide NM2 demonstrated the same dedication and application to his school studies, particularly Year 10 Work Experience, that he had learned in farming from his elder brothers who were given the responsibility to teach him ‘farming and [all] to do with farming’ in southern Sudan. Similarly, NM3’s future aspirations for university studies and professional career followed on from his experience of being compelled to attend school in southern Sudan, with the expectations being so ‘full on because if you’re not educated in Africa, you have nowhere to go’. LM8 also utilised the past and present ‘discipline of my mum and my pride’ to hold back, when provoked by racist comments in the mainstream school classes and elsewhere in Adelaide.

The nature and personal implications of these qualities and memories are discussed further under sense of identity and aspirations. The continuing family relations and cultural meanings forged by the oral traditions appeared to facilitate the South Sudanese refugee secondary students’ entry into the society in Adelaide. Their cultural emphasis on moral values of respect for their elders and extended family members contributed to their learning and gaining new information. Memory and familiarity with past cultural practices gave the students a lifeline in terms of close relationships with ‘significant persons’, such as role models, in their families whether they were actually present in the flesh or not.

***Sustaining South Sudanese Cultural Heritage.*** Moral values including nurturing; accepting responsibilities within the family and looking up to various family members as role models in relationship were especially highlighted by eight out of 21 in Adelaide. Memory of home skills such as art, woodwork and playing sport in southern Sudan were reported by four out of 21. Languages spoken at home in Adelaide were mentioned by six out of 21.

Wisdom, motivation and cultural pride were key themes (nine out of 21) frequently expressed by the interviewees (including the South Sudanese teachers) in terms of past family relationships, experiences and cultural learning. NM2 recalled ‘my mum actually had knowledge about living and surviving and stuff. That was what we were taught pretty much. But no matter what, you have to learn how to deal with the bad times’. NM3 remembered the traditions from the family’s ‘life stories like what you’re meant to do. Like how you should be living your life and stuff like that’ (Guong & Lindemann, 2011, p. 4). Some students named these qualities as being directly related to their adaptation in Adelaide and their willingness to live up to the South Sudanese spirit of ‘standing up and giving anything a go’ (LM8).

The predominant impact of change in the third context was the South Sudanese refugee secondary students’ new relationships and experiences living in the mainstream community in Adelaide. Yet their ‘family’ bonding, cultural moral values and strong united responses to the ‘new’ freedom served to remind them of their distinctive heritage and cultural pride, in much the same way as has been reported for the Vietnamese refugee experience (Tran Thi Nien, 2016).

### **Relationships outside the Immediate Family**

During the interviews, participants also discussed their relationships with people outside their immediate family network. Some spoke of their involvement in the South Sudanese community in Adelaide; a few made friends by becoming involved with sporting teams. A number spoke of feeling visibly different as they moved around the community. Table 7.4 *Participants Describing South Sudanese Community and Life in Adelaide* reports the participants who discussed various aspects of these experiences.

Table 7. 4 Participants Describing South Sudanese Community and Life in Adelaide

<b>Theme</b>	<b>NCC (4)</b>	<b>SOL (15)</b>	<b>Ts (2)</b>	<b>Total (21)</b>
1.South Sudanese Community in Adelaide	1F 3M	10F 5M	2M	21/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

SACE Stage 2 Investigation A described the importance of making new friends but also of keeping in touch with the ‘Dinka Community’. This student considered that the influence of the community was lessening as families gained employment and children went to school (Student Response 2, 2013). A similar concern about family change, not often directly addressed by the interview participants, was expressed in another SACE Year 12 Investigation. This student discovered that as the families adapted to the Australian culture in Adelaide, children were

spending more time with their friends from different backgrounds and focusing on jobs. As a result, they had less time or interest to attend community events (Student Response 4, 2013, p. 4).

***Involvement in the South Sudanese Community.*** A proportion of the interviewees mentioned the importance of the South Sudanese Community organisation in Adelaide. Eight out of 21 knew of family members attending the meetings; three out of 21 acknowledged the leadership and advice readily available and five out of 21 highlighted enjoyment of ‘cultural celebrations’ both within the community and at their own home. The actual breakdown was not made clear by the interviewees. I received the impression that whilst many of the interviewees in the study knew of community events, they avoided making direct comment about them. However, it needs to be noted that the participants were spread out all over Adelaide so that distance factors and dispersal with regards to travelling to attend the activities were a handicap.

Participant NM3 explained, ‘I don’t participate in the community as much as I used to anymore...my mum generally doesn’t discuss anything that’s happening in the community. [It] helped us to get things going’. However, LF12 explained, ‘my mum is a community leader [of] events and Dinka school on the Saturday. One [who] organises them. [She] believes [that] our culture is important...mustn’t lose our identity’. Her younger sister (LF14) did not mention her mother’s status in the community. Relationships of the participants with the South Sudanese community might be interpreted superficially as ‘generalized persons’. In the context of Australia, common membership of a minority community often results in relationships which could be called primary, though perhaps not quite ‘significant others’, through the sharing of their ethnic language and culture in a way not usually found with ‘generalized others’ (Smolicz, 1992).

SACE Stage 2 Investigation A described the importance of making new friends but also of keeping in touch with the ‘Dinka Community’. This student considered that the influence of the community was lessening, as families gained employment and children went to school (Student Response 2, 2013). A similar concern about family change, not often directly addressed by the interview participants, was expressed in another SACE Year 12 Investigation. This student discovered that as the families were adapting to the Australian culture in Adelaide, in that the children were spending more time with their friends from different backgrounds and focusing on jobs. As a result, they had less time or interest to attend community events (Student Response 4, 2013, p. 4).

***Other Friendships.*** Friends (six out of 19) from outside the South Sudanese and mainstream school communities were important to a proportion of the student interviewees. In a few cases, ‘Aussies’ and friends from other cultures such as LF9 were mentioned as assisting them in Adelaide. Those who mentioned friends rated their existence highly within the scheme of their conscious adaptation into the new way of life. These friends came from a variety of cultures including Japanese and Indian, and generally were referred to as ‘Asian friends’. Participant LM6 included the going to ‘my friend’s parties’ in a description of a typical weekend. LM11 went as far as revealing, ‘Most Sudanese I don’t get along with. [I do get along with] more Asians and Indians’. As a result of a family marriage LF12 had ‘Japanese aunties as well. Her kids speak mostly Japanese’. The making of these friends outside the South Sudanese culture and community were described with relish and enthusiasm. It appeared that they were regarded as ‘significant’ persons and important to the new relationships in participants’ lives. They had discovered that these new relationships with cross cultural friends outside the South Sudanese community were sustaining to their sense of wellbeing in the new country.

Community sport, as a possible source of friends, was highlighted by two out of 21 student interviewees. As has been mentioned previously, participant LM11’s acceptance into a lacrosse club was extremely appreciated and valued as was LM6’s weekend routine of playing soccer both at school and in ‘local communities’. Both students found these new relationships with the sporting players sustaining, especially LM11 who lived alone with his sister in Adelaide. LM11 and LM6 to a lesser extent, saw these relationships as ‘significant’ to their new and evolving personal cultural systems. They were also most vocal on the value of making of and maintaining friends from all cultures. The evidence quite clearly points to the participants’ difficulties in making friends with mainstream Australians except through sport.

A notable feature about the interview discussions on friends mentioned in Chapter 6 was that only one participant mentioned friendship within the school peer group. It would seem that social relations were not as important for the South Sudanese secondary students in the mainstream school setting as the friendships (six out of 19) reported by the general community of Adelaide. This was not expected and was a surprising finding in the study. Extended family relationships appeared to remain as ‘significant persons’ always in the background, as the students and teachers faced their new lives and learning in Adelaide. School contacts appeared to exist largely as ‘generalized others’, who were not normally personally positive to them. The evidence of the participants quite clearly points to the difficulties they encountered in making friends with mainstream Australians. The participants also said little about their friendships within the South Sudanese community. There seemed to be a silence on this issue, as there was

for discussing parents or talking about one another with teachers in the Adelaide context. The one exception was their comments on those whom they regarded as their 'role models' - usually an extended family member - who helped them with their school assignments and inspired them to continue their studies.

***Feeling 'Visible'***. When discussing their relationships with others, all 21 of the participants expressed their sense of feeling different because of their visibility, at all times and in all areas of life in mainstream society. Not only did the students report feeling uncomfortable at being visibly different at school among fellow students in classrooms and sporting teams, they also reported feeling unsafe encountering strangers at the beach, on buses, in parks, or walking along streets, with cars driving past. Receiving racist taunts from people in public places were real issues they had to learn to manage. Such experiences have been reported as commonplace among members of immigrant groups who have some visible characteristics which are given a negative meaning (Bloch et al., 2008; A. Harris, 2011a; hooks, 1994).

One of the participants (NF1) explained that she received racist remarks, 'because I'm dark-skinned. They're very offensive...you really can't do much about it. I argue back always, always I argue back. [I] feel like you have to, even though [it's] not the right thing. You feel like you have to do it'. In contrast, NM3 preferred to 'ignore' racist remarks, even though he felt that he 'would usually like to kind of respond violently but it would be useless. No, I don't bother to be violent. No one's really taught [me how] to respond. Not really. Parents haven't said anything'. The visibility of their blackness was also linked to what nine of the participants regarded as the unfair targeting of the South Sudanese community in the media.

Participant NM4 explained that:

*in general, if it's an African [offender] usually they just say it's the Sudanese offender. I've also heard lots of news stories where they have actually identified people wrongly and they've been a different nationality. They're not Sudanese. They kinda generalise (NM4).*

Such comments illustrate the participants' observations of the media's seemingly negative focus on the South Sudanese around the time of the interviews. More recently, the media seem to be more concerned with highlighting the achievements of the South Sudanese in many walks of life, such as those detailed in the last section of Chapter 2. Perhaps the most significant of these was the report on the winner of the Archibald Prize for Portraiture which highlighted the blackness of his skin colour as a feature he was proud of. The judges had evaluated the portrayal of his blackness as worthy of first prize.

## **Dealing with Different Concrete Realities**

The South Sudanese refugees in this study found themselves faced with concrete realities of everyday living, such as housing, food, and transport, which were quite different from what they had known in southern Sudan. Not only did they now have to deal with various government rules and regulations that they had never encountered before, but also living in the suburbs of Adelaide presented immense challenges for these South Sudanese refugee secondary students and their families. Generally, they were living as isolated parent-child units in houses scattered across the suburbs, in quite a different situation from the extended family groups' communal living style in southern Sudan.

NM3 described this situation as 'everyone is spread apart'. The design of the houses was also very different, according to eight out of 21 participants. Participant LF5 and others had an immediate negative impression of small houses and being 'boxed in'. Arriving at the first house, '[the] African designs bedrooms so big. [This one] was so squeezey. Oh, my God. I want to go back and stay with grandma'. Participant LM1's response was common to several others who expressed their determination to return to Africa and found life here 'artificial with the houses, etc'. Yet LM1 did go on to admit, 'guess it feels like home'.

Suburban living also meant an introduction to the new concept of 'neighbours'. Participant NM3's mother advised all her children (of various ages including adult sons and daughters) against talking and relating to the neighbours. Food was another concrete area of difference. In place of the fresh home grown produce they had known in their homeland, they were often forced to rely on the mass-produced food so much more readily available in Adelaide. Twelve out of the 21 participants commented unfavourably on the difference. Food in the school canteen was also highly criticised. In contrast, both students and teachers described their enjoyment of South Sudanese home style cooking at parties, and communal and cultural celebrations. Participant LF 13 summed it up her first experiences: 'I didn't eat for a week as I didn't like the food'. Later the extended family 'welcome[d] us [with] celebrations and everything. African food just changed everything'. Accessing the past familiar links and relationships with family members, and eating African food, gave the participants a sense of comfort in the new community.

Routine government-required activities such as filling in forms were hurdles for the refugee families but the South Sudanese community was available for advice and assistance on such matters. It appeared that most students, like participant NM3, turned to their supportive



relationships with extended family members who had arrived earlier. NM3 relied on his elder brother 'cos my brother knew how to write and he filled out most of the forms for us'.

In general the government in Australia was regarded as 'very good' by one of the teacher participants, TM2 as well as by two other interviewees. Despite the many difficulties, participant NM2 spoke of the way:

*life [here] things [were] always different. I began to feel the control of the government; you know taking care of people. Here we came... There were people actually taking care of us. It's actually different here that cares more about civilians [than] back home, you would feel it's different. Hardly feel taken care of by the government (NM2).*

Contact with government officials became more difficult particularly about the welfare rules on the issue of Child Protection. Eleven of the 21 participants mentioned what they regarded as a pressing and urgent problem. In essence it was a cultural conflict over patterns of child rearing between South Sudanese students and their families, on the one hand, and school authorities and social welfare agencies of mainstream society, on the other.

Participant TM2 who had worked as a school-community liaison officer, related his personal concerns for the welfare of children he knew at primary school, where language problems and cultural misunderstandings caused extreme distress. TM2 related that he knew:

*two brothers and one sister at the Primary school [who] always cry. [They need] somebody who knows the Dinka language. [One boy] gets upset. I was called to talk. He said he didn't want to study. [His] sister was crying... cause of the crying, doesn't want to go home? Doesn't want to answer. The child was told your mum is not taking care of you. This year [if I get] a lot of problems, I'll move [the girl] to another school. I gave two contacts: one for email [and to] ring me directly (TM2).*

Participant TM2 suggested that more South Sudanese teacher assistants be made available for effective cross-cultural understanding and language communication between families and schools.

Several students spoke of their personal experiences where their parents 'believed' the teachers instead of their own children as well as occasions where students did not feel comfortable attending school because of the interaction of Child Protection staff with their families. Participant TM1 spoke of cases where students were told not to live with their parents due to departmental concerns. He felt that it was miscommunication based on not understanding cultural differences with respect to parenting styles. Use of native Dinka speakers to act as liaison officers has been recommended to assist the South Sudanese students and their families concerning 'welfare' issues. However, responses by the State's DECD Child Protection unit

might have to be modified due to a recent judgement in the Adelaide Supreme Court that smacking and that discipline such as smacking might not be termed ‘unreasonable’ (Fewster, 2016a, p. 1).

To summarise, adaptation to the new country appeared to have taken place, in a wide variety of individual responses and topics, according to the interviewee data. Participant NM3 concluded that in his personal case, it was necessary to ‘just take a look at the bigger goal while we’re here and [it] really doesn’t matter what happens in the community as long as it’s not affecting me’. Whilst the discomforts were real for living and learning in Adelaide, most participants moved forward hand-in-hand with their home cultural base towards seeking other comfortable relationships in varied ways, such as with outside friends and to take up the new opportunities not offered back home.

The experiences of new cultural values related to foods that were different from what they had known in southern Sudan were still framed for most by the familiar family networks and cultural celebrations, whether in memory or actual concrete reality in the Adelaide context. Disturbing experiences with new places, such as at the beach and parks [with dogs] as well as racism and discrimination in the job-seeking process were reported as common experiences (El-Gack & Yak, 2016). LF4 was angry that her female relative had to change her African name in order to obtain a job interview. Media and family clashes with the Child Protection policies were openly shared and felt by the majority of interviewees. Underlying these were the commonly reported issues to do with ‘visibility’ and their subsequent learning of effective responses and expressions of feelings, in the mainstream school and community contexts at large. Whilst NM3 and his family ‘integrated [with] the white Western food’, they still preferred the ‘different African food’ they enjoyed on special occasions. This student’s comment could almost be interpreted as a metaphor of the overall adaptation to Australian society of adopting new ways that were useful, while adhering to the worthwhile patterns of their homeland.

### **The Changing Significance of Religious Meanings**

In the chaos, confusion and dangers of civil war in southern Sudan, the church had proved a place of comparative refuge and source of inner strength. The evidence of the interviews pointed to a decline in the importance of church attendance, as well as religious beliefs and practices, in the Adelaide context. Perhaps the most distinct change in cultural practices and hence relationships was the South Sudanese interviewees regarding religion and churchgoing as an ‘optional’ activity.

