

**“A tree is not a tree without its  
leaves...”**

**Exploring Integration and Belonging among  
South Sudanese Australians in Canberra**

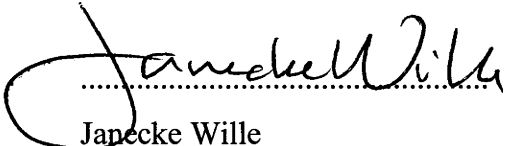
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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the  
Australian National University

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## Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text<sup>1</sup>.

  
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Janecke Wille

  
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<sup>1</sup> One peer reviewed publication has been published based on this PhD thesis: WILLE, J. 2011. Agency and Belonging: Southern Sudanese Former Refugees' Reflections of Life in Australia. *The Australasian Review of African Studies*, 32 (2), 80-100. A modified version of this article was published as a chapter in a book: WILLE, J. 2013. Agency and Belonging: Southern Sudanese Former Refugees' Reflections on Life in Australia. In: MARLOWE, J., HARRIS, A. & LYONS, T. (eds.) *South Sudanese diaspora in Australia and New Zealand : reconciling the past with the present* Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars. Neither the article nor the chapter are explicitly referenced in the main text.

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## Abstract

Increasingly people move across borders in attempts to resettle in unfamiliar environments. Often these people are refugees, fleeing familiar settings due to conflict, war, political persecution or environmental changes. In their new location, they are expected to integrate and develop a sense of belonging. This integration is mainly concerned with a two-way process of adapting and settling, with measurable outcomes such as citizenship, employment, political participation, housing and access to welfare (Ager and Strang, 2008:26; Atfield et al., 2007; Castles et al., 2002). Belonging is often discussed as the expected end-result of this integration process where a sense of shared values and understanding is cultivated (Vasta, 2009), a sense of home, community and acceptance is achieved (Hamaz and Vasta, 2009); and feelings of connectedness realised (Atfield et al., 2007).

This thesis argues that analyses of integration and belonging are intertwined, combining structural outcomes of an integration process and the emotional aspects of belonging. Integration is analysed as an *experience* for new arrivals, while belonging is analysed as the *affective state* of this experience. The research examines the experiences of South Sudanese Australians establishing their new lives in Canberra, Australia. Data was gathered through face-to-face interviews as well as observation and participation.

I use Ager and Strang's (2008) theoretical framework of integration where ten 'domains' are identified to analyse possible outcomes. Into this framework I introduce the concept of belonging as the emotional aspect, which involves the interplay between self, agency and structural positioning (Hamaz and Vasta, 2009).

The majority of participants' narratives revealed that integration and belonging occur when people feel a sense of equal opportunity in *quodidian* and *mutual* interactions with others. Experiences of recognition and mutuality emerged as essential for the development of a sense of belonging in the participants' narratives. These experiences differed among the participants, particularly with regard to their gendered position within social structures. Through emphasizing the co-constitution of integration and belonging, and the interdependence between self, agency and structural position, my data revealed how experiences of mutuality in social relations (social capital) can lead to a sense of common belonging in a new country.



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## Acronyms

AMEP –	Adult Migration English Program
CAP –	Comprehensive Peace Agreement (Sudan)
DIAC –	Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2007-2013)
DIBP –	Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2013-present
DIMA –	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (1996-2001)
ECCV –	Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
FECCA –	Federation of Ethnic Communities
IDP –	Internally Displaced Person
MARSS –	Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT
NGO –	Non-governmental organizations
SAIL –	Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning program
SHP –	Special Humanitarian Program
UNHCR –	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

*No man is an island,  
Entire of itself.  
Each is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.*

John Donne (1624)

## Conflict, Immigration and New Beginnings

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**S**tarting a new life in a different and unfamiliar country is a challenge in perseverance and adaptation. It tests one's longing for the well-known and sometimes fears of the new. Essential elements in this process are the new environment's willingness to welcome others and newcomers' own inclination to be welcomed. In the contemporary world travel has become more easily accessible, yet differences and injustice still prevail and many countries remain pervaded with fears of the unknown, with tighter control of borders and with increased ethnic and ideological conflict and hostilities (Vasta, 2009). In these environments there are people seeking a better life outside their home countries for themselves and their families, people fleeing war and persecution. These people arriving in new environments – either forced due to war, conflict and social unrest, or willingly as migrants seeking new opportunities – all bring with them their own cultures, their life experiences, life references and their ways of living.

People who have fled from war and refugee camps can experience resettlement as a particularly difficult transition. This form of forced migration continues to be a significant problem due to conflicts within and across borders. Forced migration can also lead to a fragmentation of communities and people's immediate social world (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007b; Westoby, 2008; Marx, 1990). People experience loss of family and wider social relations, disruption in education, work, daily life and livelihood strategies. Social, cultural and economic capital is often threatened, along with a disruption of people's notions of belonging to a place, a community and a society (Marlowe, 2009b; Sampson and Gifford, 2010). Yet, when arriving in a new country, people begin the endeavour of rebuilding their social world. For these people, the support and help they receive can be a life-changing experience. A part of this process is the development of a sense of belonging in a new place; establishing a sense of home and community and a sense of security. How this belonging becomes possible and what impacts on this process is the focus of this thesis. It examines factors in the host society

and among newcomers themselves that influence this sense of belonging. In exploring this often-used yet ill-defined concept of belonging it asks how newcomers themselves experience the development of belonging. I endeavour to shed light on aspects of people's lives that can encourage this development and at the same time look at social traits and individuals' resources that can hinder it.

I link this discussion of belonging to the community of former South Sudanese<sup>2</sup> refugees living in Canberra, Australia. In doing this, I aim to gain insight into their worries, hopes and practices in Australia. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, experiencing everyday life on the same terms as others in society was the essence of a successful settlement process.

First, however, I present some background to this study: why this topic was chosen; the context in Australia when the topic was chosen; and a brief overview of debates in Australia related to refugees, multiculturalism and integration. I then present the research questions and the structure of this thesis.