A comparison of Table 5.7 with Table 7.5 *Participants Describing Religious Meanings in Adelaide* below indicates the decline in the importance of religion to the participants. Only four participants, all students, commented on their religious practice in Adelaide compared to a total of eighteen who discussed this aspect of their life in southern Sudan. Those who did attend spoke of the support that the Australian churches gave them initially. Some students went to a Sudanese church, as well as to a Catholic or unnamed denomination as reported in Wood (2013, p. 219). Participant NM4 was appreciative of the advice and donations which the Catholic Church provided to his family. LF10 spoke of her devotion and close connection to God as a continuation of her religious life in southern Sudan. It was not clear which church she attended. Participant LM2 continued his devotion as a Muslim, attending the mosque, even though his other family members went to a different church.

Table 7. 5 Participants Describing Religious Meanings in Adelaide

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1. Religion Meanings in Adelaide	0F 2M	1F 2M	0	5/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts=teachers

Churchgoing became an optional activity in sharp contrast to the past, when it was integral to all aspects of life in the southern Sudanese communities. The various churches' previous contribution to schooling in local languages and basic numeracy was only minimally relevant in Adelaide where compulsory schooling was the site for almost all learning. The church, however, had been synonymous with the cultural family celebrations, as well as a compulsory neighbourhood meeting place and venue for cultural values and practices to be played out. It appeared from the comments that going to church in Adelaide was acquiring a new meaning. It was also an important way of coming together and meeting other South Sudanese.

It would seem that religious values of belief and practice had declined in importance for the participant group in Adelaide, as the constant horrors of civil war and issues of physical survival were no longer daily realities. It is also possible that they found that the services here, even when held in Dinka, were very different from the worship patterns they remembered in southern Sudan. They did not 'feel at home' in local parish congregations, nor did they have the same feelings, when the exuberant spontaneous dancing and singing they were accustomed to, had little if any place in the more formal and dignified religious tone of services in Adelaide. My personal observations of a Dinka confirmation service held in St Francis Xavier's Cathedral confirmed the awkward nature of the South Sudanese girls' dancing and the male South

Sudanese choir listening to the football on their radios in the quiet gaps in the service. The priest at the time also urged the congregation ‘to bring a plate’ for morning tea after the next month’s service, and, with some condescension, added ‘you Sudanese, now don’t bring an empty plate’. The adaptation of religious values in the future would depend, to some extent, on how the local Australian churches structures, as in the case of the Corinthian Catholic Community (Wood, 2013) discussed in Chapter 2, incorporated their style of worship.

### **Linguistic Adaptation in Australia**

The South Sudanese secondary students and teachers were asked about their use of languages such as Dinka, English, Swahili and Arabic at home and in the community in Adelaide. Tables 4:1, 5.5 and 7.6 *Participants Describing Languages in the Family in Adelaide* below were compared to show any changes in language usage between southern Sudan and Adelaide. Table 7.6 shows that only eight of the participants commented on language usage at home, whereas all had discussed language use within the family in southern Sudan. However, the three SACE Stage 2 Investigations by Dinka-speaking students in *Language and Culture* explored the use of the Dinka and English languages at home and in the South Sudanese community in Adelaide. Their data are compared and contrasted with the interview data in the following discussion. Together these data revealed that considerable changes had taken place in the participants’ linguistic values since their arrival in Australia.

Table 7. 6 Participants Describing Languages in the Family in Adelaide

<b>Theme</b>	<b>NCC (4)</b>	<b>SOL (15)</b>	<b>Ts (2)</b>	<b>Total (21)</b>
1.Languages and the Family in Adelaide	1F 2M	3F 1M	2M	8/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts=teachers

The other (apart from Dinka) languages that participants had known in their homeland suffered a sharp decline in use, to zero in the case of Swahili. Given that the South Sudanese secondary students and teachers were immersed in learning to use English for school and daily community purposes, and that there was no context for them to use Swahili in Adelaide, this was not surprising. Arabic continued to be used in two specific (LM6 and NM4) family and religious contexts.

**Acquisition of English.** The most obvious linguistic change, the acquisition of English in both spoken and written forms, was not discussed directly by the participants. Yet the interviews themselves provided evidence of the extent of their English learning. The interviews were conducted in English. The participants had no difficulty in understanding the questions put to

them and responding in English at some length. The transcripts of their comments, and the extracts quoted in this thesis, reveal some grammatical errors, some limitations in vocabulary and a tendency to use informal, and even slang expressions, which could be expected in what they took to be a conversation with an outsider, rather than a formal school assessment. Nevertheless, they revealed a surprising capacity to communicate effectively, and to express their thoughts and feelings in quite telling ways.

Gaining literacy skills in English prove more difficult. I witnessed as an ESL teacher their struggles with reading and writing, in particular. Their determination to succeed kept them going. Evidence of their eventual success was the fact that a number completed the Year 12 South Australian Certificate of Education and some did well enough to go on to university studies.

***Gaining Literacy in Dinka.*** Perhaps the most surprising feature of the participants' linguistic adaptation in Adelaide was the extent to which they made use of the opportunity to gain literacy in Dinka. The importance of Dinka for these refugee students is clearly revealed in Table 7.7 *Participants Describing Formal Learning of Dinka in Adelaide*. In contrast to the eight participants who talked about language usage in Adelaide generally (Table 7.6) all 21, students and teachers commented on the formal learning of Dinka in Adelaide.

Table 7. 7 Participants Describing Formal Learning of Dinka in Adelaide

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1.Learning Formal Dinka in Adelaide	1F 3M	10F 5M	2M	21/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

This unexpected opportunity came through language teaching offered through the state Department of Education and Child Development (DECD). At secondary school level, DECD funded a specialist language school which offered Dinka outside normal school hours to Years 11 and 12 SACE students as a *Language and Culture* subject, as described in Chapter 2. The provision of this subject represented a significant modification to mainstream education structures to allow South Sudanese secondary students to pursue studies in their mother tongue and include the mark in their ATAR score for entry to tertiary studies. Examples of the final assessment investigations submitted by three South Sudanese students in this subject have been used as complementary data in the present study.

In these Dinka language and culture classes, students were able to learn to read and write Dinka, which most had not been able to do in the makeshift schooling of war-torn Sudan, or in the refugee camps. Moreover, as mentioned earlier the students were fortunate to have TM1 as their teacher. TM1 had worked on the linguistic structures of Dinka orthography and the development of Dinka educational materials at the University of Khartoum in the 1990s. He played a role as a ‘significant person’ or role model in his work as Senior Dinka teacher for the students undertaking the SACE language studies.

The four students from the Catholic College were keen to have the Dinka classes held at their school, but they did not take up the option of attending the Dinka language classes, held at the specialised government school for languages. Participant NF1 was grateful to be given the teacher’s permission to use her Dinka language when her South Sudanese secondary student colleagues were having difficulty understanding in the ESL classes. Given that there were Italian and Japanese classes held at her school, she felt that ‘we need Dinka classes as well. No Dinka classes here’. Participant NM2 said ‘I would have done Dinka if [Dinka] was here. I would like to do that’.

NM3 considered,

*that there should be a choice if the student wants to learn their language. It’s very important for the student to know where they come [from]. It shouldn’t be forced from the teacher to be the course in Dinka. It should be more open like if you want to learn your own language. It’s your choice (NM3).*

Within the South Sudanese secondary students’ interview group, a small number undertaking the classes in Dinka (three out of 15) reported the importance of formally learning their mother tongue at school and using it at home. Participant LF3 told her little brother how ‘you feel so bad not knowing it [Dinka]’, referring to her past life in the refugee camp at Kakuma. Participant LF9 expressed her relief at not only learning Dinka formally but her views on what that meant in the context of Adelaide. ‘It means a lot in another culture. [It] means our culture is still alive. We remember where we’re from. We’re the next generation. We have to keep our culture alive. We have this opportunity [to] interact [and] have that bond and grow much stronger as a community’. Participant LF10’s mother encouraged her daughter ‘learn Dinka first’ as against learning Spanish at school before returning to South Sudan to visit family. The two South Sudanese teachers of Dinka spoke of how important it was for students using at home what they learned at Dinka classes. Participant TM1 stressed the importance of this home interaction when he spoke of the ‘link between the class and the [other] language’. He used to ‘encourage students to use the [everyday] day style [Dinka spoken at home] and what learned

[in class] with the Dinka'. TM2 focused more on having Dinka speakers as teachers and staff at school to then support the speaking of the mother tongue at home.

Six out of the fifteen students learning Dinka explained that they wished particularly to extend their knowledge of spoken Dinka to the written form. Participants LF5, LM6, LF9, LF10, LF13 and LF15 knew little Dinka from their past disrupted education and intermittent home locations outside Sudan and in the refugee camps. They valued the opportunity to learn more words and be able to read and write in Dinka, which they regarded as their mother tongue in the Language and Culture classes they attended. Learning literacy in Dinka was considered important by the 15 student participants who made up the whole Dinka class. They personally committed their time to attend after school and complete the substantial assessments required. They understood the importance of this Year 12 subject for their language and literacy and their career pathway to university study in Adelaide.

Within the South Sudanese secondary student and teacher interview group, there was a unanimous (21/21) response to the importance of using the spoken Dinka language in Adelaide. A significant group (17/21, the language students and teachers) expressed interest in furthering their learning not only of the spoken but written form of Dinka. The latter result was not surprising given that this group comprised the formal students and teachers of the Dinka language. However, it was interesting that all the interviewees, including the four students at the Catholic Co-educational College, also reported their fervour for using Dinka as a spoken language in Adelaide. The students' enthusiasm for maintaining their language, in a new country, is not surprising because of its importance for communication with the family and community network, for maintaining other aspects of culture and for their sense of identity (O'Regan, 2016).

***Changing Patterns of Language Usage.*** In contrast to the detailed discussion on family language use in southern Sudan, language use at home in Australia was an aspect not often mentioned in the interviews. *In his interview, NM4, who spoke both Dinka and Arabic with his mother in southern Sudan, revealed that in Adelaide 'we don't really use Dinka that much...More I'm just used to English to speak'.*

However, the three SACE Year 12 Investigations which explored language use filled in some of the gaps in this area. The student with the A grade had surveyed 'a random group of Dinka people' and examined the issue: *The impact of the changes to the Dinka language and culture*

in a South Australian context. The student found that the Dinka language was now being spoken far less due to having:

*to communicate with the majority of the citizens by speaking English at school or the workplace. An average worker works 6-8 hours a day while a student is at school for 6 hours a day, that's 6-8 hours without speaking Dinka. When asked where did they often speak Dinka, a huge amount replied at home, community gatherings and at church. They were then asked whether they mixed Dinka with English and 85% responded yes. This creates a big concern for the elders, as some Dinka words will eventually be replaced with English word (Student Response 2, 2013, p. 3).*

The student found that all five major dialects of Dinka existed in Australia; her own dialect was 'Bor' while most of her friends were either 'Rek'<sup>13</sup> or Twic'. Her survey revealed that the Dinka language was spoken much faster and more fluently in South Sudan than the Dinka-English mix spoken by the youth here (Student Response 2, 2013, p. 4). The elders in the community spoke fluent Dinka to each other but attempted to use some English words to communicate with their children. Most Dinka youth spoke Dinka only to their parents, and frequently used English with their South Sudanese friends. Furthermore the mixing of Australian slang and shortened Dinka forms was becoming commonplace in conversations amongst the Dinka community (Student Response 2, 2013, p. 5).

The SACE Stage 2 Investigation assessed as C grade entitled *The changes occurring in the Dinka community in South Australia*, also discovered that Dinka was being spoken far less as the South Sudanese settled into life in a 'non-Dinka community'. The early arrivals tended:

*to speak Dinka a lot in their houses but as soon as the children [begin] attending school they get to know English and interact more with other's children and as the years go by they are more likely forgetting their language and speaking English often (Student Response 4, 2013, pp. 2-3).*

This second investigation also reported that Dinka was spoken at South Sudanese community events to further involve children in the home culture and show the importance of the language. The Dinka dialects 'are not that strong anymore. Meanings have changed...I'm not really forgetting Dinka but I have difficulties when I'm speaking it. So I do either mix it with English or just answer back in English' (Student Response 4, 2013, pp. 3-4).

The third SACE Stage 2 Investigation assessed as B grade was entitled *Dinka customs and their changes and the changing identity of Dinka people over time*. This study also explained that

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that Rek is now the agreed standard form of Dinka orthography (Lo Bianco et al., 2009).



difficulties in communication between old and young were leading to the growing trend for families to speak in a mix of English and Dinka:

*It is hard for the older generation to speak English fluently. This forces the Dinka community to mix their language with English... Personally it is hard for me and the younger generation to speak fluent Dinka which makes it hard to communicate with our parents and relatives back home that we communicate with on the phone. Overall Dinka is a language that will likely keep changing due to circumstances of the community and the environment (Student Response 3, 2013, pp. 4-5).*

The A grade SACE student went further to suggest a decline in Dinka has occurred as its speakers settled down to life in a different community characterised by living in suburbs of non-Dinka speakers, and day-to-day exposure to English speakers in school and workplaces:

*A majority of Dinka youth are unable to speak, write and read Dinka properly and a small percentage of them lack knowledge about their culture. This creates a big concern for the next generation of Dinka's (Student Response 2, 2013, p. 7).*

*TMI's desire to link written Dinka that he taught in the secondary school class with the everyday Dinka spoken at home showed his awareness not only of the need for language upkeep and maintenance but also the importance of literacy in the language. The South Sudanese community played a role, too, as it provided a context for its members to converse in Dinka and foster cultural awareness. This is illustrated in the SACE Year 12 C grade response:*

*when the parents are having turns to do a speech in front of everyone [South Sudanese Community event], they don't use English when talking that would set a bad example ...because everyone seems to speak Dinka at the events [rather] than English (Student Response 4, 2013, p. 3).*

The difference in emphasis between the interviews and the three SACE scripts should be noted. All the SACE scripts focussed on the predominance of English and its infiltration into Dinka in a way that suggested a shift to English was inevitable. A similar pattern of decline in the younger generation's use of their home language has been reported in numerous studies of immigrant groups (Clyne, 2007; Secombe & Zajda, 1999). In general, the interview data did not reflect this trend to English, the dominant language. In contrast, the interview data indicated instead the participants' commitment to Dinka as well as being prepared to learning (which was needed for communication with the older generation at home and with one another where secrecy was an advantage). Participant NF1 felt she had to remind her teacher that 'I speak Dinka too'. Whilst NM4 used the required English at school, he expressed that he 'would like to use my own languages [Dinka and Arabic] though'.

### **Extending their Educational Meanings**

All 21 interview participants spoke in great detail about their experiences of education in Adelaide school. Their comments went beyond outlining the knowledge and skills they were relearning to consider what education meant for them personally and how they had learned to develop strategies to get the best out of it for their own purposes. Table 7.8 *Participants Describing Adaptations to Schools in Adelaide* summarises the number of participants who responded to this topic. A detailed breakdown of their comments is in Table 7.8, Appendix G.

Table 7. 8 Participants Describing Adaptations to Schools in Adelaide

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1. Adaptations to Schools in Adelaide	1F 3M	10F 5M	2M	21/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

***Adapting to School Procedures.*** One of the experiences described learning the best way to approach school administrative staff. Participant LM6 described what he regarded as his worst memory at school, when he attempted to hand in a religion assignment to the Front Office because his teacher was absent. The resulting communication breakdown took place in the School of English soon after his arrival in Adelaide. He explained that he filled in the required slip and went to the Front Office where he met one of the receptionists and asked her to put the assignment in the teacher’s pigeonhole. He remembered that ‘she stared at me and said, ‘I’m not your servant’’. He replied, ‘Sorry, please show me and I’ll sign my name’. LM6 was a very conscientious student whose experiences had begun to make him aware of what to do when he was faced with difficulties in relationships or possible cultural misunderstandings in his school learning. ‘When I [don’t] understand the issue. Make perusal [*sic*] contact with the teacher [and say] would you please make time to discuss’. However, if he gained university entrance, his procedure, would be as follows. ‘I will step back, and say, Ms Thomas, will you please explain to me?’ In this way, LM6 devised his own personal communication style to match that of his school and future learning. In particular, he took account of the discomfort felt by many mainstream Australians, when people stand too close to talk to them. He demonstrated that he was willing to adjust his style of communication, but not his determination to ensure that he was successful in learning. Similarly, NM4 devised ‘something I’ve worked out myself, just a practical manner that’s what I’m used to. I learn better if you show me how to do things, that model. If I need help, I ask [with] a specific task and what should I be doing and they explain it. I get time to do [this] in the class. They’re [the teachers] pretty helpful here’.