## **The path towards this study**

I am myself a migrant to Australia and had been here for four years when the local media increasingly focused on South Sudanese newcomers in 2007. After their arrival in the mid-1990s refugees from the now South Sudan did not experience more than the usual complications in their initial settlement in Australia. By 2007 however, a number of incidents caught the attention of the media and subsequently regular articles focused on the difficulties that South Sudanese had in 'integrating' and 'adapting to the Australian way of life' (Henry-Waring, 2008). This culminated in 2007 with the then Minister of Immigration, Kevin Andrews, suggesting that South Sudanese refugees in Australia were less capable than others of integrating into Australian society: "Some groups don't seem to be settling and adjusting to the Australian way of life as quickly as

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<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, I refer to South Sudan as the country where the people in this study come from in spite of the fact that when they fled their country, it was still 'Sudan'. I talk about South Sudan and South Sudanese when referring to the country and the people involved in this study, while at times I may refer to 'southern Sudan' if the context is related specifically to the time before the independence of South Sudan.

we would hope, and therefore it makes sense to [...] slow down the rate of intake from countries such as Sudan” (quoted in Hart and Maiden, 2007). Being a relative newcomer to Australia myself, I was struck by the South Sudanese’s experiences and shocked by this negative labelling. While not a refugee, and with no experience in the negative connotations that often follow the so-called refugee label (see for example Pupavac, 2006; Zetter, 1991), and also with a very different background from the South Sudanese arrivals, I nevertheless wanted to understand the settlement experiences of the South Sudanese men and women. Additionally, being in Canberra, a somewhat homogeneous city and with relatively few refugees from South Sudan and other African countries, I considered how it must feel like to arrive in a different country, often with no immediate family or established community. From here, I started to reflect on so-called ‘successful integration’: what does it mean for a person to integrate; when can one say that someone is ‘successfully integrated’?

In order to understand the migration process, it is necessary to focus on the changes in migrants’ lives, their own experiences and their understanding of these changes. Babacan (2010:17) emphasized this subjective component in her discussion of migration and belonging:

People create meaning out of the contexts in which events occur. Consequently an experience of migration always involves a strong subjective component of people’s lived experiences and their reactions to the new environment. Rapid social change results in both physical and psychological impacts that in turn determine the patterns of immigration and refugee adjustment to their new country. The impression created by the initial settlement experiences has a lasting impact on the settlement process.

In addressing these issues of experiences and adjustments, my interest moved towards understanding how these changes influence a settlement process. In doing this I began to explore belonging as *a sense of connectedness* through access to basic needs such as employment, housing, language and social relations. In the words of Buonfino (2007:6):

[B]elonging is a different language to culture, identity and rights. It is a basic frame of reference which relates to human need, and encompasses the many ways in which people find points of recognition in their lives.



Hamaz and Vasta (2009) suggested that this sense of belonging develops through the interplay between self, agency and structural position. In exploring this definition, I will argue that belonging develops through everyday activities and through the impact these various activities have on a subjective self and on agency. In looking at a specific integration process we can develop a sharpened understanding of how people settle successfully and develop this sense of belonging.

In this thesis, integration is understood as an *experience*, while belonging is *the affective state* that introduces an emotional aspect to an integration process. I argue for a two-way integration process involving both newcomers and the receiving society but ask what factors need to be present for this two-way process to occur. The questions asked in this thesis are related to this sense of belonging and how connectedness and belonging in a new country can develop. I argue that in order to understand both belonging and integration, the analysis must focus on how belonging develops within a number of domains vital for integration, including employment, housing, citizenship and safety (see also Fozdar and Hartley, 2012).

Political and policy debates shape the nature of different integration contexts, so it is beneficial to outline recent Australian immigration debates. This will be followed by an overview of current refugee trends in Australia, providing the context for looking more closely at how a particular immigrant group – South Sudanese refugees – was portrayed in the mid-2000s.

### ***The Australian context***

Post-war Australia is seen as a successful example of a multicultural society with high levels of social cohesion (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2013). Immigrants have been integrated into Australian society without major conflict, and the Australian government proudly claims to be one of the most successful multicultural societies in the world (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011b). According to the former Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), cultural diversity is one of the greatest strengths of Australia (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011b; Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 2003). Academic literature

supports these claims (Jupp, 1996; Lopez, 2000). Today, the “majority of migrants make a successful transition to life in Australia and make significant economic and social contributions to Australia” (Gray et al., 2012). This success is all the more remarkable given Australia’s historical legacy of the White Australia policy.

In spite of these positive contemporary characteristics there remains an ongoing public debate over immigration, multiculturalism and more recently, the arrival of asylum seekers. This debate subsides and flares up depending on proximity of elections. While the debate mainly concerns asylum seekers or ‘boat people’, and not necessarily the humanitarian entrants arriving through the Australian Humanitarian Program which are the focus of this study, this broader context is worthwhile noting due to the political heat the debate generates.

A series of global events has led to an intensifying of these local debates in both public and political discourse over the past decade. Episodes such as the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Bali bombings, London bombings as well as the Cronulla riots in Sydney, together with the more recent atrocity in Oslo, riots in Sweden and brutal killing of a soldier in the streets of London have amplified debates both in media and in the political arena concerning immigration. The concerns discussed relate to cultural diversity, integration, social cohesion, social harmony, as well as ‘national values’ (Fozdar and Hartley, 2013; Vasta, 2007).

In an analysis of the Australian media’s reporting of multiculturalism, Green, Richards and Bowd, (2006) noted how these recent events have increased the questioning of the worth of multiculturalism in the media. Additionally, they claimed that this scepticism towards multiculturalism has “raised the level of intolerance in society” (2006:4). This heightened the debate on the value of integration based on social cohesion, common identity and a sense of belonging (Humpage, 2003; McPherson, 2010; Wise, 2007). After the Tampa events in 2001 when a Norwegian vessel rescued 438 asylum seekers but were denied access into Australia, the 2001 election year produced a more punitive approach towards asylum seekers. The definite statement by the then Prime Minister John Howard (“We decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come”) marked a turning point in Australia’s history (Scanlon, 2006), where conservative commentators began to assertively question the role of multiculturalism.

After this incident, and following tighter border control as well as the US led war on terrorism, ethnic diversity and multiculturalism remained highly contested topics in Australia. In 2005, the then Treasurer Peter Costello warned that people intent on coming to Australia “who did not like Australian values and preferred a society that practiced Sharia law should go elsewhere” (Grattan, 2005). This view was repeated in a speech in Sydney in February 2006 in which Costello contrasted ‘mushy multiculturalism’ with Australian values such as “[L]oyalty, democracy, tolerance, the rule of law” (Costello, 2006). Remarks like this reinforced a divide between ‘us’ and a feared emacatured ‘other’.

According to Gale (2006), an environment emerged where “fear has become a central feature of both media reporting and contemporary politics in Australia” (see also Gale, 2004). In this environment of increased fear, Gale (2004) claimed that people started to question immigration and ‘the others’ coming to this country. The Government increasingly focused on the importance of social cohesion. One consequent question that this atmosphere provoked was whether social cohesion and ethnic diversity is possible under such circumstances.

Similar debates have been evident in the UK where various episodes of social unrest along with changing patterns of immigration have “brought the relationship between community cohesion and ethnic diversity to the forefront of public and political debate” (Letki, 2005:1). The growing diversity of immigrants in the UK has led to a governmental prioritization of the need for social cohesion and a shift away from the “longstanding promotion of multicultural race relations and the acceptance of ‘difference’” (Zetter et al., 2006:1). Zetter, Griffiths, Sigona, Flynn, Pasha and Beynon further noted that in the UK there had arisen:

...a concern that the new immigration (i.e. greater cultural, ethnic and religious plurality) jeopardises commonly held norms and values by which a nation such as Britain identifies itself. In turn these trends, it is suggested, undermines the assumed bases of social solidarity, identities and shared history by which citizenship and belonging are conferred. (Zetter et al., 2006:5)

The closely related question of trust and ethnic diversity was also raised by the US sociologist Robert Putnam. According to Putnam, the more diverse a community, “the

less likely were its inhabitants to trust anyone, from their next door neighbour to the local government” (quoted in Wilson, 2006). More divisive discussions on this topic were voiced by Huntington (2005) in *Who are we? The challenges to America's national identity*; by Kesler and Bloemraad (2010) in ‘Does immigration erode social capital?’; and by Uslaner (2011) in ‘Trust, Diversity, and Segregation in the United States and the United Kingdom’. These discussions have been echoed in Australia, both in the political landscape and in wider public debates. While my study does not focus on these wider debates on multiculturalism and social cohesion as such, they are an important context for any sense of belonging because they impact on personal and emotional commitments migrants make in this environment. The extent to which this ongoing criticism of diversity impacts on those labelled ‘the other’ is addressed in this thesis. Exploring such experiences of belonging in these contexts can add clarity to the forces that hinder or encourage a cohesive yet diverse society.

By mid-2013, as federal elections approached, ‘the boats’ issue resurfaced, with reports by then Foreign Affairs Minister Bob Carr stating that “the Rudd government is about to rewrite Australia's refugee assessment process, making it more ‘hard-edged’”. Carr believed that “the majority of people arriving by boat now are economic migrants, not genuine refugees” (Bachelard, 2013). This repeated refocusing on immigration vis à vis ‘boat people’, and questioning people’s ‘genuineness’, emphasizes the relevance of my initial question about the impact this kind of political discourse on the sense of belonging among immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers already in the country. Soutphommasane (2012) summed up the recent history of this issue:

For many years, there was a consensus in Australia that some matters should be placed beyond partisan contest. Questions of immigration were seen as too important to be determined by mere politics. These were the days when things such as the national interest still counted for something. When humanitarian issues weren't determined by cold calculations about political advantage. All this broke down in the 1990s. It began with some hardening of sentiments towards asylum seekers. The Keating Labor government in 1992 introduced mandatory detention, which was believed to serve as a deterrent to boat arrivals. Two subsequent developments, however, were most profound. The rise of Hansonism had a palpable effect on public attitudes. The ideological developments of the Howard years reinforced this. Hansonism was co-opted into a conservative populist nationalism. It became acceptable within mainstream debates to

politicise asylum seekers as part of a culture war fought over national identity.

In this thesis, I explore the degree to which the ongoing discussion over national identity, Australian values, and ‘the other’ as something to fear, impact on the lives of the South Sudanese men and women arriving in Australia. The question is: to what degree do public attitudes influence self and self-esteem and the establishment of significant social relations? The following sections contextualize this question within contemporary Australian cultural politics.

### *Australian Values and the Citizenship Test*

Criticism of the ‘Australian values’ debate (hinted at by politicians such as Andrews and Costello) has focused on how it promotes a language of exclusion rather than of inclusion (Clyne, 2007). It can create boundaries by isolating certain groups in society – boundaries between those who belong and those who do not. Others criticizing the language of ‘Australian values’ looked to the ill-defined nature of these Australian values: “The problem with trying to define Australian values or culture beyond democracy and the rule of law is that they are not necessarily agreed values” (Vliet, 2006:2).

In an effort to frame these Australian values, in 2006 the Federal government suggested the introduction of a citizenship test for new immigrants in Australia. The test would “apply to all new immigrants who apply to become Australian citizens after being in Australia for four years” (Howard quoted in *The Age*, 2006d). A discussion paper released by the government in 2006 as a response to public concern over the suggested test emphasised “the importance of commitment to the Australian way of life, as well as the need for immigrants to have basic English skills and an understanding of Australian values to fully participate in Australian society” (quoted in Bennett and Tait, 2008:77). The Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Testing) Bill 2007 was introduced in Parliament on 30 May 2007 and was passed for implementation in October 2007. Most applicants for citizenship must successfully complete this citizenship test before applying for Australian citizenship (DIAC, 2007).