***Reflecting on their Schooling Experiences.*** Many students had reflected on their mainstream schooling experiences and were keen to provide feedback for future changes in what they

regarded as key areas of concern. LM6 advocated the reversal of the Pastoral Care (PC) segments in the school day into free lessons for students. He felt that disadvantaged students would especially gain from these, if there was a learning skills focus. Participant NF1 preferred that the already existing free lessons should not to be totally unsupervised. 'I think... the free lessons worked least for me...I wouldn't like just sitting around by myself. I would love a free lesson to be supervised by a teacher where you could get help if you need it from the teacher'. More inclusion of Dinka and African culture into the curriculum, for example, in dance, drama and music was another common request that participants made. As NF1 suggested, 'more cultural things should be added [such as] dance and drama. Yeah'. LF4 described the 'not [being able to use or] bring what we did [learned in southern Sudan] here. Not your culture we understand'. Thus, the recognition of prior learning or a 'bridge' between past and present learning was another suggestion.

The South Sudanese secondary students overwhelmingly spoke of their appreciation for the learning opportunities offered in Adelaide's schools. However, whilst they appreciated the freedom to make the most of these valuable experiences, they were concerned with the more casual style of schooling in Adelaide compared to the familiar, highly disciplined style in southern Sudan. The often casual and free atmosphere disturbed their sense of wellbeing and stability, and LF13 indicated a common feeling that the weak mainstream students should be kept 'back in that year level instead of putting them up'. Many participants resented this fact that all students were promoted each year, regardless of their learning progress and attitude during the school year. Unlike school in southern Sudan, there appeared to be few if any consequences to deviations of the behaviour dictated by schools.

***Developing their own Personal Educational Meanings.*** Adaptations to the new school system were made in many diverse ways depending on the individual. The small group who had friends at school appeared to view them as a 'resource' existing only in the school context rather than in the outside community at large where other students (like LM6 and LM11) were starting to make meaningful friends from a variety of cultural backgrounds outside school. More importantly, the South Sudanese secondary students valued their learning of new knowledge and skills, and the progress they had made upon reflection with teacher or fellow student support. Participants NF1 and NM2 realised the importance of their SACE co-ordinator's personal attention to drafting assignments after school hours and the contribution of their school's homework club tutors and organisers. Several students also noted there were individual teachers who assisted their progress, even if they were in the minority over the range of their mainstream school teacher experiences in Adelaide.

However, many participants identified not only good teachers who explained ‘every little thing’ (LF4) but what they wanted from them, such as personal discussions about their understanding the subject area content and skills involved, as LM1 appreciated with his Economics teacher. Many noted the attitude, style of talking to students and thus approachability of the teacher. LF5 observed ‘the way [a good teacher] talks and explains to you’ so that she felt she was being treated well. Similarly, LF14 targeted ‘people in [the] library and the homework club [who were] approachable’. Most participants also indicated what was now required for their active role of being a good student. LF4 suggested their asking teachers for help both within class times and during the school day. LM1 realised the importance of ‘pay[ing] attention’ in classes and choosing subjects according to personal interest such as Economics which ‘really interests me. [So, I become] more involved’. He, like other participants, chose subjects (such as PE to link with his ‘knowledge and background’) which utilised prior knowledge and skills from southern Sudan. Their adjustment therefore came to focus more on developing a personal learning two-way relationship with good teachers, perhaps even identifying such teachers with former ‘family mentor teachers’ in southern Sudan.

A recent study by Baak (2016) has also pointed to the importance of positive relations with teachers in the NAP, ESL and specialist programs. As a result of the compulsory educational opportunities in a safe and stable environment, education became more important to the participants in their personal cultural systems than in southern Sudan. Developing personal relationships with teachers, learning real subject content and future learning possibilities were now all of crucial importance in achieving the successful school outcomes they aspired to.

The sense of identity and aspirations for the South Sudanese secondary students and teachers emanated from the overall impact and interplay of their past and current learning and life relationships and experiences in southern Sudan and Adelaide. The family and its extended family network was still the dominant personal cultural system for the participants and operated their home base. Living and learning to function in mainstream schooling and Adelaide society, despite looking and feeling ‘different’, and in the midst of their own extended family network and South Sudanese community as well, influenced their incorporation of new and emerging personal educational meanings and personal identities seeking to aspire in quite new ways.

### **Adaptations in Identity and Aspirations**

Adaptations to the sense of identity and aspirations of the South Sudanese refugee secondary students and teachers, as revealed in their comments about life and schooling once they were settled in Adelaide, can be seen as a result of the overlapping cultural contexts in their lives.

Table 7.9 shows that all 21 participants discussed their identity and aspirations in Adelaide. A more detailed breakdown of the various aspects discussed is provided in Table 7.9 *Participants Describing Identity and Aspirations in Adelaide* in Appendix G.

Table 7. 9 Participants Describing Identity and Aspirations in Adelaide

Theme	NCC (4)	SOL (15)	Ts (2)	Total (21)
1.Identity in Adelaide	1F 3M	10F 5M	2M	21/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

Their sense of identity linked to their homeland had not lessened or been repudiated by any of the participants since their arrival in Australia. In fact, for a number of reasons, it appeared to have strengthened. This was particularly the case when the new nation was established in 2011 and they were already settled in Adelaide.

Underpinning their sense of identity was the maintenance, for most participants, of their primary relationships with at least one parent, or other members of the extended family network. Particularly important for career goals and general sense of self-worth were those they regarded as their family role models and the successful South Sudanese role models increasingly being shown in the media (Adut & McKelvey, 2016). The numbers of these significant others in Adelaide were less than in southern Sudan, as reflected in the fact that they were discussed by only ten out of the 21, as compared with 17 who had mentioned such relationships in southern Sudan. Yet the identification of the participants as South Sudanese by those of their significant others who had come to Australia continued to reinforce their personal sense of being south Sudanese. Moreover, it was with those family members that the participants activated their distinctive South Sudanese family and moral values, spoke their Dinka language and celebrated family and community occasions with the food, the songs, the music and the drums they loved.

In the Australian context, there was another factor which strengthened their sense of being South Sudanese. All had commented on the shock of discovery their blackness in the context of schools dominated by fellow students who were white skinned, and on the often negative experiences of racism they endured as a result of their colour. Their immediate visibility meant that they were constantly being identified as, or given the meaning of South Sudanese, by all the other mainstream students, those who constituted their ‘generalized others’ in the context of secondary relationships in the school.

The participants' evident pride in being South Sudanese was projected in several ways. LM8 expressed in traditional terms that being South Sudanese meant to him being 'brave, as standing up to people, lions or whatever. My pride'. This is reminiscent of Guong's comment that his family and society's expectations focussed on the need 'to defend ourselves, to be strong and show no fear and to be confident as men...to be courageous' (2011, p. 4). A less flamboyant, practically oriented assertion came in the advice of NM3, 'Don't think of yourself any less different to people you find here. Try your best and just know where you come from and why you're here and where you want to go'.

Pride in their South Sudanese sense of identity was also evident in their behaviour. A natural pride in their distinctive physical prowess which was linked to their sense of being South Sudanese can be seen in their enjoyment, and obvious success in school athletics and sport. For their Research Project, required as part of their Year 12 studies, a number of the students chose a sport-related topic or one related to the experience of the South Sudanese community in Adelaide. Pride in their physical appearance and blackness was also seen in their enjoyment of the opportunity for physical decoration and display of fashion at school formals, which could be interpreted as akin to South Sudanese customs for bridal adornment (Student Response 2, 2013, p. 6). As a teacher, I remember observing the delight which the girls revelled in, when parading their carefully chosen finery, complementing their height, natural grace and colour, for the senior school formal occasions.

There was no evidence that any of the participants identified themselves directly as Australian in any way. Two participants, with both parents residing in Adelaide, however, did make comments about Australia beginning to feel like home (LM1 remarked that 'guess it feels like home' and NM4 also felt that 'Australia's pretty good'). The fact that both of these were in Adelaide with two parents may indicate that they felt more settled here in Australia. In contrast, as can be seen in the following paragraphs, many others intended to return to South Sudan following the completion of their professional studies.

What did occur in the third context through the influence of both role models and in their South Sudanese family and community and the inspiration and guidance of teachers with whom they had a two-way relationship, was a consideration of their intellectual identity (as discussed at the end of Chapter 6). This was linked to specific career aspirations in the case of 17 of the participants. Seventeen out of the nineteen students (17/19) expressed their preference for future academic and work-related occupations. Participants LF3 and NF1 were determined to be nurses, participant LF4 wanted to become a midwife and participants NM4 and LF14,

psychologists. LF7 was anxious to get into journalism while LF12 desired a fashion apprenticeship. LM11 wanted to become a builder or enter the air force, NM3 aimed to be an engineer and LM8 and LF13, accountants. NM2 wanted to study social work, LF9, law or politics and LF15, international law and human rights and LM2 wanted to be a mechanic. While LF19 aspired to learn the Dinka and Spanish languages, LM1 was hoping to 'find a course which interests me'.

The majority of those with professional aspirations made it clear in their comments that their main aim in studying for these careers was not the money and status they could get in these professions in Australia. Rather they hoped to be able to use their professional knowledge and skills in helping people back in South Sudan. As NF1 claimed 'my study, I see it here, but back home [I] would love to become a nurse. Here we've got plenty but not back home. They wouldn't have. The reason I came to Australia...was to learn and then go back to my country'.

## **Conclusion**

In the third context of cultural overlap, the participants' comments indicated that the social relationships and cultural meanings linked to South Sudan continued to be activated both in memory and in the concrete reality of the country of their re-settlement. At the same time, they were being introduced to new relationships and new cultural meanings originating in the life of the mainstream Australian group. They found themselves having to learn the requirements of government bureaucracy, for example, and the learning demands of compulsory attendance at school.

The network of the South Sudanese family and community maintained their traditional family and moral values, despite the constraints imposed by the Adelaide context. These included family members missing except in memory; the dispersal of family units, scattered across suburban Adelaide; in houses of very different design; and with the most readily available food quite different to their own. On special family and community celebrations, however, they were able to enjoy activating together a fuller range of their home and family cultural values.

Maintaining religious meanings, however, particularly the practices of worship, which had been so important to them in southern Sudan, proved more challenging. The Christian churches they attended were not their own; the clergy and members of the congregation in local parishes were not members of their own community as they had been in their homeland. Even though the Christian beliefs were much the same, the patterns of worship seemed formal and cold compared to the exuberant singing, dancing and drumming which had been an integral part of

their worship services. Given their physical dispersal across Adelaide the church and its worship - though still recognised - could no longer be the centre of their day-to-day activities.

In the area of social values, attendance at school involved personal interaction, and the development of secondary relationships with other students and teachers. Such relationships were quite outside the extended family network on which their lives in southern Sudan had been centred, but had been experienced in a small way by some in the refugee camps. In Adelaide some were beginning to add other friends from their involvement in sport.

Linguistic meanings were extended considerably in this third context. In addition to the literacy in English which they had acquired through schools in Adelaide, many of the participants made their own choice to gain or strengthen their literacy in Dinka. This study gave them a broader and deeper understanding of their own language and culture, as well as opening to them the possibility of extending this knowledge through the reading of books, as well as Dinka resources and articles available on the internet from the Dinka diaspora across the globe.

The opportunity for greatly extending their educational values, which came through schools in Adelaide, evoked a strongly positive response from the participants. They studied with determined motivation and showed initiative in developing the most effective personal strategies to achieve their learning goals. In particular, this meant seeking out what might be called two-way learning relationships with teachers in order to do well. The means for career advancement came into reach as they developed their own sense of intellectual identity.

The final outcomes of the learning journeys for the South Sudanese secondary refugee students were generally positive, sustaining both cultures in their given contexts, and the duality of creative interchange between present memories and future dreams in the third context (Secombe & Zajda, 1999).



## **Chapter Eight: Understanding the Learning Journeys of South Sudanese Refugees**

### **Introduction**

This research study can be seen as an answer to the call of Brown and his associates for the views of South Sudanese refugee secondary students to be made ‘explicit’, not only in order to understand ‘their specific backgrounds and experiences’ but also to develop ‘educational strategies, resources and policies’ which meet their needs (J. Brown et al., 2006, p. 161). Although Brown made this plea in 2006, the findings of this study indicate that the urgent need to understand refugee students is just as necessary and urgent in 2014-5 as it was when he wrote.

The personal voices of the nineteen South Sudanese secondary students and two teachers in the interview data have yielded new understandings of the learning experiences in their past context of southern Sudan and in their learning journey to their current context of Adelaide. Their clearly stated views and emotions have proved useful in filling in the many gaps and silences surrounding their past and present life situations and learning experiences. Their forthright accounts of what learning experiences worked for them, and what did not, have provided first-hand guidance for school leaders and classroom teachers in enhancing their learning as refugee secondary students in the Australian context. They pointed to possibilities beyond the educational recommendations listed by Brown to focus on what South Sudanese refugee students could achieve when working with teachers who understood their situation.

### **Revisiting the Research Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this research study was to: firstly, listen to, hear and reflect on the largely hitherto ignored personal voices of South Sudanese refugee secondary students; and secondly, compare their learning experiences from their homeland in southern Sudan and in Adelaide schools. Furthermore, the study set out to:

- investigate the forms, languages and experiences of the learning of southern Sudanese refugee secondary students prior to coming to Adelaide;
- explore the individual southern Sudanese refugee secondary students' perceptions of the ways of learning they experienced within the family and community in their homeland;
- explore the perspectives of South Sudanese refugee secondary students on the forms, languages and experiences of learning in secondary schools in Adelaide;
- ascertain the commonalities and differences across the interviewed group in terms of preferred ways of learning, their sense of identity and their aspirations for the future.

The participants proved to be very ready to engage in conversation with myself as the researcher and share their thoughts and feelings about their life situations and learning experiences. There was a wealth of interview data recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Before presenting an overview of the main findings, it is worthwhile to consider what made the interviews so successful.

### **Evaluating the Research Method Used**

This research is based on a total of 21 interviews, 19 with South Sudanese refugee secondary students and two with South Sudanese teachers who also came as refugees. Chapter Four outlined the approach used to contact potential participants, give them confidence to actually take part and encourage them to talk freely about their experiences. As mentioned earlier, my background and experience as the researcher in knowing other languages and teaching English to speakers of other languages both in South Australia and overseas proved to be positive factors in maximising the usefulness of the interviews. More specifically, my experience in teaching a number of refugee students from southern Sudan was important in defining the topic of the thesis and formulating the interview questions in ways they were most likely to feel comfortable with.

My familiarity with secondary school procedures enabled me to make contact with relevant schools and arrange preliminary meetings where I could talk with students of southern Sudanese background, explain the purpose of the research and how it provided an opportunity for them to explain their views and experiences. In hindsight, this preliminary contact proved vital in influencing the students to participate and helping them to feel at ease with myself as the researcher.

### **Recognising the Limitations of the Research**

As a small-scale example of qualitative research, involving only a proportion of the total number of South Sudanese refugee students in Adelaide secondary schools, this study is only able to reach conclusions related to those who participated in it. It is not possible to generalise beyond this study and assume that the findings from this study can be applied directly to South Sudanese refugee secondary students in Sydney or Melbourne or the US, or even those in other Adelaide secondary schools. The scope of the investigation was also confined to issues related to learning and education. Other social structures, such as the family, religious and community organisations were important only to the extent that they had some involvement, in, an influence

on, children and young people's learning. In addition, the study chose to focus on students in secondary schools, thus ignoring the needs of other groups within the South Sudanese community, such as pre-school children and their language needs, or mothers who had no time to learn English, or understand how Australian society operated. These limitations of the research study need to be borne in mind.