The proposal of a citizenship test drew much criticism, especially from those representing refugees arriving from African countries, where the knowledge of the English language and level of formal education is generally low (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia [FECCA], 2006; Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria [ECCV], 2006). For instance, the ECCV (2006:2) noted how the citizenship test may create “social exclusion, resentment and undermine community harmony in Australia”. The ECCV stated that the conflict, war, terror and trauma many refugees have experienced would have disrupted their education and these applicants could have difficulties reaching a “sufficient standard to pass a formal citizenship test. Denying such people citizenship could be a breach of Australia’s international human rights obligations” (ECCV, 2006:2). Former Prime Minister John Howard deflected such criticism and claimed that the citizenship test was “about cohesion and integration, it's not about discrimination and exclusion” (Howard quoted in *The Age*, 2006c). Further criticism of the citizenship test, however, pointed towards the aspects of cohesion and integration, emphasizing “citizenship’s role in promoting a set of culturally limited Australian values...suggesting that the process had a singular vision of Australian cultural belonging and even assimilationist tendencies” (Voloder, 2011:112). Others suggested that the introduction of the citizenship test represented Howard’s “final move in his departure from multiculturalism” (Tate, 2009:97) and a redirection of “national identity away from inclusive multiculturalism to exclusive monoculturalism” (Fozdar and Spittles, 2010:143). With Labor winning Federal government in 2007, they responded to the criticism and undertook an independent review of the citizenship test, leading to changes and the introduction of an amended citizenship test in October 2009. The new test responded to critics from FECCA among others and accepted their main recommendations: “a) any citizenship test be based on the legal requirements of citizenship; b) an alternative pathway to citizenship be developed for refugees and disadvantaged or vulnerable migrants, and; c) that the English level of the test be returned to the legislatively required ‘Basic English’ rather than the higher English level that was introduced in 2007” (2009:2). This debate over the citizenship test exemplifies how ‘belonging’ can be implicated in political debate and public discourse. Looking at the concepts of belonging and connectedness through the citizenship test is an important element of the integration process analysed in this thesis.

## *Multiculturalism in Australia today*

The post-2001 discussions around social cohesion, ethnic diversity and citizenship redefined the politics of multiculturalism in Australia. John Howard argued that Australia had been “too obsessed with diversity” (expressed by Howard as ‘zealous multiculturalism’) and stressed the need to return to a focus on the “enduring values of the national character” (Levine and Stevens, 2007). A diverse society rather than a united society is problematic, according to Howard who preferred to focus on the need for a “cohesive, integrated Australian society” (Howard quoted in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2006b). According to Clyne (2007), both former Prime Minister John Howard and Andrew Robb, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs from January 2006 to January 2007, preferred to avoid the concept of multiculturalism altogether, and focused on ‘integration’ and ‘shared values’. Clyne (2007) argued that when integration and shared values are used *in contrast* to multiculturalism, “they take on a meaning similar to assimilation. Assimilation is the concept behind the citizenship test and the values debate”. Assimilation was the official goal of immigration during the White Australia policy, when values other than those derived from Britain were discouraged.

On 23 January 2007, the term ‘multiculturalism’ was officially withdrawn from the Department of Immigration. From being known as the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), the Department was rebadged as the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). Howard defended the new name, claiming the change represented what all Australians believed: that immigration should lead to citizenship. According to Howard, the change was “not designed to kick multiculturalism, it’s designed to better reflect the pathway to becoming an Australian inherent in a vibrant immigration program” (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2007). For others, however, this change of name was just “one symbolic act” towards a language of exclusion rather than inclusion (Clyne, 2007). Criticism from the opposition Labor Party included claims that it had been Howard’s wish for a long time to “scrap multiculturalism” (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2007). A change in government in 2007 was followed by the introduction of a revived multicultural policy in February 2011 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011). This new multicultural policy included four principles, emphasising how the Australian Government:

- celebrates and values the benefits of cultural diversity for all Australians;
- is committed to a just, inclusive and socially cohesive society where everyone can participate in the opportunities that Australia offers and where government services are responsive to the needs of Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- welcomes the economic, trade and investment benefits which arise from our successful multicultural nation and finally;
- will act to promote understanding and acceptance while responding to expressions of intolerance and discrimination with strength, and where necessary, with the force of the law. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011:5)

Although defined and implemented in different ways depending on national context, Vasta (2007) found two key principles within all multicultural policies: social equality and participation; and cultural recognition. Within the revived Australian multicultural policy, these principles can be found: cultural diversity; participation in the various social and cultural opportunities; understanding and acceptance of different cultures; as well as a strong focus on social cohesion: “Australia’s multicultural policy [...] responds to our cultural diversity and aims to strengthen social cohesion” (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011b:2).

The debates introduced above often employ the charged concepts of assimilation, integration and multiculturalism without supplying a clear definition. The definitions employed for this study are those introduced by Vasta (2007). Vasta (2007:4) defined ‘assimilation’ as the “process of complete absorption, through policies and programs of forced integration, based on the idea of a certain end-state where immigrants are fully absorbed into the norms and values of the receiving society”. Vasta (2007:4), noted, however, that this was a problematic definition as it did not “accommodate ‘difference’ adequately, and [that] the discriminatory structures of the receiving society that prevent integration are generally ignored”. Furthermore, this one-way approach to immigrant settlement expects immigrants to “discard their culture, traditions and language” (Castles et al., 2002:114).



'Integration', as Vasta pointed out, has two rather different definitions in contemporary debates. The first definition assumes integration to be the "process through which immigrants and refugees become part of the receiving society. Integration is often used in a normative way, to imply a one-way process of adaptation by newcomers to fit in with a dominant culture and way of life" (Vasta, 2007:5). While this definition resembles the intent behind assimilation, a second usage "refers to integration being a two-way process of adaptation, involving change in values, norms and behaviour for both newcomers and members of the existing society" (Vasta, 2007:5). This thesis refers to integration as a two-way process in discussing the settlement process.

The normative understanding of multiculturalism focuses on participation and recognition and respect of differences (cultural, religious, languages) and is more policy-oriented in its content rather than being concerned with the social process of settlement itself. Expanding multiculturalism through a focus on a two-way or mutual accommodation involves an "internalization of difference" where the "collective characteristics of inserted groups become accepted as distinctions within social positions and membership groups" (Vasta, 2009). Mutual accommodation, Vasta stressed, is one of "the main building blocks missing from current or earlier policies of multiculturalism or integration" (2007:26). Parekh has argued that multiculturalism suggests the "need for a common sense of belonging" (quoted in Vasta, 2007:26). This common belonging can be achieved by "developing 'a body of moral values which deserve the respect of all human beings'" (Parekh in Vasta, 2007:26-27).