Although qualitative research findings cannot be generalised to other sets of respondents, particularly those from other ethnic cultural groups, in the sense of predicting specific difficulties of learning or attitudes to schooling, they can be used beneficially in other ways. Insights into the particular dilemmas and issues of South Sudanese refugee secondary students, into which learning approaches worked and which did not, can be most helpful for school leaders and classroom teachers in considering the most effective approaches to adopt for other groups of refugee and immigrant students. In-depth understandings of students' views and feelings about factors which they found most beneficial in their learning are particularly useful in this regard.

### **Symbolic Strands from the Emic Analysis**

Two approaches to qualitative analysis were outlined in Chapter Four. Emic analysis focused solely on the voices of the participants per se, what they chose to speak about, or to keep silence on, as well as how they talked about such issues. Etic analysis, in contrast, interprets their views and comments in the light of theoretical concepts that help to deepen understanding of the participants and their situation.

Emic analysis seeks to identify what has been called the symbolic strands or motifs as in literature and music, in each of the three contexts. These come directly from what the participants said, without any intervening theoretical interpretation. They are the thoughts and feelings mentioned in some way by all the participants, usually repeatedly, and often re-iterated in discussing different aspects of their daily lives. They seem to symbolise what the participants saw as the key events or issues in their life in that context. Each of the data analysis chapters (5, 6 and 7) has its symbolic strand introduced as a subsection of the chapters.

For Chapter 5, the symbolic strand that emerged from the interviews was judged to be the ever-present reality of war. Through all their talk about life as they remembered it in southern Sudan, the taken for granted realities of living in a war zone were woven like a lurid thread. The memories of the good times they liked to recall within their extended families and community were shot through with the fear of violence erupting in their community at any moment. Fathers

and brothers were away fighting; churches and schools were unusable because of destruction or unexploded bombs. There was the ever-present fear of militia and soldiers, from which they knew they would have to run to survive. In the end, all these refugee families had been forced to run; to leave their home, with as many family members as they could find, and run for safety to a refugee camp. Eventually they reached Australia as refugees, to find that in their new homeland where they did not have to fear the ever-present reality of war.

In the context of Australia (Chapter 6), these refugee secondary students encountered a different sort of reality which they could not escape. In Africa, the colour of their skin had been a taken for granted normality, despite the variations in shade across the continent. The issue of their visibility confronted them from the time they began attending school in Australia - the great majority of the students and almost invariably, the teachers, were white; they were not. What they referred to as their 'blackness' affected the way white skinned students and teachers viewed them and treated them. In the wider community, their visibility drew unwanted attention, insulting comments, hostile looks and even physical attacks from passers-by in the park, other passengers on the bus and strangers on the beach. Those participants with height and strength and sporting skills were not slow to see the advantages that their physique gave them. Another positive response evident in one way or another in most of the participants was the pride they expressed in their blackness. This issue coloured most of their relationships, but not it would seem, those with the teachers whom they respected and trusted. However, the interview comments showed clearly that the student participants (6/19) who had relationships with white Australians outside of school were: firstly, LM11 who made friends with members of his lacrosse team; and secondly, NM2 who completed his mainstream school work experience at Hungry Jacks. Playing or researching sport in Adelaide, which originated from an earlier elementary interest in southern Sudan, appeared also to have a connection with the making of new friends outside the mainstream school experience as in the case of participants NM4, LM1, LM6 and LF9.

Within Context 3, the space referred to as the South Sudanese Community in Adelaide, the participants' comments about their situation some five or more years after their arrival, suggested a double symbolic theme, Present Memories and Future Dreams. The duality of the strand seems to be especially symbolic of the two orientations that they maintain in balance, as their way of adapting to life in Australia. The memories of family and community life in southern Sudan were reported as a present reality in their commitment to maintaining these patterns of family life, of community celebrations and the Dinka language in their new country. As Wood put it, the binding workings of memory was not 'a backward looking or offshore

directed focus', it provided the firming of their roots through 'effective networks...to strengthen the position of individual families and of the Sudanese community in their new environment' (Wood, 2013, p. 202). At the same time, their settlement in Adelaide had given them an opportunity for education that would have been unthinkable in their homeland. Their determination to master English and become effective learners was driven by their dreams of what they could achieve if they made the most of the educational opportunities that they had been offered.

### **Social Relations and Cultural Meanings in the Etic Analysis**

The two theories utilised in conjunction with etic analysis were Humanistic Sociology and Symbolic Interactionism. Humanistic Sociology was used as relevant and appropriate to explain both the personal and group cultural values of the South Sudanese refugee secondary students within the sum of their social, linguistic, religious, and educational and sense of identity/aspirations experiences concerning both at home and inherited cultures. This theory assisted a deeper understanding into the intimate perspectives and their personal and cultural values of the South Sudanese refugee students. The experience of being a refugee arriving with inherited cultural values underwent (radical in some cases) transformation in a variety of ways. The students had personal choices and actions to take within opposing cultural value systems operating and different relationships on offer in the new country. The compatible and supporting theory, Symbolic Interactionism defined key relationships with 'significant others' evidenced in the primary relationships with the family and its cultural network, including the church, in southern Sudan. These were crucial for both the interviewees' physical survival, nurturing and 'learning'. As there were fewer available family network members with the disruptive move to Adelaide, frequently, these relationships took on the status of significant role models both to inspire and support the participants' pressing learning and community needs. Secondary relationships with 'generalized others' applied to those with teachers, fellow students inside and outside of mainstream schooling and the general community in Adelaide society.

*The Overall Breakdown.* The visual representations which follow (Figures 8.1 and 8.2) illustrate the overall breakdown of the participants' learning journeys from southern Sudan to Adelaide. Common patterns were displayed in terms of their learning and adaptations in their responses to the three contexts of their southern Sudan homeland, mainstream schooling and adaptation to life and learning in Adelaide. Whilst the 'Survival' category shown in Figure 8.1 was not directly addressed by the participants as such, their responses indicated an awareness

of the prevalent threat manifesting in the constant ‘running’ and movement towards safer conditions of living and operating on a daily basis in southern Sudan. The ‘Extended Family & Role Models’ classification referred to the participants’ responses describing their nurturers, role models and informal teachers, roles frequently performed by parent/s as well (Figure 8.1). The participants’ devotion to the family network, its moral values and informal learning were not only firmly entrenched in southern Sudan (Figure 8.1) but manifested their continuance, despite fewer numbers, in Adelaide (Figure 8.2). The largely central position of religious values and the church for cultural worship, celebrations and substantial informal learning in southern Sudan (Figure 8.1) shifted dramatically to a side position of fewer active attendees whether Christian or Islamic in Adelaide (Figure 8.2).

The social values (Figure 8.2) displayed the key importance of relationships with teachers, followed by the participants’ involvement in sport, whether school or community and lastly the seemingly interconnected making of new friendships outside school. Linguistic values associated with speaking Dinka, the mother tongue, underwent a transformation from daily spoken use in southern Sudan (Figure 8.1) to 15/19 undertaking formal language study in Adelaide (Figure 8.2). However, the lack of English being spoken and well at home in Adelaide did provide a handicap in terms of homework assistance and computer literacy for most, if not all, of the participants (Figure 8.2). Educational values were sporadic in terms of whole group formal learning in southern Sudan whether in the community, local or other school and refugee camps (Figure 8.1). Not surprisingly, as mentioned previously, the relationships with teachers and school styles of learning became paramount for all of the participants as opportunities for learning and career paths now presented themselves in Adelaide (Figure 8.2). Several students devised their particular learning strategies as personal responses and suggestions for their successful learning as a novel two-way process with their teachers.

Identity and aspirations redefined from being strongly based around the family and its network’s survival in war-torn southern Sudan (Figure 8.1) to being markedly ‘South Sudanese’ in Adelaide (Figure 8.2). The ‘South Sudanese’ category in Figure 8.2 referred to the participants’ responses expressing their overwhelming desire to retain their Dinka language, pride in their culture together with an acceptance of their ‘difference’. Similarly, the category of an ‘Intellectual’ identity (Figure 8.2) related to the participants’ firm focus on success in their mainstream school learning and development of future study and career plans. This intellectual school identity emerged for all of the participants in different ways alongside their continuing sense of cultural heritage spurred on by influential, if sparse in numbers, role models from close or wide family networks in Adelaide (Figure 8.2). Future professional goals coupled with the

desire to return and ‘give back’ to South Sudan now characterised the overwhelming majority of responses from the participants (Figure 8.2).





Figure 8. 1 Participants' Learning Journeys From Southern Sudan (Context 1)

	NF1	NM2	NM3	NM4	LM1	LM2	LF3	LF4	LF5	LM6	LF7	LM8	LF9	LF10	LM11	LF12	LF13	LF14	LF15	TM1	TM2
<b>Family</b>																					
No. of Parents	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
Ext Family & Role Models	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Learning, Family & Community	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	1
Moral Values	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Linguistic Values (Oral)</b>																					
Dinka	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Arabic	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Swahili	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
English	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	-
<b>Religious Values</b>																					
Christian	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-
Islamic	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Educational Values</b>																					
Learning in Community	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Local School	-	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	1
Other School	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Refugee Camp	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Identity &amp; Aspirations</b>																					
Family	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Survival	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1



Figure 8. 2 Participants' Learning Journeys To Adelaide (Contexts 2 & 3)

	NF1	NM2	NM3	NM4	LM1	LM2	LF3	LF4	LF5	LM6	LF7	LMS	LF9	LF10	LM11	LF12	LF13	LF14	LF15	TM1	TM2	
Year of Arrival	2003	2005	2004	2003	2000	2004	2008	2003	2005	2008	2004	2007	2004	2007	2004	2004	2007	2004	2006	1998	2004	
<b>Family</b>																						
No. of Parents	1	1	1	2	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	
Ext Family & Role Models	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Moral Values	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	
Social Values																						
Teachers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Dinka Community	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	1	
Friends In School	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Other Friends	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	
Sport- School & Community	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>Linguistic Values (Oral)</b>																						
Dinka- home	1	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	
Arabic- home	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
English- home	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>Religious Values</b>																						
Active Christian	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Islamic	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>Educational Values</b>																						
Intensive English	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	
Dinka Classes	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Teacher Relations	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Learning Styles	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Learning Strategies	1		1		1			1	1	1								1				
<b>Identity/Aspirations</b>																						
South Sudanese	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Intellectual	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Returning to South Sudan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	

*Some Personal Profiles.* Whilst the participants as a whole shared common patterns of learning and identity in southern Sudan, particular individuals displayed distinctive responses in their adaptations to mainstream schooling, life and their forming new facets of an evolved identity in Adelaide. How these particular individuals completed their learning journeys from southern Sudan to Australia can be traced in the columns recording their responses in Figures 8.1 and 8.2.

LM11 lived as ‘a loner’ with his elder sister in Adelaide. She became his most ‘important person’ and role model representing the southern Sudanese family network with its moral values. She cooked ‘Dinka food’ for him ‘so that I don’t forget’. He took up Dinka language studies outside school as he declared he was ‘here to learn’. Membership of the lacrosse sporting club some suburbs distant from his home served to make him ‘feel like I belong’ and appeared to lead to his making friends with ‘Asians and Indians’ rather than with ‘most Sudanese, I don’t get along with’. He found strength and support from his active Christian membership of both a Dinka and an Australian church, the latter he rated as ‘understood ...Australian one better’. Despite LM11’s adaptation and learning and career goals of becoming a ‘builder or join the air force’, he wanted to return to South Sudan ‘now but have to finish school first’.

LF10 indicated her continued strong sense of religious involvement with active churchgoing and a close relationship with God in Adelaide. Her view of taking up Dinka language studies was ‘really important and need[ed] to speak at community events’ and later visit her dad in South Sudan. Participant LF10 also explored a new sense of personal worth through the creative arts of film making, choreography of school concerts and writing media screen scripts. Dance, drama and the colourful nightly story telling were retrieved from her cherished memories in southern Sudan. Relating to and negotiating with teachers were extremely important to LF10 and most participants. Even those teachers (as the Catholic teacher [sister] at one of the Catholic secondary schools in Adelaide) who made a negative impression had something to offer for LF10. Overall, LF10 and the other participants appeared confident, purposeful, vocal and strategic with their encounters with teachers in their mainstream school identity. Whilst LF10 spoke of strong negative impressions of some teachers’ communication styles, she still realised that, in her experience, they ‘meant well’.

LF14 felt lonely like LM11 in the mainstream school experience and was hampered by her early experience of not knowing ‘much English at the time’. She enjoyed practical subjects in the secondary school like woodwork and art, experiences of which came from her early years in southern Sudan. She undertook studies after school in the Dinka language in line with her mother’s community leader role and concern to maintain their culture and identity in Adelaide. LM14 was troubled with what she described as a racial insult from a fellow Indian student, a former school friend, which led to her assaulting the student and changing schools. She wondered if her ‘being African’ was the problem. However, she felt that the school counsellor ‘made it her problem’ as LM14 alone was forced ‘to apologise’. The experience led to her interest in Psychology as a future career to help ‘kids and youth’. LM14 defined clearly what good teachers meant to her. She described them as ‘attentive [and] more understanding. They’ll come and talk’.

NM4 was one of only two participants with both parents present in Adelaide. Like the other student, LM1, apart from ‘feeling different’ which was common to all the participants, he interacted readily with mainstream Australian culture through parties and socialisation, as well as identifying with his own culture. He spoke of valuing being in Australia and kept up an active attendance at church in Adelaide. Friends in the mainstream school context appeared as a ‘static resource’. However, outside the school, friends in the South Australian community at large, featured significantly as did his teachers at school. NM4 valued and used the Dinka language (and Arabic) with assorted extended family members and his close family; he did not speak of improving their Dinka literacy. Whilst this was viewed as important, it was subsidiary to improving English literacy and making new friends.

NM3’s responses indicated an independent and visionary participant. Upon the advice of his mother, he basically kept separate from the South Sudanese community and neighbours. Church attendance had lost its value in his family’s life. Common to all participants, he expressed his views on ‘visibility’. However, NM3’s research project aimed to support the improved learning for all South Sudanese secondary and other refugee students. His research paper was extensively prepared with interviews sought from a wide range of relevant persons. Whilst he valued interaction with mainstream classmates, NM3 viewed the learning interaction as a distinctively two-way process with each making a valued contribution. Like several interviewees, he went on to study at

university in Adelaide. Whilst the Dinka language was important for NM3 to maintain, he did not choose to undertake Dinka studies. However, NM3 not only expressed a serious intention to help his people in the future, like most of the interviewees, but participated in a Catholic Mission group to Bathurst Island on his school holidays.

TM1 was the older of the two South Sudanese teacher participants, an experienced teacher of the Dinka language for the SACE and an elder in the South Sudanese community in Adelaide. Whilst highly valuing the study of the Dinka language and their cultural heritage via the oral tradition, TM1 promoted closer connections with the South Sudanese parents and families with the mainstream schools and the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD), welfare authorities. Whilst he was aware of the 'visibility' issue, he accepted and valued his South Sudanese heritage and culture. He had visions for the future and worked towards them. Despite TM1's early formal schooling (including literacy in the Rek dialect of the Dinka language) by a Catholic missionary order in southern Sudan, church attendance was not mentioned in Adelaide. TM1 was united with TM2 in the call for Dinka Language teachers and Dinka-speaking social workers, counsellors (whether based at the secondary schools or available from the South Sudanese community) and Department for Education and Child Development staff. The two teachers believed that future sources of such staff and personnel would help to create a bridge between educational and social welfare staff and the South Sudanese community at large. TM1 appreciated the value of an Australian education and way of living but was very concerned about the unsatisfactory relationship between these two sections of the community. TM1 wished for the Dinka language to become a more fully recognised part of Australian (and in this case Adelaide) multicultural society including secondary, tertiary education and part of the global Dinka language diaspora.