According to Vasta (2007), the concept of 'social cohesion' is often confused with returning to a policy of assimilation, or rather 'integrationism', which according to McPherson (2010:547), remains "concerned with the adaptation by outsiders to local norms". As noted by Humpage (2003:2), the Coalition Government's focus after 2001 was on social cohesion "associated with belonging and inclusion based on shared values and norms" and reflected a notion of the need for outsiders to adapt to 'our' norms and values. Similar sentiments remained in debates during the subsequent Labour government where, according to McPherson, there was "conformance based immigration policies" and migrants and refugees were characterized as "problematic against dominant norms" (2010:547). This 'becoming like us' echoes a sense of integrationism rather than a mutual process of accommodation, or what Hage

(1998:139) referred to as the “multicultural Real: where diversity becomes part of the norm and where the definition and understanding of multiculturalism reflects a ‘we which is itself diverse’”. In the earlier statements by Costello, Andrews, and Howard, a two-way integration process tended to disappear and the emphasis was placed on changing the other to be like us. Andrews went further, not only singling out one specific group as different, but also emphasizing how this group was *less able to integrate*.

In this research, an approach to the issue of multiculturalism and integration will be taken through people’s own understandings of shared values in this process. This allows the possibility of imagining a genuinely two-way approach of integration, or what Hage call the multicultural Real. This element of the aforementioned debates tended to be underemphasized in public discourse.

### ***Recent trends in refugee intakes***

Despite increased border controls, conflicts, war and persecutions based on ethnicity, religion or ideologies persist. As a consequence, the number of refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) remains considerable. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2013b:2) estimated that in 2012:

...7.6 million people were newly displaced due to conflict or persecution, including 1.1 million new refugees - the highest number of new arrivals in one year since 1999. Another 6.5 million people were newly displaced within the borders of their countries – the second highest figure of the past ten years.

According to the UNHCR (2012:8), the number of asylum seekers in Australia and New Zealand grew by 36 per cent during 2012 over the previous year, from 11,800 to 16,100 claims.

As a signatory of the United Nations 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, “Australia shares responsibility for protecting these refugees and resolving refugee situations” (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011a).

While asylum seeker claims in Australia remain the focus of media attention, in this thesis refugees granted a visa through the Australian Humanitarian Program are the cohort examined. People granted a visa in Australia as part of this humanitarian program, are either onshore asylum seekers or overseas people through the offshore resettlement program. The latter comprises both the Refugee category and the Special Humanitarian Program Category (SHP). The refugee category refers to those who are “subject to persecution in their home country and who are in need of resettlement” (DIMA, 2006b:6) while the SHP program refers to “people outside their home country who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country” (DIMA, 2006b:6). An Australian citizen, permanent resident or eligible New Zealand citizen, or an organization based in Australia, must act as the proposer/sponsor for the SHP applicant. The onshore application “aims to provide options for people who wish to apply for protection (or asylum) after arrival in Australia” (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011a). As demonstrated in Table 1.1, the onshore humanitarian program grant has increased throughout the recent years while the SHP offshore grants have significantly declined. The refugee grants have been relatively stable since 2006-07. The decline in SHP visas was due to a reduced flow of refugee applications and increased demand for places in the Onshore Protection category (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2013a).

**Table 1.1: DIAC Humanitarian Program Figures (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011a; Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2013a)**

<b>Category</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>
<b>Refugee</b>	6022	6003	6004	6499	6003	5998	6004
<b>Special Humanitarian (offshore)</b>	6836	5183	4795	4511	3233	2973	714
<b>Onshore</b>	1272	1793	2131	2492	4534	4828	7041
<b>Temporary Humanitarian Concern</b>	14	38	84	5	-	-	
<b>Total</b>	14 144	13 017	13 014	13 507	13 770	13 799	13 759

The Onshore category includes protection visas and onshore humanitarian visa grants that are countable under the Humanitarian Program” (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2010-2011).

In 2005-06, the focus of the offshore Humanitarian Programme in Australia was on resettling persons from Africa, including the South Sudanese who are the focus of this thesis. These priorities reflected the then UNHCR priorities. However, in 2006 the Department of Immigration and Citizenship moved to decrease the numbers of people from African countries and shifted its focus towards refugees from South East Asia. This resulted in a decrease in the African intake from around 60 per cent in 2004-05 to around 50 per cent in 2006-07 (DIMA, 2006a). Further cuts in the African intakes followed in 2007-08 (Overington, 2007a).

Overington (2007b) claimed these cuts were a result of public discussions regarding the “lack of success” of the African program, relating to the media comments discussed earlier over the so-called difficulties South Sudanese refugees had in settling in Australia. The Federal government, however, explained the changes as “based on the advice of UNHCR – on annual consultations on the humanitarian program conducted by the minister, and on submissions from a whole range of community bodies but principally the Refugee Council of Australia” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007a:54). Reasons for these cuts in the African intake will not be assessed here. However, as part of this thesis, it can be hypothesised that a significant decrease of intake from a particular region still experiencing social strife can have a negative impact on people’s sense of belonging due to a heightened sense of lack of acceptance and support within the community.