### **Insights from the Emic and Etic Analyses**

The etic analysis, using the two theories of Humanistic Sociology and Symbolic Interactionism, have complemented each other and served as effective interpreters of the South Sudanese interviewees' authentic voices and views. The participants' learning journeys were at last made evident from their detailed responses in the exploration of their social relations and cultural meanings both in southern Sudan and Adelaide. Their relationships with both 'significant' and 'generalized persons' illustrated the nature of their distinctive learning journeys and adaptations across the oceans to Adelaide. Some

relationships with teachers and some students went beyond Mead's interpretation and theory of 'generalized persons' (Morris, 1934) as they became influential in the lives of participants such as LM11 and his friends at lacrosse and the work of TM1 whose classroom teachings went beyond the conventional borderline to include his role model guise of 'uncle' and 'the importance of the family and respect' (TM2).

The emic and etic analyses formed not only a compatible union in this thesis but gave birth to building up the relevant internal forces at work, shining a light on the full meanings of the learning and lives of the participants in each of the three contexts. Chapter 5 participant responses revealed the important emic strand of the Ever-present Reality of War in southern Sudan shaping their daily lives in terms of physical survival, the transient nature of their 'schooling' learning and the centrality of the family and its nurturing and guiding network. In Chapter 6 the emic strand of the Visibility Issue became evident as a permanent one affecting the participants' sense of feeling 'different' upon arrival, within the important mainstream schooling interactions and relationships with teachers and students and the community life in Adelaide. However, other forces at work appeared to strengthen their natural sense of physical pride and develop a new sense of school or intellectual identity. Possessing and showcasing natural prowess on the sports field and natural elegance at school formals appeared to assist their confidence in being South Sudanese. The emic strand of Present Memories and Future Dreams emerging from the participant responses in Chapter 7 illustrated their managing and 'living' their new life of opportunities in Adelaide. 'Family in Memory' shone like a beacon to remind the participants of their family cultural values from southern Sudan (Figure 8.1) as did the fewer but various family role models living in Adelaide (Figure 8.2). The formal schooling opportunities with future career paths, including the possibility to upgrade their literacy in Dinka, their mother tongue, and gain tertiary entry points, further served to enhance their lives. This in turn firmed up the 'South Sudanese Identity and Aspirations' (Figure 8.2).

### **Practical Recommendations**

The analysis of interview data in Chapters 6 and 7 has dealt in some detail with the participants' comments on what they found useful in their Adelaide schools, as well as their suggestions of what they could be done to fill the gaps which they had known in their learning experiences. Their views can be seen to contribute significantly to what

Maadad and Rodwell (2017) proposed as a ‘pedagogy of the displaced’ to underpin the education of refugee children. This conceptualisation helps to refocus ‘the nature of the learner, their learning and teaching’ (Maadad & Rodwell, 2017, p. 155). The following discussion of the South Sudanese participants consolidates their most important suggestions.

***A More Flexible and Inclusive Curriculum.*** The recommendation to include relevant elements of South Sudanese culture, both as teaching examples and possible alternative individual assignments arises from the participants’ appreciation of the inclusions they had known and their desire for more. Incorporating South Sudanese stories within mainstream subject areas like English and EAL/D and South Sudanese music, dance and drama in the domain of creative arts can be a key strategy in recognising the different cultural expressions of the refugee students and acknowledging their validity alongside the mainstream culture of the school, and the cultural strands derived from other immigrant and refugee student groups in the school. Opportunities to display the outcomes of such work enable the South Sudanese to share their cultural expressions with other students who can then extend their knowledge and understanding of cultural groups different from their own.

It is also important that the school’s curriculum is flexible enough to arrange additional classes that fill in the gaps of knowledge and skills that many refugee students bring to their mainstream school learning. Lack of basic understanding in maths and science has hindered many South Sudanese refugee secondary students from following their preferred professions. They would benefit greatly from a subject designed to provide them with the basic foundation knowledge in these subjects which would enable them to go on to more successful study in these two important areas. Similarly, the development of computer literacy courses for newly arrived refugees would greatly facilitate their successful achievement in the mainstream classroom. Several of the South Sudanese refugee secondary students, like NM3, expressed their frustration that much of the required school work assumed not only that all students had a laptop, but also that they were proficient in computing skills. Short courses on computing skills could be incorporated into all subjects as a precursor to assessment from Year 10 onwards. Alternatively, these could be run as short lunch time courses based in the library, available to all students who wished to attend.



*Understanding and Positive Attitudes in Teachers and School Leaders.* Current expectations of the behaviour and attitudes to be shown by teachers and those in positions of leadership toward refugee students and others from varying backgrounds have been included in the AITSL 1.3 Australian Professional Standard for Teachers (Graduate) formulation of a comprehensive set of Professional Standards. At the level of beginning Graduate teachers, the official expectation is that they will ‘Demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds’ (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited, 2014). Recommendations from the 2014 survey conducted by EAL/D educators go further. They considered that programs of initial teacher education should include ‘at least one compulsory unit in English as a Second Language for pre-service teachers’ (Australian Council of TESOL Associations, 2014, p. 35).

The expectations assembled in the EAL/D Standards Elaboration document are even more explicit and include a number of statements. Teachers should: ‘Know EAL/D learners and how they learn EAL/D and the goals include: ‘Know, have empathy for and be responsible to the diverse linguistic, cultural and socio-historical characteristics of EAL/D learners; understand the nature of EAL/D learning and its relationship to culture and wellbeing’ according to Standard 1 (Australian Council of TESOL Associations, 2015). Standard 2 expects that teachers will ‘Know the content and how to teach it for EAL/D learners’, while Standard 6 requires them to ‘Engage in professional learning for working effectively with EAL/D students and their families’. In addition, Standard 7 states: ‘Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community regarding cultural and linguistic diversity’ (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited, 2014).

The 2014 EAL/D survey also recognised the importance of school leaders, like principals and deputies, understanding the needs and background learning experiences of refugee and immigrant students who come to be enrolled in their schools. The subsequent report recommended that ‘principals with multilingual populations be provided with guidelines and resources to appropriately manage the EAL/D learning of these populations’ (Australian Council of TESOL Associations, 2014, p. 35).

The concerns expressed in the 2014 EAL/D Report echo the comments of the participants. The behaviour and attitudes of a number of teachers, school leaders and EAL/D teachers they had known did not live up to the high expectations laid down in these standards and statements. The great need, it would seem, is for access to updated and relevant resources which are able to portray the specific background, the family circumstances, the group cultural values and the learning experiences of individual students from a particular refugee or immigrant group. Recently, these have identified these sorts of data for the South Sudanese refugees, but they are in academic form and not readily available to over-worked teachers and principals. Specifically prepared and efficiently presented online resources or booklets with relevant information and specific examples would be invaluable for more effective professional development. They could be readily used both by individual teachers and for school professional development sessions.

For such an up-to-date professional development component for all teachers on the South Sudanese, for example, relevant topics could include the South Sudanese secondary students' prior learning and literacy experiences in language learning; practical skills and focus on the cultural, social, linguistic, religious and educational values impacting on all the South Sudanese secondary students covered in this study. Especially significant would be the demonstration of these refugee students' strength in the oral transmission method of learning and their past favoured manner of personalised teaching from their family members. The limitations of their past learning experiences and the taken for granted physical discipline at 'school' in southern Sudan could also be featured (Baak, 2016). It should also move on to explain their difficulties and achievements in the Australian school system, focussing particularly on the qualities of, and the teaching approaches used, by those teachers held in high regard by the participants.

***Building Closer Ties between the School and the South Sudanese Community.***

Difficulties with the relationships between the mainstream schools and the South Sudanese homes and community have been exposed by the student and teacher interview responses. Employing more South Sudanese liaison staff and counsellors has been suggested to bridge the gulf of sensitive cultural understanding. The use of South Sudanese case workers to assist families with school issues and cultural differences of child upbringing would encourage the DECD Child Protection agency to work more

closely with the South Sudanese Community. On the other hand, as mentioned previously, a recent Supreme Court case in Adelaide has opened the entire issue of intervention into the boundaries of family life and behaviour. The RAN-EC (Responding to Abuse and Neglect- Education and Care) 2015-2017 online update training for teachers might well require rethinking and adjustment (Government of South Australia, 2012).

Increased use of bilingual South Sudanese personnel (BSSOs) and (CLOs) including teachers and counsellors would effectively draw the mainstream school system, families and wider South Sudanese Community to closer working ties, improve Dinka and English literacy (Department for Education, 2009, p. 9), cultural understanding and integration. Such staff could be called upon to run and assist with school tours, enrolment days, assessment and reporting nights, cultural days and exhibitions, parent-teacher evenings and sensitive meetings with parents over 'disciplinary issues'. Buddies could be enlisted for the South Sudanese parents and students from the initial enrolment to help students and parents adapt to formal schooling and expectations and outline school support available. Schools should have a list of available South Sudanese support personnel to intervene in problems involving students and families, and to stand in for parents on parent-teacher evenings at schools.

Social and learning links between the South Sudanese community and the mainstream schools could assist in their closer working ties. This can include, for example: Dinka language events; South Sudanese dinners held in the schools' nutrition class centres; African dancing, singing, music, hair braiding and the distinctive African fashion. These types of events would legitimise the place of the culture and even mother language in Adelaide schools. Dinka conversational classes for South Sudanese and Australian parents could be advertised and run in the community centres. The Ethnic School Dinka classes and School of Language SACE could be promoted in the South Sudanese community and mainstream schools via the SACE coordinators.

Elementary English-speaking classes for parents after hours or during the school holidays would also bring the school, homes and community together. I did attend an African Parents' Information Night at my previous Catholic secondary school and observed that it was well attended and appreciated by the parents. As mentioned in the earlier section, regular timetabling of such events, meetings with classroom or year level teachers and

hosted by community leaders for a run through of the timetable, tour of the school, homework expectations, and parent-teacher nights would also be beneficial.

Development of courses such as computer literacy for newly arrived refugees would facilitate their learning. Several South Sudanese refugee secondary students like NM2, commented on their lack of computer skills upon arrival at secondary school. However, given practice and exposure, NM2 found that over time his IT skills did improve. Additional IT learning support could have helped this process. Libraries could run short courses, for example on writing assignments; conducting research and/or writing these into all subjects as a precursor to assessment at RSD (Research Skills Development) Framework (Willison, 2006) workshops. Doing this will assist the professional teacher development and enhance the progress of the refugee students.

### **Future Research Directions**

The analysis of the interview data presented in the last three chapters has highlighted a number of areas where further research could prove most useful.

One of the most pressing of these was the need for further research into effective ways of learning in subject areas which South Sudanese refugee secondary students found difficult. The gaining of literacy skills in English, when students have no prior literacy skills in the language they speak at home and only very limited oral experience in English is one such area. Another learning area needing further research was in the subject areas of science and maths which had proved particularly challenging for male and female participants. Many stressed that these subjects had presented on-going difficulties and hurdles for understanding from their early secondary years. Learning weakness in these core areas of the secondary curriculum prevented them from pursuing a range of further studies leading to worthwhile professional careers. Investigating the most effective approaches to learning in these two areas could perhaps best be done in classroom based action research. A number of different approaches could be developed in order to find out which proved most effective and why.

Follow-up studies of the learning experiences of South Sudanese refugee students in universities, TAFE programs and work situations would also be most valuable. In addition, other qualitative investigations of other South Sudanese students at different levels in the education system would complement the present study and show whether

the experiences discussed in this thesis would be reported among students interviewed or surveyed in other studies.

Comments from the interviews pointed to a need to investigate the educational needs of other members of the South Sudanese community in Adelaide. What, for example, are the pre-school learning needs of the children born in Adelaide to Dinka parents? In particular, what forms of oral and pre-literacy language support do they need in both Dinka as their home language, and English, as the language they need to know for school? In addition, what are the educational needs of the mothers who have arrived in Australia, with their children to look after, knowing no literacy in Dinka and only a few words of spoken English?

Another challenging and controversial area for research inquiry is peer group relations and friendships, both inside and outside the school, and the way in which the visibility of South Sudanese young people influences the pattern of these interactions. This, too, may be an area best explored through action research in a school or classroom setting, to investigate different approaches to encouraging greater interaction and what activities most effectively promote it.

### **The End of the Learning Journey?**

My final impressions are as a privileged interviewer, observer, former secondary teacher and university lecturer, of the South Sudanese refugee secondary students and their teachers. I view their whole passage from southern Sudan to Adelaide with admiration. In my opinion they have withheld private and personal impressions at times, such as their real thoughts about each other, their families and the value and real usefulness of the South Sudanese community in Adelaide. Despite such omissions and the limitation of my own identity as a former ESL teacher, I have learnt first-hand of their learning journeys. They were undoubtedly full of serious obstacles such as war, danger and loss of loved ones along the way in southern Sudan; their difficult decisions in transitioning to a new culture and their emerging as a largely positive and proactive cohort in terms of a strengthened personal identity in Adelaide with firm goals towards their future paths to home in South Sudan.

In essence, participant NM4 described his own life as ‘a kind of a journey. It’s been fun learning new things, different subjects, different teaching methods and all those

interesting experiences'. Equally, participant NM3's desire to fast track his learning journey was depicted in the local newspaper article entitled: 'Quick Learner can't wait to start university' (Holderhead, 2013). This article highlighted NM3's determination, strong spirit, focus on goals, enthusiasm for learning and goals achieve so one progresses in life. The educational value of these participants' learning in Adelaide had surpassed the survival learning in southern Sudan and the participants were ready to move forward and contribute to new environments as well as to their familiar environments in South Sudan. Nothing could be further from the overall negative experiences of the refugees in Dobson's study in Norway (Dobson, 2004).

Nevertheless, the call for service to 'home' (19/21) seemed to be integral to being a member of the Dinka community in Adelaide. The social value and cultural sense of future obligation was common to most participants and is consistent with the South Sudanese sense of 'meeting one's obligations' and 'being a good moral person' (Wood, 2013, p. 207). This call generally accompanied the taking up of the very real formal learning and career opportunities, notably for the female South Sudanese refugee secondary school participants, on tap in the new country. Participant LF14's learning journey illustrated this common phenomenon in her determination to not only become a psychologist but to return home and 'assist the homeless kids [They] need education. Attitude [of government] is really bad. They treat them like rubbish. It's not just a money thing. It's their attitude'.

In terms of the future formal studies expressed by most participants, once completed, these could well signify the end of learning journeys for the South Sudanese refugee secondary students. Whilst most participants reported their fervent desires to return 'back home' and some spoke of wanting to 'now', completing their future study goals appeared to be their first preferred option. Only two students did not indicate a future career pathway plan. However, returning to South Sudan did not necessarily mean that participants would work and remain there indefinitely. As the researcher, I had observed and seen documented the regular pattern of South Sudanese mothers or other family members going back to see close family members for an indefinite period of time and then returning to Adelaide.

In the meantime, as the refugee mother, and wife of one of the Two Abrahams (one of whom returned to South Sudan twice to support the Bor Orphanage and Community

Education Project plans for a school (Zable, 2015, p. 17)), settled in Latrobe Valley in Victoria, had indicated and recognised, it was their South Sudanese cultural heritage with its strong roots, which allowed refugees like herself and her family, to move forward and take up the ‘wonderful’ opportunities at hand in Australia:

*Whilst we were living through hard times, it was our beliefs, our culture and our faith that kept us going. It was our beliefs, our culture and our faith that kept us going... Our culture is the very essence of who we are (Malual, 2015, back cover).*

What appears to last was ‘the call to return home’ triggered by the enduring sense of South Sudanese cultural values and firm sense of identity as a dual force underlying the participants’ adaptation to the opportunities for life and learning in Adelaide. As mentioned earlier, NM3, as school captain, during and after his visit to Bathurst Island as part of his Catholic College’s Outreach program, reflected on its lasting significance:

*Visiting this place of the 2,000 or so people from the village, which is a similar size to the same place as I came from, each having a simple life, it reminds me of home in South Sudan. We need to keep up the traditions otherwise you forget where you come from and who you are. It’s my heritage and tradition (NM3).*

## **Appendices**



## Appendix A: Instrument: Open-ended Interview Questions

1. A] **What** are some of the things you remember learning before you went to school?  
B] Tell me about **what** you learned and  
C] **How**;  
D] **Where** you were and  
E] **Who** you learned from.