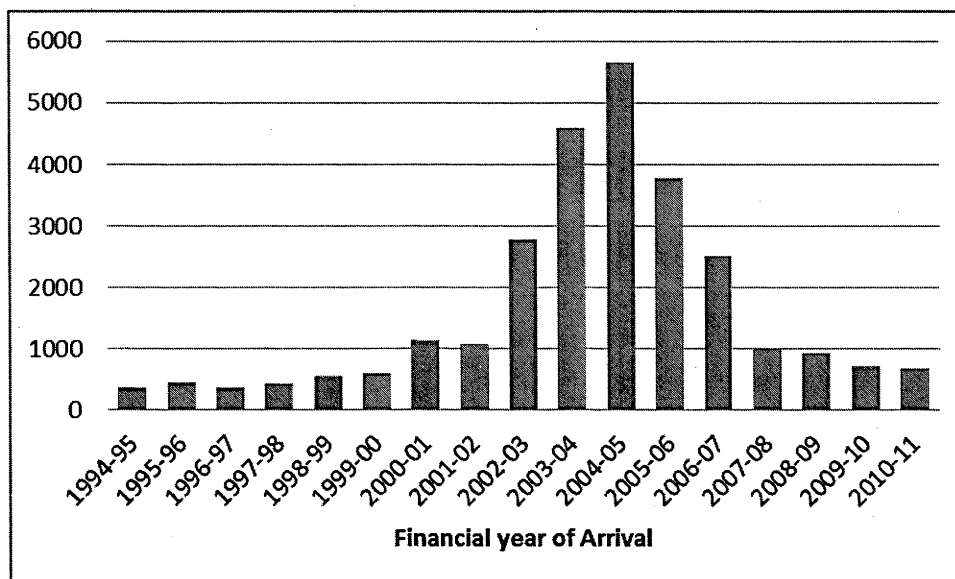
### ***South Sudanese in Australia***

As noted earlier, in the early 2000s, the fastest growing African group in Australia – and the one receiving most public attention – were refugees from South Sudan. More than 28,000 South Sudanese refugees arrived in Australia up to 2007 (Overington, 2007b). In 2007, after a peace agreement in Sudan, the country was still listed as the world’s most unstable country in social, economic and political terms (The Fund for Peace, 2007). Yet, the newfound peace and later independence for South Sudan in July 2011 did not significantly improve the living conditions for the population in the country. UNHCR continues to report of continuous conflict over resources:

Efforts to transform the country into a functional state have been beset by inter-communal violence, rebellions by militia groups and localized conflicts over land and natural resources. (UNHCR, 2013a)

As a result of these ongoing conflicts and internal problems, South Sudanese refugees in Australia are hesitant to return home and the number of South Sudanese refugees in Australia has not reduced.

**Figure 1.1: South Sudanese refugees arriving in Australia<sup>3</sup>**



In 2006 the Australian Census reported a total of 19,050 Sudanese-born in Australia, up by 287.7% since the 2001 Census (Hatoss and Huijser, 2010). As demonstrated in Figure 1.1, the Sudanese-born arrivals in Australia had grown substantially between 2002 and 2005, before the arrivals dramatically declined from 2006 to 2011 (Lucas et al., 2013). While the majority of new arrivals from South Sudan settled in the larger metropolitan areas of Melbourne and Sydney, 1.9% of the total Sudanese/South Sudanese in Australia are reported to be living in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). This research is concerned with the experiences of this South Sudanese group in Canberra.

Since the significantly drop in arrivals in 2005-06 there has been a steady decline in South Sudanese new arrivals in Australia. This recent decline in annual intake has,

<sup>3</sup> Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), 2006: Immigration Update 2005-2006, 2007.08, 2009-10, 2010-11.

according to Robinson (2013:12), “been a source of stress for the community and a challenge to successful settlement”.

In many cases refugees come from generations of fragmented families. Many Sudan- and South Sudan-born residents have cherished the dream of reuniting their family in Australia and have worked hard to save the money needed to sponsor family members. But they perceive that the door to fulfilling their dream is now closed.

By 2011-2012, both the total number of places in the offshore humanitarian program offered to Africans (20.1%), and the share of this allocated to Sudanese people, had dramatically declined. Sudanese were once the largest single group of recipients of offshore humanitarian visas: almost 6,000 entered Australia via the Humanitarian Program in 2004-5. In 2010-11 this number was 243, which represented only 2.7% of the quota. This decline is partly compensated for by family members of resettled refugees who enter Australia via the family stream of the voluntary migration program. However, this offers few opportunities for members of a wider family to be reunited. In 2011-2012, the quota was vastly oversubscribed, with the result that fewer than 10% of available visas were awarded to family members who were not the partner or parent of an Australian citizen. (Robinson, 2013:12)

Related to family reunion and fewer arrivals of family members that were not partner or parent is the migration policy of “numerically linking the offshore Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) and the Onshore Protection Program – a policy not replicated in any other country” and this has led to a reduction of “the availability of SHP places to its lowest level in nine years” (Refugee Council of Australia, 2011:7). According to the Refugee Council of Australia (ROCA), the “onshore and offshore components of Australia’s Refugee and Humanitarian Program have been numerically linked” since 1996. This means that

...every time an asylum seeker is recognised as a refugee and granted a Protection Visa, a place is deducted from the SHP. As a result of Australia receiving an increasing number of successful asylum applications over the past few years, SHP visa grants have declined dramatically from over 5,000 in 2007-08 to just 714 in 2011-12, with the number expected to fall further in 2012-13. At the same time, demand for SHP visa remains high, with more than 20,000 applications currently awaiting visa grants. As a result, waiting times for SHP visas

commonly stretch into years and many families remain separated indefinitely. (Refugee Council of Australia and Settlement Council of Australia, 2013:1)

The lack of extended families, together with the difficulties associated with being a relatively new group with limited knowledge of institutions, norms and structures (Robinson, 2013), form an important context for the analysis in this thesis. In particular, the research explores the impact from these conditions on the development of a sense of belonging. The analysis of the challenges faced by South Sudanese arrivals in Australia was also conducted in the context of the negative media publicity over the ‘inability’ of South Sudanese to ‘integrate’. These structural, attitudinal and emotional factors impinge on the possible success of Hage’s multicultural Real.

Starting around 2006, there was growing mention of Sudanese refugees in the Australian media. A story that received amplified attention was a decision by the Tamworth City Council in NSW to reject five Sudanese refugee families for settlement due to fears that it would lead to a “Cronulla riots-type situation” in the area (Norrie, 2006). The Tamworth mayor based the decision on media reports that labelled South Sudanese refugees as law-breakers, dangerous drivers, rapists and without respect for authorities (Norrie, 2006; Murphy, 2006). The mayor later justified his position on the grounds that he was worried about limited resources in Tamworth and the lack of support from the Federal government. The decision provoked outrage within the national refugee community and received negative coverage in most Australian media. As a result, Tamworth Council decided to accept the refugees for a trial period (Munro and Welch, 2007).