### Interviewer's Prompt List

- Mother, father or father-figures, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, adult/young neighbours
  - Jobs for boys, jobs for girls
  - Earliest learning experience and was it important and why
  - Best learning experience, worst/most difficult learning experience, most memorable and why
  - Stories, songs, music, dancing, memory, repetition
  - Bible, verses, religious writing and stories
  - Written materials eg community letters, pamphlets, posters, advertisements, newspapers, newsletters, information boards: where from?
  - Observation
  - Emotion, voice, gestures, physical space
  - Role Models
  - Culture, customs, traditions, rituals
  - Written information on Africa eg history
  - Languages
  - Hunting
  - Church, sermons, writings, languages
  - Learning English
  - 'Market', getting food
  - Cooking, looking after young children, family activities
  - How did you think of yourself
- 
2. A] **What** do you remember about your first days at school? Tell me about those first days  
B] **Where** was it? Was it outside?  
C] **Who** were your teachers?  
D] **What** do you remember doing?  
E] **What** things did **you like** doing?

- 2 . F] **What didn't you like doing?**  
 G] **What** was the most difficult?  
 H] Best Memories?  
 I] Worst Memories?

### **Interviewer's Prompt List**

- 'Classrooms' and how the various years were organised
- Welcome on the first day
- Teachers, communication styles, lessons, best learning experience, worst learning experience, most memorable and why, homework, assignments
- Emotion, voice, gestures, physical space
- Written materials
- Newspapers, community newsletters, community events
- 'Libraries'
- Bible, verses and religious writing/stories
- Use of memory and repetition for learning
- Languages eg Arabic and Dinka and learning English
- Speaking in class, answering questions
- Getting into trouble
- Peer / friendship groups: did they help you in the class or outside the class
- Role Models
- Recess, lunch and after school
- Sports or sporting activities eg running and athletics, music, songs, singing, dancing, stories, drama and acting
- School rules, textbooks, 'dictionaries', stationery, 'school equipment' and 'uniforms'
- Food/'Canteen'/s
- How did you think of yourself?

3. A] **What** are your feelings about **coming to and living in Australia/South Australia?**  
 B] **What** have you enjoyed the most?  
 C] **What** will you always remember?  
 D] **Who** are your friends?  
 E] **What** have you learnt from them?

### **Interviewer's Prompt List**

- List the schools and years of attendance
- Mother, father or father-figures, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, adult/young neighbours
- Jobs for boys, jobs for girls
- Community activities, meetings, celebrations

- Earliest learning experience and was it important and why
  - Best learning experience, worst/most difficult learning experience, most memorable and why
  - The first day at school
  - Role Models
  - Church, helpful members, languages, sermons, religious writings
  - Shopping
  - Food: how was it different from the food you were used to; How do you buy African foods?
  - How would you compare living here with living in Sudan? Informal and formal experiences?
4. A] What are your feelings about what **you haven't liked?**  
 B] or enjoyed about Australia/South Australia?  
 C] Do you think you will always feel this way?  
 D] What was the most difficult to adjust to?  
 E] Who helped you?  
 F] How?

#### **Interviewer's Prompt List**

- Living at home in the suburbs, shopping, taking public transport, visiting the doctor, dentist, Centrelink, filling out forms, Immigration visits, passports,
  - The weather, the beaches, the food, cooking, size of the houses, location of the houses, parks, bikes and cars
  - Leisure activities: music, dance, sport, radio, television, mobile phones, going to Church and the services
  - Making friends in your area and at school, meeting/dating: girls/ boys
  - Family members, father-figures, friends, teachers, counsellors, co-ordinators, library staff
  - Role Models
  - Languages
  - Emotion, voice, gestures, physical space
  - How do you feel about yourself and sense of comfort living in South Australia?
5. A] What do you remember **learning at secondary school here in South Australia?**  
 B] Tell me **where** you were?  
 C] **How** you learned and from **who**?  
 D] Tell me **about** your experiences of learning.  
 E] Did your **friends** help you?  
 F] **How**?  
 G] **What** worked **best** for your learning?  
 H] **How** did it work?

I] **What** worked **least** for you?

### Interviewer's Prompt List

- List the schools and years of attendance
- The first days at school/s
- ESL classes/support
- Teachers, counsellors, co-ordinators, classrooms, lessons, Maths and Science, other students, working in groups, oral presentations, writing, asking and answering questions, assignments, research, homework
- Making friends
- Role Models
- Use of computers
- Use of the Library
- Learning new languages
- Memory and repetition
- Free lessons
- School rules, getting into trouble
- Favourite lessons, least favourite lessons, most difficult lessons
- Maths and Science
- Music, Dance, Drama, Photography, Art
- Homework Clubs
- Special occasion school days eg sports, swimming, saints and patronal festivals, assemblies and participation
- Recess, lunch and after school
- Canteen/s
- Sporting/athletic activities
- Religious activities in school
- Mother, father or father-figure, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, neighbours, church members, refugee association members, community leaders, members and tutors.
- Yourself as a learner; English levels, challenges
- Use of Arabic, Dinka now and for the future
- Stories from Sudan and any connections/themes/styles of learning
- School Subjects and any connections with learning from home
- Your sense of Identity and Comfort at school
- Your current views [also your parents' and family's] of Education in South Australia
- Changes in school subjects
- Your future learning path or goals/compared with your family's aspirations
- How do you see your future in South Australia or Sudan?
- Advice to newcomers: school and daily life in South Australia

6. A] **What** are some of the things you've learned **after** arriving in South Australia?

B] **Tell** me about **what** you learned and

C] **How** in the **community** here.

- D] Was it from the Sudanese community as compared with the school?  
E] **Where** were you?  
F] **How** did you learn and  
G] **Who** did you learn from?

### **Interviewer's Prompt List**

- List the schools and years of attendance
- ESL classes/support
- First experiences at school, what you enjoyed, what you didn't enjoy, what you found most difficult
- Writing and speaking
- Computer access and use for classes and research
- Maths and Science
- Learning new languages
- Use of Arabic and Dinka
- Teachers, support staff, library staff, classes, other students, Homework Clubs
- Community gatherings: formal and informal, activities,
- Community leaders and members
- Part time work & school Work Experience
- Role Models
- Church and the Bible
- Shopping
- Transport
- Newspapers
- Advice to newcomers: life in South Australia, positives and negatives.

## Appendix B: Ethics approved documents

Note: Title of thesis (*How do Sudanese students describe their own learning processes in their home context? How do Sudanese students describe their own learning processes in their South Australian context?*) served as the original starting-point in these documents.

### 1. Ethics Approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee



RESEARCH BRANCH  
RESEARCH ETHICS AND COMPLIANCE UNIT  
BEVERLEY DOBBS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE  
SA 5005  
AUSTRALIA  
TELEPHONE +61 8 8303 4222  
FACSIMILE +61 8 8303 7325  
email: beverley.dobbs@adelaide.edu.au  
CRICOS Provider Number 00123M

Applicant: Dr M Picard

School: School of Education

Application No: 12648

Project Title: **How do Sudanese students describe their own learning processes in their home context? How do Sudanese students describe their own learning processes in the South Australian context?**

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPROVAL No: H-290-2011

APPROVED for the period until: 30 November 2012

It is noted that this study is to be conducted by Ms Judith Thomas, PhD candidate. Ethics approval will be sought from the SA Department of Education and Child Development.

Refer also to the accompanying letter setting out requirements applying to approval.

PROFESSOR GARRETT CULLITY  
Co-convener  
Human Research Ethics Committee

Date: 24 NOV 2011

## 2. Further Ethics Approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee



RESEARCH BRANCH  
RESEARCH ETHICS AND COMPLIANCE UNIT  
BENNELLY CDBS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE  
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS SUB COMMITTEE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE  
SA 5006  
AUSTRALIA  
TELEPHONE: +61 8 8303 4323  
FACSIMILE: +61 8 8303 7323  
EMAIL: [boverley.cdbcs@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:boverley.cdbcs@adelaide.edu.au)  
CRICOS Provider Number 93133M

24 November 2011

Dr M Picard  
School of Education

Dear Dr Picard

**APPROVAL No.:** H-298-2011  
**PROJECT TITLE:** How do Sudanese students describe their own learning processes in their home context? How do Sudanese students describe their own learning processes in the South Australian context?

I write to advise you that on behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee I have approved the above project. Please refer to the enclosed endorsement sheet for further details and conditions that may be applicable to this approval.

The ethics expiry date for this project is: 30 November 2012

Participants taking part in the study are to be given a copy of the Information Sheet and the signed Consent Form to retain.

Please note that any changes to the project which might affect its continued ethical acceptability will invalidate the project's approval. In such cases an amended protocol must be submitted to the Committee for further approval.

It is a condition of approval that you immediately report anything which might warrant review of ethical approval including:

- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants
- proposed changes in the protocol; and
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

It is also a condition of approval that you inform the Committee, giving reasons, if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

A reporting form is available from the website at <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ethics/human/guidelines/reporting>. This may be used to renew ethical approval or report on project status including completion.

 PROFESSOR GARRETT GULLITY  
Convener  
Human Research Ethics Committee

### 3. Ethics Approval from DECD



**Government of South Australia**

**Department for Education and  
Child Development**

Policy and Communications

31 Rinders Street  
Adelaide SA 5000  
GPO Box 1150  
Adelaide SA 5001  
DX 541

Tel: 8226 0119  
Fax: 8226 7636

DECD CS/11/106-2.1

21 December 2011

Dear Principal/Director/Site Manager

The research project titled *"How do Sudanese students describe their own learning processes in their home context? How do Sudanese students describe their own learning processes in the South Australian context?"* conducted by Ms Judith Thomas from the University of Adelaide has been reviewed centrally and granted approval for access to DECD sites. However, the researcher will still need your agreement to proceed with this research at your site.

Once approval has been given at the local level, it is important to ensure that the researchers fulfil their responsibilities in obtaining informed consent as agreed, that individuals' confidentiality is preserved, and that safety precautions are in place.

Researchers are encouraged to provide feedback to sites used in their research, and you may want to make this as one of the conditions for accessing your site. To ensure maximum benefits to DECD, researchers are also asked to supply the department with a copy of their final report which will be circulated to interested staff, and then made available to DECD educators for future reference.

Please contact Jeffrey Stotter, Project Officer – Research and Innovation on (08) 8226 0119 for further clarification if required, or to obtain a copy of the final report.

Yours sincerely

**Ben Temperly**  
**HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS**



4. Catholic Diocese of Adelaide- Police Check



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Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide  
POLICE CHECK UNIT

February 21, 2012

File Number:

Ms Judith Thomas  
61 Sussex Street  
NORTH ADELAIDE SA 5006

Dear Ms Thomas,

RE: Police Check Outcome


The application recently submitted by you to the Police Check Unit for a national police check has now been processed. As a result of this process, I am pleased to inform you that you have been granted a police check CLEARANCE. Please note that other screening processes such as referee checks may also be required and that this police check clearance is only one part of the screening process and does not guarantee automatic clearance for employment or acceptance as a volunteer.

This letter should be kept for your own records. You are also required to produce this as verification of your clearance.

Your next police clearance will be due on 14 February 2015 or earlier as may be requested at the discretion of the organisation for whom you work or volunteer.

For any further enquiries in relation to this, please contact Anne-Marie Hogan on 8301 6173 or [receptionpcu@oca.catholic.edu.au](mailto:receptionpcu@oca.catholic.edu.au).

Yours sincerely,

 Anne-Marie Hogan  
Operations Supervisor, Police Check Unit  
Catholic Archdiocese Of Adelaide

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## 5. Ethics Approval from the Catholic Education Centre



Catholic Education Centre  
110 College Street, Melbourne, SA 5001  
PO Box 179, Torrenville Place, South Australia 5011  
Telephone: 08 8201 5600  
Facsimile: 08 8201 5611  
M03 41 4 5021 5600  
Email: [director@catholic.edu.au](mailto:director@catholic.edu.au)  
[www.cesa.catholic.edu.au](http://www.cesa.catholic.edu.au)

---

Ms Judith Thomas  
Lecturer in Language Methodology & Curriculum  
School of Education  
The University of Adelaide  
SA 5005

Dear Ms Thomas

Thank you for your email correspondence in which you seek permission to conduct research in Catholic secondary schools in connection with the study *How do Sudanese students describe their own learning procedures in their home context? How do Sudanese students describe their own learning procedures in the South Australian context?* I understand the research will involve interviews with Sudanese students and that you will seek the advice of Principals as to the most convenient time for these to be held.

In the normal course, permission of the Principal of each school in which you wish to conduct research is required. Research in Catholic schools is granted on the basis that individual students, schools and the Catholic sector itself is not specifically identified in published research data and conclusions.

Approval is also contingent upon the following conditions, i.e. that:

- the permission of parents has been obtained
- the research complies with the ethics proposal of the University
- the research complies with any provisions under the Privacy Act that may require adherence by you as researcher in gathering and reporting data
- no comparison between schooling sectors is made
- the researcher will be interviewing students under the supervision of an authorised school employee
- sector requirements relating to child protection and police checks are met by researchers:
  - where researchers obtain information in relation to a student which suggests or indicates abuse, this information must be immediately conveyed to the Director of Catholic Education SA
  - all researchers and assistants, who in the course of the research interact in any way with students, are required to undertake a police check through the Archdiocese of Adelaide Police Check Unit.

Information with regard to obtaining police clearance can be accessed at the website address:  
[www.cesa.catholic.edu.au](http://www.cesa.catholic.edu.au)

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## 6. Ethics Approval from the Catholic Education Centre Continued

S p m

Researchers should forward a certified copy of their National Police Certificate, which has been issued within the last three months, to the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide Police Check Unit at the Catholic Education Office, PO Box 179, Torrensville Plaza SA 5031. The Police Check Unit will then post a clearance letter to the researcher. This letter should be provided to the Principal of each school.

I would appreciate an electronic copy of the final report for use within the sector, following the research being completed.

Please accept my very best wishes for the research process.

Yours sincerely

HELEN O'HIGGIN  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

17 January 2012

## Appendix C: Documents Related to Contacting Participants

### 1. Advertisement Invitation to Participate in a Research Study



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
FACULTY OF THE PROFESSIONS

JUDITH THOMAS  
LECTURER IN LANGUAGE METHODOLOGY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE  
SA 5005  
AUSTRALIA

TELEPHONE +61 8 8313 7571  
FACSIMILE +61 8 8313 3604  
Judith.thomas@adelaide.edu.au  
CRICOS Provider Number 00123M

#### ADVERTISEMENT/INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Sudanese students enrolled in secondary schools in South Australia are being sought to participate in a research study currently in progress in the School of Education at the University of Adelaide.

This research is being conducted as part of a PhD dissertation which focuses on the educational and cultural challenges of Sudanese secondary students. The students will be interviewed about their learning including difficulties and successes in school.

Participation takes approximately up to 1 hour.

This invitation has been sent out on behalf of the University of Adelaide. Personal and home details of participants would not be passed on to researchers.

The University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education and Children's Services have approved this study.

If you are interested about this study, and if you are willing to participate, please contact

Judith. S.Thomas at [Judith.thomas@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:Judith.thomas@adelaide.edu.au)

Thank you.

## 2. Assent Form for Students

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
FACULTY OF THE PROFESSIONS

JUDITH THOMAS  
LECTURER IN LANGUAGE METHODOLOGY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE  
SA 5005, AUSTRALIA

Telephone +61(0) 8 8313 7571  
facsimile +61 (0)8 8313 3604  
Judith.thomas@adelaide.edu.au  
CRICOS Provider Number 00123M



### ASSENT FORM

**"Sudanese Narratives of Secondary School Literacies in South Australia"**

I agree to be in a study about the learning challenges I faced in my country of origin and that I now face in school. This study was explained to my (mother/father/parents /guardian) and (she/he/they) said that I could be in it. The only people who will know about what I say and do in the study will be the people in charge of the study.

In the study I will be asked questions about my learning in Sudan, South Australia, my school and my family. I will also be asked questions about how I view my learning overall from past to present.

Writing my name on this page means that the page was read (by me/to me) and that I agree to be in the study. I know what will happen. If I decide to quit the study, all I have to do is tell the person in charge.

\_\_\_\_\_

Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name

### 3. Information Sheet for the Student



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
FACULTY OF THE PROFESSIONS

JUDITH THOMAS  
LECTURER IN LANGUAGE METHODOLOGY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE  
SA, 5005  
AUSTRALIA

TELEPHONE +61 8 8313 7571  
FACSIMILE +61 8 8313 2804  
Judith.Thomas@adelaide.edu.au  
CRICOS Provider Number 00123M

#### Information Sheet for the Student

**"Sudanese Narratives of Secondary School Literacies in South Australia?"**

Dear Student,

My name is Judith Thomas and I am currently undertaking research at various secondary schools in South Australia. I am under the supervision of Dr. Margaret Secombe and Dr. Nina Maaddad of the School of Education, University of Adelaide. The project is entitled "Sudanese Narratives of Secondary School Literacies in South Australia?"

The purpose of the research is to investigate the descriptions of the educational challenges of Sudanese students in their country of origin as well as in the South Australian school context. It aims to do the following:

- (1) To determine the forms and expressions of literacy prior to Sudanese students coming to Australia.
- (2) To explore individual Sudanese students' perceptions of their own preferred ways of learning.
- (3) To ascertain if there are commonalities across the sample in terms of preferred ways of learning associated with academic success.
- (4) To explore Sudanese students' perspectives on Secondary Education in SA in South Australia through their language learning narratives.

The study will provide an insight into the learning of Sudanese students in secondary schools in South Australia. This understanding can inform the parents, the teachers and DECD, and the Sudanese community groups to enable or help them to create support programs for Sudanese students or strengthen existing ones.

## Information for the Student Continued

### **What will be required of you as student respondent?**

Willingness to share experiences in an interview that may last for about 30 to 60 minutes depending on your comfort.

### **What are the benefits of the study to you as respondent?**

This is an opportunity for you to share experiences that are otherwise taken for granted. You can have a voice in this research so that that people can understand your learning successes and challenges as a Sudanese student in South Australia.

However, your involvement may not be of any benefit to you.

### **Will this interview affect teaching and learning time?**

To ensure that no school activities will be affected, arrangements for interview will be done based on your convenience.

### **Consent Form**

Participation is completely voluntary. You are not going to be evaluated in this research. Participation or non-participation will not affect your academic progress in any way. If the questions upset you, you can talk with the school counselling services. You can withdraw at any time.

Please read the consent form carefully and sign if you want to participate in the study.

Please hand over the second copy of the consent form to Judith Thomas.

### **Anonymity and confidentiality**

This interview will be audio recorded and your identity will remain anonymous throughout this project. Confidentiality of all your responses is assured.

### **Contacts for information on the project**

If you have any questions about this project please contact Ms Judith Thomas, the researcher by email or phone as on above letterhead. If you wish to speak with an independent person about the manner in which this research is being conducted or to make a complaint please telephone the HREC Secretariat on +61 8 8303 6028 or email: [recu@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:recu@adelaide.edu.au).

Thank you for considering participating in this research project.

*This research has been approved by the Department of Education and Children's Service and the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee.*

## 4. DECD Information Sheet for the Principal



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
FACULTY OF THE PROFESSIONS

JUDITH THOMAS  
LECTURER IN LANGUAGE METHODOLOGY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE  
SA 5005  
AUSTRALIA

TELEPHONE 481 8 8213 7571  
FACSIMILE 481 8 8213 3804  
Judith.Thomas@adelaide.edu.au  
CRICOS Provider Number 00123M

Date-----

Dear-----[Director/Principal of School]

My name is Judith Thomas and I am currently undertaking research at various secondary schools in South Australia. I am under the supervision of **Dr. Margaret Secombe** and **Dr. Nina Moadad** of the School of Education, University of Adelaide. The project is entitled "Sudanese Narratives of Secondary School Literacies in South Australia?"

The purpose of the research is to investigate the descriptions of the educational challenges of Sudanese students in their country of origin as well as in the South Australian school context. It aims to do the following:

- (1) To determine the forms and expressions of literacy prior to Sudanese students coming to Australia.
- (2) To explore individual Sudanese students' perceptions of their own preferred ways of learning.
- (3) To ascertain if there are commonalities across the sample in terms of preferred ways of learning associated with academic success.
- (4) To explore Sudanese students' / perspectives on Secondary Education in SA in South Australia through their language learning narratives.

The study will provide an insight into the learning of Sudanese students in secondary schools in South Australia. This understanding can inform the parents, the teachers and DECD, and the Sudanese community groups to enable or help them to create support programs for Sudanese students or strengthen existing ones.

For this reason, may I request to conduct interviews with your Sudanese students on behalf of the University of Adelaide. The personal contact and address details of the participants would be protected and would remain anonymous and would not be passed on to the researchers. To facilitate this I would request that you distribute the information sheets and consent forms on my behalf. Their participation in the interview takes approximately 1 hour depending on their comfort.

The University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Education and Children's Service have approved this study.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely yours,  
Judith. S. Thomas.



5. Standard Consent Form for Participants in a Research Project



HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**STANDARD CONSENT FORM  
FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE PARTICIPANTS IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

1. I Wynn ..... (please print name)  
consent to take part in the research project entitled:  
.....

2. I acknowledge that I have read the attached Information Sheet entitled:  
.....

3. I have had the project, so far as it affects me, fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. My consent is given freely.

4. I have been given the opportunity to have a member of my family or a friend present while the project was explained to me.

5. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.

6. I am aware that I should retain a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the attached Information Sheet.

7. I agree to the interview being audio recorded. (please tick)   
.....  
(signature) (date)

**WITNESS**

I have described to Wynn ..... (name of subject)  
the nature of the research to be carried out. In my opinion she/he understood the explanation.

Status in Project: .....

Name: .....

.....  
(signature) (date)

**Appendix D: Participants' Concrete Background Facts and Group Membership**

**IN SOUTHERN SUDAN**

**IN ADELAIDE**

Participants *	Gender	School Year Level	Year of Arrival	Family	Community	Schools	Religious Groups	Family	Other Groups	Schools	Religious Groups
				M=mother F=father S=siblings E=extended family	D=Dinka spkng A=Arabic spkng R=Refugee camp	S= local school B=boarding school E=school in Egypt	C=church M=mosque	M=mother F=father S=siblings E=extended family Ma=married	SC= Sudanese Community S=sport	Ca=catholic G=govt # GS= govt specialised## I=indept### E=ethnic	C=church M=mosque
TEACHER											
TM1	M	n/a	1998	M,F,S,E	D,A,R	S	n/a	E	SC	GS/G	n/a
TM2	M	n/a	2004	E	D,R	S	n/a	Ma	SC	E	n/a
STUDENT											
NF1*	F	12	2003	M,F,S,E	D,R	n/a	C	M,S,E	n/a	Ca	n/a
NM2*	M	12	2005	M,F,S,E	D,A,R	S	C	M,S,E	SC	Ca	C
NM3	M	12	2004	M,F,S,E	D,A,R	S	C	M,S,E	n/a	Ca	n/a
NM4	M	12	2003	M,F,S,E	D,A,R	S	C	M, F,S,E	SC	Ca	C
LM1	M	12	2000	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C	M,F,S,E	SC	GS/Ca	M
LM2	M	12	2004	F,E	A,R	E	M	M,S	n/a	GS/G	n/a
LF3	F	12	2008	M,E	R	S	C	S	n/a	GS/G	n/a
LF4	F	12	2003	M,F,S,E	R	S	n/a	M,S,E	n/a	GS/Ca	n/a

LF5	F	12	2005	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	n/a		M,S,E	SC	GS/Ca	n/a
LM6	M	12	2008	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C		M,S,E	S	GS/Ca	n/a
LF7	F	12	2004	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C		M,S,E	SC	GS/Ca	n/a
LM8	M	10	2007	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C		M,S,E	SC	GS/I	n/a
LF9	F	12	2007	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	n/a		M,S,E	n/a	GS/Ca	n/a
LF10	F	12	2001	M,F,S,E	D,A,R	S	C		M,S,E	SC	GS/Ca	C
LM11	M	9	2004	M,F,S,E	D, A,R	S	C		S	n/a	GS/G	C
LF12	F	10	2004	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C		M,S,E	SC	GS/Ca	n/a
LF13	F	11	2007	M,F,S,E	D, R	B	C		M,S,E	n/a	GS/G	n/a
LF14	F	11	2004	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C		M,S,E	n/a	GS/Ca	n/a
LF15	F	11	2006	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C		M,S,E	n/a	GS/I	n/a
TOTALS												
Teachers: 2M	Student s: 8M & 11F	Yr 9:1  Yr10:2  Yr11:3	1993- 2000: 2  2001- 2003: 4  2004- 2006:	M,F,S,E=18  M,E=1  F,E=1	D= 21  A=7  R= 21	S=18  B=1  E=1	C= 15  M=1  N/A=5		M, F,S,E=2  MSE=14  MS=1  S=2	SC=10  S=1  N/A=10	GS/G=5  GS/Ca=9  GS/I- 2	C=4  M=1  N/A=16

		Yr12: 13	10  2007- 2010: 5	E=1		N/A=1			E=1  Ma=1		C=4  E=1	
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**\*An F in the identification number indicates a female, and an M, a male participant. Govt #= government school; GS##= government specialised school of languages and Indept###= Independent school.**

**Appendix E:** Tables from Chapter 5

**Table 5.1 Participants' Concrete Facts on Group Membership- IN SOUTHERN SUDAN**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Family</b> M=mother F=father S=siblings E=extended family	<b>Community</b> D=Dinka-spknng A=Arabic-spknng R=Refugee camp(usually limited English & Swahili)	<b>Schools</b> S= local school B=boarding school E=school in Egypt	<b>Religious Groups</b> C=church M=mosque
<b>TEACHERS</b>				
TM1	M,F,S,E	D,A,R	S	n/a
TM2	E	D,R	S	n/a
<b>STUDENTS</b>				
NF1	M,F,S,E	D,R	n/a	C
NM2	M,F,S,E	D,A,R	S	C
NM3	M,F,S,E	D,A,R	S	C
NM4	M,F,S,E	D,A,R	S	C
LM1	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C
LM2	F,E	A,R	E	M
LF3	M,E	R	S	C
LF4	M,F,S,E	R	S	n/a
LF5	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	n/a
LM6	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C
LF7	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C
LM8	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C
LF9	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	n/a
LF10	M,F,S,E	D,A, R	S	C
LM11	M,F,S,E	D, A, R	S	C
LF12	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C
LF13	M,F,S,E	D, R	B	C
LF14	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C
LF15	M,F,S,E	D,R	S	C
<b>TOTALS</b>	M,F,S,E=18 M,E=1 F,E=1 E=1	D= 21 A=7 R= 21	S=18 B=1 E=1 N/A=1	C= 15 M=1 N/A=5

\*An F in the identification number indicates a female, and an M, a male participant.

**Table 5.2 Participants Describing Family Patterns in Southern Sudan**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total
1. Family with 2 parents, children & extended family	NM4 NF1	LM1 LF4 LM6 LF7 LM11 LF10 LM12 LF13 LF14	TM1	12/21
2. Single parent with children & Extended Family	NM2 NM3	LM2 LF3 LM8 LF9	0	6/21
3. Extended family in parental roles	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF5 LM6 LF9 LM8 LF12 LM11 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	16/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 5.3 Participants Describing Oral Traditions of Learning in the Family in Southern Sudan**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total
1a. Oral traditions of Learning				
Speaking, telling & visualisation	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM6 LM11  LF3 LF4 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13	TM1  TM2	14/21
Showing, observing, modelling & 'hands-on'	NM2 NF1 NM4	LM2 LM6  LF3 LF7 LF4 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13	TM1  TM2	14/21
Role models	NM3 NF1 NM4	LM11 LM6  LF3 LF5 LF9 LF10 LF13 LF15	TM1	12/21
Memory & repetition	NM3 NF1 NM4	LM1 LF4 LM6 LF5 LM11 LF7 LF10 LF12 LF13	TM1  TM2	14/21

1b. Content: Stories					
Family history	NM3 NF1 NM4	LM2 LM8 LM11	LF4 LF5 LF9 LF12 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	14/21
Life values & consequences	NM3 NF1 NM4	LM1 LM6	LF9 LF10 LF12	TM1	9/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 5.4 Participants Describing Cultural Learning through the Family in Southern Sudan**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total	
1a. Moral Values					
Nurturing	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM6	LF4 LF5 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	14/21
Sharing	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM8 LM11	LF4 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1	14/21
Responsibilities	NM2 NF1 NM4	LM1 LM6 LM11	LF5 LF9 LF10 LF13	TM1	11/21
Gender roles discussed	NM2 NF1 NM4	LM2 LM6 LM11	LF3 LF12	TM1	9/21
Fear & danger eg animals and resilience in face of war	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM2 LM8 LF9	LF7	TM1 TM2	10/21
Discipline/expectations	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13	TM1 TM2	16/21
Wisdom	NM2 NF1		LF5	TM1	4/21
1b. Practical Skills including basic home literacy					
Basic home writing & reading	NM3 NF1	LM2	LF5	TM1	6/21

	NM4				
Domestic eg making fire, cleaning, caring for younger siblings	NM2 NF1	LM8	LF7 LF10 LF14	TM1	7/21
Agricultural	NM2 NM3	LM1	LF14	TM2	5/21
Counting	NM3	0		0	1/21
Business skills	NM2		LF5	0	2/21
1c. Creative Arts					
Music	NM3	LM15		TM2	3/21
Dance	0		LF4 LF10	0	2/21
Art & drawing	NM3 NF1	LM8	LF15	0	4/21
Making huts & objects	NM3 NF1 NM4	LM2 LM6		0	5/21
Making toys	NM3	LM2		0	2/21
1d. Physical Activity					
Sport	NM2 NM3 NM4	LM6 LM8 LM11		0	6/21
Games	NM4 NF1	LM8	LF15	0	4/21
Exploring	NM3 NM4	LM8		0	3/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 5.5 Participants Describing Language Learning through the Family in Southern Sudan**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total
Languages				
Dinka	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM6 LF9 LM8 LF10 LM11 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1	14/21
English	NM3 NF1 NM4	LF7	0	4/21
Swahili	0	LF3 LF9 LF10 LF12	0	4/21
Arabic	NM4	LM6	0	2/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers



**Table 5.6 Participants Describing Language Learning in Various Social Groups, Apart from the Home, in Southern Sudan**

Languages	'School'	Church	Wider Community	Refugee Camp	Total
Dinka	NM4 LF5 TM1 LF9 TM2 LF10	NM2 LF14 NM3 NM4	0	LF10	*P=9 *C=11
English	NM2 NM3 NM4  LF7 LM2 LF13 LM6 LF14 LM8  TM1	LF7 LF14	0	LF10 LF14	P=11 C=14
Arabic	LM2 LF10 LM11	NM2 NM3	NM4-Egypt	LF10	P= 6 C=7
Swahili	LF9 LF10 LM6 LF12 LF13	0	0	NM3 LF3 LM6	P=7 C=8

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

\*The citations (C) are greater than the mention of participants (P) because some mentioned learning the language concerned in more than one social group.