An important context for the Tamworth story was that a few weeks before the rejection of the refugees, Pauline Hanson had returned to media attention. As the former One Nation leader, Hanson released a media statement calling for a need to “Ban diseased Africans” (*The Age*, 2006a). Following-up from her previous scare campaign where she warned that Australia was about to be “swamped by Asians” (Hanson, 1996), Hanson had now shifted focus and warned against black South Africans coming to Australia with diseases such as AIDS and tuberculosis (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2006a; *The Age*, 2006b; *The Age*, 2006a). Similar sound bites were echoed in a message by Prime Minister Howard when he stated that refugees and migrants carrying the HIV virus

should be denied access to Australia (*The Australian*, 2007). This statement was seen by critics as a direct attack on all African refugees as well as the stigmatization of all people with HIV/AIDS (*The Age*, 2007). Earlier, in 2005, Andrew Fraser, an Associate Professor in the Department of Public Law at Macquarie University in Sydney, had suggested that Australia should claim back its White Australia Policy (Fraser, 2005). His article was overtly racist, hinting that white people were superior to black people: “If immigrants are genetically remote from the European gene pool, the damage to Australia’s genetic interests will be especially pronounced” (Fraser, 2005:15). Referring directly to refugees from Africa, Andrew Fraser argued that “black Africans will never become a ‘market-dominant minority’ in Australia” and that experiences from other places in the world “tells us that an expanding black population is a sure-fire recipe for increase in crime, violence and a wide range of other social problems” (Fraser, 2005:16). Although this article received abundant criticism, the negative influence it had on the lives of African immigrants or refugees was echoed in many of the memories of South Sudanese interviewed in this thesis.

Reports of African involvement in crime, violence and social problems was only some of the characteristics of the South Sudanese echoed in the Australian media in the mid-2000s. In December 2006, *the Mercury* reported statements by Andrew Robb, the then Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, in which he warned against ethnic enclaves within Australia (*the Mercury*, 2006). Robb noted how certain groups, such as black African refugees, posed a social challenge due to “their distinct culture and difficulties settling here” (*the Mercury*, 2006). The claim was published even though it was based on no detailed research. Other headlines such as “Inquiry into rampage refugee” (Dore, 2007), “Community party ends with brawl and stabbing” (Shtargot, 2007), “Drunk and driving” (Mitchell, 2007), “Warning on African refugee gangs” (Kerbaj, 2006b) as well as “Refugees said to be turning to crime for kicks” (Kerbaj, 2006a), were all targeted on young Sudanese refugees allegedly involved in various forms of crime.

The main thread in all these articles was that young Sudanese arrived in Australia from a war-ravaged country where they had grown up with a culture of violence. Many had also received training with weapons. Most of the articles looked at other reasons behind the crimes. For instance, Sudanese community leaders pointed to the lack of a sense of



belonging within Australian society, a feeling of disconnection from the mainstream society, difficulties making the transition to Australian life, as well as the capacity of the Australian social system to deal with these problems (Kerbaj, 2006a; Kerbaj, 2006b; Mitchell, 2007). These South Sudanese perceptions of themselves are some of the topics explored during the interviews for this research. As Valentine, Sporton and Bang Nielsen note (2009), self-perceptions within socio-political contexts are a vital aspect of the development of a sense of belonging, yet this subjective realm has remained underemphasized in media reports and the experiences of the South Sudanese community have been rarely explored.

Some articles on South Sudanese refugees in Australia had a more positive message, such as those looking at Sudanese children integrating well in schools and Sudanese refugees settling in 'real' multicultural suburbs in Melbourne (Cook, 2007; Schwartz, 2007). However, these articles also mentioned, as a subtle reminder, problems among children starting schools in Australia, such as the potential for tension and the often low education levels due to learning disruptions during their flight and time in refugee camps.

The structural context of integration also was noted by some commentators. According to Bartolomei (in Overington, 2007a), it is misleading to speak of a failed integration process. It is rather a matter of "resettling too quickly without putting in appropriate services" (Overington, 2007a). A similar claim concerning this two-way nature of the process was made by Ben Fraser (2007) who argued that when a country such as Australia has accepted and decided it can afford to protect African refugees, it must also recognize and allow time for adjustment and possible difficulties.

In this thesis, I illustrate how this two-way nature of the settlement process is made more apparent through the lenses of the concepts of integration and belonging. Vital aspects in this process include *feelings* of home and connectedness, *feelings* of acceptance and recognition, and the *encouragement* of a sense of belonging. This research analyses this sense of belonging and complements it with the experiences and resources brought from the participants' home country. While the South Sudanese experiences in South Sudan and in refugee camps will not be described in detail, it is necessary to take a brief look at the conflict in Sudan and South Sudan leading to the

influx of refugees in Australia and elsewhere; the changes in structures and institutions within the South Sudanese communities; and the journey from life in South Sudan to life in Australia as a refugee. This is important in order to contextualize the cultural experiences that shape the subjectivity of the people who formed the respondents of my thesis. It is addressed in Chapter Four after the literature on belonging and integration is reviewed in Chapter Two and the methodology of the thesis explained in Chapter Three.

## **The emerging research questions**

Through looking at South Sudanese men and women settling in Australia, this study explores how a sense of belonging develops. Fozdar and Hartley (2013:2) noted how “[D]efinitions of settlement often do not acknowledge explicitly that it requires the development of a sense of belonging, or emotional connection, to the nation state and its people”. Fozdar and Hartley (2012:26) also emphasized the need for more “detailed qualitative research” on aspects of refugees’ “connections with the wider community”. My research places itself within this field and explores the development of these connections. By emphasising personal experiences and the context in which South Sudanese men and women find themselves, my research follows the definition of belonging established by Hamaz and Vasta (2009:5), who explored how “belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling ‘at home’ and about feeling ‘safe’”. Their analysis of belonging involved the interplay between subjective self, agency and structural positioning. In this thesis, these elements of belonging will be linked with the contentious concept of ‘integration’. As noted earlier, the concept of integration has been criticized for its assimilistic assumptions of a process of ‘fitting into the established norms and rules’ and for failing to take account of the experiences and background of the newcomers, as well as the barriers that hinder this integration process (McPherson, 2010). However, a two-way process of integration (as also noted earlier) concerned with a mutual process of adapting and settling and with a focus on measurable outcomes such as citizenship, employment, political participation, housing and access to welfare, helps to chart the subjective experience of belonging. By drawing on this *emotional* component, and by focusing on the *mutual* aspect of an integration process, the thesis aims to assess the experiences of an integration process and the development of a sense of belonging.