**Table 5.7 Participants Describing Religious Meanings in Southern Sudan**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total
Religion mentioned	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF3 LM2 LF7 LM6 LF10 LM8 LF12 LM11 LF13 LF14 LF15	TMI TM2	18/21
Christian	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF3 LM6 LF7 LM8 LF10 LM11 LF12 LF15	TMI TM2	15/21
Muslim	0	LM2	0	1/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 5.8 Participants Describing Educational Meanings in Southern Sudan**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total
School Attendance	NM2 NM3 NM4	LM2 LF3 LM6 LF4 LM8 LF5 LM11 LF7 LF12 LF13 LF14	TM1 TM2	16/21
Fragmented learning to read, copy letters of the alphabet/ write in English/Swahili. 'In school'	NM3 NM4	LM6 LF3 LF4 LM8 LF12 LF13	TM1	9/21
School homework	NM3	LF5	TM1	3/21
Learning songs/hymns in class	0	LF12 LF13	TM1	3/21
Learning a 'language' purposefully	NM2(English) NM3 (English) NM4 (English)	LM2(English, Arabic) LF3(Swahili) LM11(Arabic) LF7,LF14 (English)	TM1(Dinka, English) TM2 (Dinka)	10/21
Competing in maths	0	LF4		1/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 5.9 Participants Describing Family and Community Identity in Southern Sudan**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total
1.Identity in the Family	NM2 NF1 NM3	LM1 LF3 LM2 LF4 LM6 LF5 LM8 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF14	TMI	16/21
2. Identity in the Extended Family	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF5 LM6 LF9 LM8 LF12 LM11 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	16/21

3. Cultural Celebrations (including Food) and Identity & the Community	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF4 LM8 LF5 LM11 LF7 LF9 LF12 LF14 LF15	TMI TM2	16/21
4. Names & Identity	NM4	0	TM1	2/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Appendix F:** Tables from Chapter 6

**Table 6.1 Participants' Concrete Facts on Group Membership-IN ADELAIDE**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Family</b> M=mother; F=father; S=siblings; E=extended family; Ma=Married	<b>Other Groups</b> SC=South Sudanese Community S=Sport	<b>Schools</b> Ca=catholic; G=govt#; GS=govt specialised##;I=indpt###;E=ethnic	<b>Religious Groups</b> C=church M=mosque
<b>TEACHER</b>				
TM1	E	SC	GS	n/a
TM2	Ma	SC	E	n/a
<b>STUDENT</b>				
NF1*	M,S,E	n/a	Ca	n/a
NM2*	M,S,E	SC	Ca	C
NM3	M,S,E	n/a	Ca	n/a
NM4	M, F,S,E	SC	Ca	C
LM1	M,F,S,E	SC	GS/Ca	M
LM2	M,S	n/a	GS/G	n/a
LF3	S	n/a	GS/G	n/a
LF4	M,S,E	n/a	GS/Ca	n/a
LF5	M,S,E	SC	GS/Ca	n/a
LM6	M,S,E	S	GS/Ca	n/a
LF7	M,S,E	SC	GS/Ca	n/a
LM8	M,S,E	SC	GS/I	n/a
LF9	M,S,E	n/a	GS/Ca	n/a
LF10	M,S,E	SC	GS/Ca	C
LM11	S	n/a	GS/G	C
LF12	M,S,E	SC	GS/Ca	n/a
LF13	M,S,E	n/a	GS/G	n/a
LF14	M,S,E	n/a	GS/Ca	n/a
LF15	M,S,E	n/a	GS/I	n/a

\*An F in the identification number indicates a female, and an M, a male participant. . Govt #= government school; GS##= government specialised school of languages and indpt###= independent school.

**Table 6.2 Participants Describing School Patterns in Adelaide**

<b>Codes &amp; Numbers</b>	<b>NCC</b>	<b>SOL</b>	<b>Ts</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.School				
Welcome or otherwise	NM2    NF1 NM4	LF3 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF15	0	8/21
School Mentor Group in the Catholic College	NM3	0	n/a	1/4
After School Homework Club in the Catholic College	NM3    NF1 NM4	LF12* LF13 LF14**	0	6/21
School Counsellors	NM3	LF14**	TM1 TM2	4/21
School uniform	0	LF5 LF12 LF13 LF14	0	4/21
Teachers	NM2    NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1    LF3 LM2    LF4 LM6    LF5 LM8    LF7 LM11   LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21
Students	NM2    NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1    LF3 LM2    LF4 LM6    LF5 LM8    LF7 LM11   LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21
Friends/resources at school	NM3    NF1 NM4	LM1	0	4/21

School sport	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM6	LF3 LF4	0	8/21
2.Outside school						
School peers as friends	NM3		0		0	1/21
Community sport			LM6			1/21
Sporting clubs	0		LM11		0	1/21
Part time workplaces	NM2			LF4	0	2/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

LF12\* = current student at both the Catholic College and SOL after school; LF14 \*\*= former student at the Catholic College and a younger sister of LF12.

**Table 6.3 Participants Describing Language Learning and the School in Adelaide**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total	
1.Languages					
English/ESL	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1  LM11  LF3 LF7 LF10 LF13	LF5 LF9 LF12 LF15	0	13/21
2.Learning other languages					
Italian	NM3 NM4	LM1	LF4 LF7 LF12	0	6/21
Greek and Spanish	NM4	0		0	1/21
Japanese	0	LM11	LF7	0	2/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 6.4 Participants Describing Religious Meanings in Adelaide**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total
Religion or Church mentioned	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM2 LF10 LM11	0	7/21
Christian	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM11 LF10	0	6/21
Muslim	0	LM2	0	1/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 6.5 Participants Describing Formal School Learning in Adelaide**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total
1.School Styles of Teaching	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF3 LM2 LF4 LM6 LF5 LM8 LF7 LM11 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21
Teachers	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF3 LM2 LF4 LM6 LF5 LM8 LF7 LM11 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21
Visibility issues: including 'feeling different' in school and with peers in general	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF3 LM2 LF4 LM6 LF5 LM8 LF7 LM11 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21

Discipline in Schools	NM3 NM4		LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF13 LF15	TM1 TM2	16/21
2.School Styles of Learning						
Teachers	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21
Students	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21
3.Specific subjects						
English-spelling, drafting, oral presentations	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1	LF3 LF7 LF9	0	8/21
Class debating	0			LF13	0	1/21
Maths	NM2 NM3	NF1	LM1 LM2	LF3 LF4 LF10 LF13 LF15	0	10/21
Religion	0		LM6	LF7 LF15	0	3/21
Research project	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM6	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF14 LF15	0	11/21
Economics	0		LM1		0	1/21
IPP	0			LF4	0	1/21
Business studies	0		LM1		0	1/21
Science	NM3	NF1	LM8 LM11	LF4	0	5/21
Physics	0		LM11		0	1/21
Food & hospitality	0			LF3 LF7 LF14	0	3/21
Dance	0			LF10 LF13	0	2/21
Music	NM3			LF3	0	2/21



Performing arts(drama)	0		LF15	0	1/21	
difficulties – Experiences	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21
Art & photography		NF1	LM8 LM11	LF14	0	4/21
Woodwork	NM4			LF14	0	2/21
Computing & laptop difficulties discussed under school difficulties	NM2 NM3		0		0	2/21
Psychology	NM4			LF14	0	2/21
Legal studies	NM4		0		0	1/21
History	0		LM11	LF7 LF15	0	3/21
Geography	0		LM11		0	1/21
Classical studies	0			LF10	0	1/21
Biology	NM4		LM6 LM8		0	3/21
Physical Education (PE)	0		LM1 LM8	LF15	0	3/21
Outdoor Education	NM4		0		0	1/21
Skills learnt at school and Self-reflections on relationships with teachers	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF10 LF13 LF14	TM1 TM2	16/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 6.6 Participants Describing Identity in Adelaide**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total		
1.Identity in Schools & aspirations						
Visibility issues in school	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21

Teachers	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF10 LF12 LF13	TM1 TM2	17/21
Peers in school	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF9 LF10 LF14 LF15	n/a	16/21
School subjects	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	0	19/21
Languages- English & other languages	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF15	0	15/21
School sport	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM6	LF4	0	7/21
School organisation and structure	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM11		TM1	6/21
2.Identity & religion	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM2 LM11	LF10	0	7/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Appendix G: Tables from Chapter 7**

**Table 7.1 Participants Describing Family Patterns in Adelaide**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total
1. Family with two parents & children	NM4	LM1	TM2	3/21
2. Single parent with children & Extended Family	NM2 NF1 NM3	LM2 LF4 LM6 LF5 LM8 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1	16/21
3. Siblings only	0	LM11 LF3	0	2/21
5. Extended family in parental roles	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF4 LM6 LF5 LM8 LF9 LM11 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM2	16/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 7.2 Participants Describing Cultural Learning through the Family in Adelaide**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total
1a. Moral Values				
Nurturing	NM3	0	TM1 TM2	3/21
Responsibilities	NM3	LM6	TM1 TM2	4/21
Gender roles (reversal)	NF1	LM1	0	2/21
Role models	NM3	LM1 LF3 LM8 LF5 LM11	TM1 TM2	8/21
Practical advice & adaptability	NF1	LM6	TM1 TM2	4/21
Discipline/freedom	NM3 NF1 NM4	LM1 LF4 LM2 LF5 LM6 LF7 LM8	TM1	11/21

Wisdom; motivation and developing a sense of 'character and spirit'	NM2 NF1 NM3	LM1 LM8	LF4 LF5	TM1 TM2	9/21
1b. Practical Skills including school work & literacy					
Writing & reading	NM4 NF1	0		0	2/21
School homework	NM3	LM1 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF9	0	6/21
Languages	NM3 LF1	LM1	LF5	TM1 TM2	6/21
1c. Creative Arts					
Art	NM3 NF1	0		0	2/21
Woodwork	NM4	0		0	1/21
'Hands-on learner'	NM4	LM2	LF3	0	3/21
1d. Physical Activity					
Memory of sport	NM3 NF1 NM4	LM6 LM11		0	5/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 7.3 Participants Describing Oral Traditions of Learning in the Family in Adelaide**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total	
1a. Oral traditions of Learning					
Speaking, telling & visualisation	0	LM1 LM6 LM8	LF4 LF7 LF10	0	6/21
Teaching & modelling	NF1	LM1	LF10	TM1 TM2	5/21
Role models	NM3	LM1 LM6	LF3 LF5 LF9	TM1 TM2	8/21
Memory & repetition	NM3 NF1	LM1		TM1 TM2	5/21
Practical learner- 'hands-on'	NM4	LM2 LM8	LF3 LF10	TM1	6/21
1b. Content: Stories					
Memory: names; stories & family history	NM4	LM11	LF5 LF7 LF12 LF13 LF15	TM1 TM2	9/21

Memory: life values; work hard; discipline; contributing & consequences	NM2	NF1	LM1	LF3	TM1	21/21
	NM3		LM2	LF4	TM2	
	NM4		LM6	LF5		
			LM8	LF7		
			LM11	LF9		
				LF10		
				LF12		
				LF13		
				LF14		
				LF15		

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 7.4 Participants Describing South Sudanese Community and Life in Adelaide**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total
Meetings	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1 LM8	LF3 LF15 TM2	8/21
Leadership	0		LF12 LF14 TM2	3/21
Cultural celebrations		NF1 LM2	LF7 LF13 LF15 0	5/21
Child Protection issues with schools, counsellors & teachers	NM3	LM2 LM8	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF13 LF14 LF15 TM1 TM2	11/21
Culture shock	NM4	LM11	LF12 LF14 TM2	5/21
Food	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1 LM2 LM8 LM11	LF7 LF9 LF13 LF15 TM2	12/21
Neighbours & houses	NM3 NM4	LM1 LM2 LM6	LF5 LF10 LF13 0	8/21
African sense of Time	NM2	LM6	0	2/21
Issue of visibility: public places, beaches, parks, transport-racism/feeling unsafe: animals, buses, trains & cars	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1 LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15 TM1 TM2	21/21
Government attitude & policies	NM2	LM11	TM2	3/21
Media	NM2 NM3	LM1 LM2	LF5 LF7 TM1 TM2	9/21

	NM4					
Friends	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM6 LM11	LF3 LF12	0	8/21
Playing community sport	0		LM6 LM11		0	2/21
Adaptation	NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM6 LM11	LF3 LF5 LF9 LF12 LF14 LF15	TM2	13/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 7.5 Participants Describing Religious Meanings in Adelaide**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total
Christian				
Catholic	NM4	0	0	1/21
Islamic	0	LM2	0	1/21
Other	NM2	LM11 LF10	0	3/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 7.6 Participants Describing Languages in the Family in Adelaide**

Codes & Numbers	NCC	SOL	Ts	Total	
Languages					
Dinka	NM2 NM4	NF1	LF3 LF9 LF10	TM1 TM2	8/21
Swahili	0	0	0	0/21	
Arabic	NM4	LM6	0	2/21	
English	NM4	NF1	0	0	2/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=Government specialised Languages co-educational secondary school; Ts= Teachers

**Table 7.7 Participants Describing Learning Formal Dinka in Adelaide**

<b>Codes &amp; Numbers</b>	<b>NCC</b>	<b>SOL</b>	<b>Ts</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.Government Language specialised school				
Dinka	0	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11 LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	17/21
2.Sudanese Ethnic School	0	LM8	LF9 TM2	3/21
Using Spoken Dinka	NM2 NM3 NM4 NF1	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11 LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21
Extending Skills in Dinka-Literacy	0	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11 LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	17/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

**Table 7.8 Participants Describing Adaptations to Schools in Adelaide**

<b>Codes &amp; Numbers</b>	<b>NCC</b>	<b>SOL</b>	<b>Ts</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.School Styles of Teaching	NM2 NM3 NM4 NF1	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11 LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF11 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21
Teachers	NM2 NM3 NF1	LM1	LF3 TM1 TM2	21/21

	NM4		LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF11 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15		
2.School Styles of Learning						
Teachers	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF11 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21
Students	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM2 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF11 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21
3.Skills learnt	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM6 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF5 LF10 LF13 LF14	TM1 TM2	16/21
4.Organisation and structure	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM11		TM1	6/21
5.Opportunities and freedom	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM6	LF3 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF15	TM1 TM2	12/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers



**Table 7.9 Participants Describing Identity and Aspirations in Adelaide**

<b>Codes &amp; Numbers</b>	<b>NCC</b>	<b>SOL</b>	<b>Ts</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.Identity in the Family	NM3 NM4	LM1 LF3 LM2 LF4 LF9	TM1 TM2	9/21
2.Identity in the Extended Family		LM8	TM1 TM2	3/21
3. Identity in the Cultural Celebrations	NM2 NF1	LF10 LF12	TM2	5/21
4.Identity in the Community		LM6 LF12 LM11	TM1 TM2	5/21
General lifestyle difficulties regarding visibility including food, 'time', housing, leisure, beaches, parks, cars, transport & feeling 'unsafe'	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF3 LM2 LF5 LM6 LF7 LM8 LF9 LM11 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM2	19/21
Friends-in the wider community	NM2 NM4	LM1 LF9 LM6 LM11	TM1 TM2	8/21
Friends/ 'resources' at school	NM3 NF1 NM4	LM1	0	4/21
Sport-community	0	LM6 LM11	0	2/21
Sport-school	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF3 LM6 LF4	0	8/21
Part- Time Work	NM2	LF4	0	2/21
Identity & Media	NM2 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF5 LM2 LF7	TM1 TM2	9/21
5.Identity & Dinka Language learning [dialects]	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM1 LF3 LM2 LF4 LM6 LF5 LM8 LF7 LM11 LF9 LF10 LF11 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	21/21
6. Identity & learning English/ESL at school	NM2 NF1 NM3 NM4	LM11 LF3 LF5 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF15	0	13/21
7.Identity & Religion	NM2	LM2 LF10	0	5/21

	NM4		LM11			
8. Future Academic & Personal Aspirations	NM2 NM3 NM4	NF1	LM1 LM2 LM8 LM11	LF3 LF4 LF7 LF9 LF10 LF12 LF13 LF14 LF15	TM1 TM2	19/21

**Key:** NCC=Catholic co-educational secondary College; SOL=specialised government school for languages; Ts= teachers

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