The thesis begins by looking at integration as the process in which recognition of self, agency and mutuality is experienced. This leads to the following set of research questions:

1. How does the development of social relations in the new country impact on a sense of belonging?
2. In what way do people's relations back in their home country impact on the development of a sense of belonging in their new country?
3. What does citizenship mean for the development of belonging?
4. How important is language in the integration process?
5. How does employment/unemployment influence on people's sense of self and agency? and
6. How do political and public debates on integration impact on people's sense of recognition and belonging?

Based on these questions and concepts, this thesis explores the following ideas and guidelines related to the narratives on belonging that emerged from the interviews and observation conducted:

1. Recognising how a person's past and present impact on their sense of self enhances an understanding of the development of belonging.
2. Recognising and respecting the agency of those experiencing an integration process enhances the understanding of the development of a sense of belonging.
3. Recognising the importance of mutual recognition in quotidian activities enhances a sense of belonging in everyday life.

The concepts that are taken from these guidelines and that are addressed in the analysis section are the concepts of recognition, self, agency and mutuality. By looking at the personal experience of an integration process and the affective state of belonging this study is oriented towards an understanding of how people reach the multicultural Real. It argues that mutual accommodation is an important component of generating a sense of common belonging.

## Thesis composition and content

The intention of this thesis is to provide an analysis of personal and subjective experiences with a settlement process in order to learn more about belonging and integration. The South Sudanese community in Australia is an appropriate community for this endeavour, due to the media attention they received, as well as being a relatively new group in Australia. By analysing integration and belonging from the perspective of the South Sudanese men and women, I aim to reach a more complete understanding of a settlement process where experiences and emotions are taken into account.

*Chapter Two* looks at how integration has been debated in the literature. The rationale behind the integration framework suggested by Ager and Strang (2008) will then be introduced, where ten measurable domains of integration are developed. The chapter also looks at various debates over the concept of belonging before settling for the definition that emphasizes belonging as the interplay between subjective self, agency and structural positioning (Hamaz and Vasta, 2009). *Chapter Three* then looks at the research design employed for this thesis. Leaning towards a phenomenological perspective that links agency and structure, the chapter explores the development of trust between the researcher and the participants, describing how I, as the researcher, came to know the participants. Finally, the chapter introduces the interview schedules and analysis of responses.

The following four chapters bring in the voices of the South Sudanese men and women who participated in this study. *Chapter Four* analyses the notion of self and the factors that influence a sense of self. The emotional aspects of an integration process are brought into focus and a gendered division is highlighted through different experiences of belonging. *Chapter Five* operationalizes how the integration process effects on agency, with a focus on employment and citizenship. The gendered nature of settlement noted in Chapter Four is maintained by looking at the male respondents' ability to develop a sense of hope through employment participation and social knowledge. The women, in contrast, were more focused on their immediate needs, such as language skills training, gaining employment and the fundamental rights that come with citizenship. Throughout Chapters Four and Five a sense of belonging is linked directly to the domains of integration employed by Ager and Strang.

*Chapter Six* focuses on the structural positioning of South Sudanese refugees. Considered a fundamental aspect in the development of a sense of belonging (Buonfino, 2007), I bring in Fraser (2000; 2001) and her theory of recognition, misrecognition and redistribution. In this context, the chapter explores the participants' experiences with racism (or rather, misrecognition based on labelling). By linking recognition, redistribution and misrecognition to the process of integration, the chapter reveals how structural positioning influences the experience of all areas of an integration process (including employment, education, housing and citizenship) and influences the development of a sense of belonging.

*Chapter Seven* discusses the interconnection between self, agency and structural positioning through the concept of mutuality. By elaborating on the concept of social capital, the chapter reinforces how gender plays a major role in people's experiences of belonging and integration. Belonging and longing were also analysed by bringing in concepts of common belonging and mutual accommodation as a way of connecting the emotional with the structural components of this process. The co-constitutive relationship between integration and belonging is emphasised through exploring how people feel a sense of equal opportunity in *quotidian* and *mutual* interactions with others.

### Theorising Integration and Belonging

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As travel becomes within the reach of most people and communication technologies enable people to be immersed in cultures located elsewhere, and to cultivate multiple identities, the question of belonging becomes more complex and more central to the debate on how we live together. (Buonfino, 2007:5)

**I**n the contemporary globalized world, many people move across borders on a regular basis, either willingly or forced due to war, violence, persecution, or climate change. These movements involve changes in many areas of people's lives such as the change of physical place, loss of friends and family and adaptation to new social environments. For some, it is also relatively easy to return, or at least keep contact with a home country through social media. For others, this contact is not available. How these disruptions and changes impact on people's sense of belonging in a new country is the focus of this research. I ask how people settle and develop a sense of belonging in a new country, often with different cultural context, history and experiences.

Arriving in a new country with the intention of settling and starting a new life involves an immense challenge in recreating one's own social world. New ways of living have to be adapted and new relations developed, in addition to finding employment and/or education, housing and familiarising oneself to government institutions and welfare organisations. This settlement process has been under scrutiny in many research contexts, attempting to answer the question of how to facilitate this process for the benefit of all actors involved – the newcomers, the established society, the second-generation children as well as future generations (Castles et al., 2002). While this settlement process has been theorized in numerous ways and the process itself has received many labels such as assimilation, inclusion, acculturation, adaptation and

incorporation, (see Castles et al., 2002 for further discussion), most multicultural Western countries have adopted the label of integration as the preferred settlement label. This is also the term I will settle for here in spite of criticism, discussions, and lack of agreed definition. I will address these criticisms while affirming the process of integration as defined and employed by Ager and Strang (2008). I further ask how a sense of belonging plays a part in this process, as an affective state emphasizing a connectedness with the new society. I ask whether this connectedness is, if not a prerequisite, then a vital part of the process towards feeling settled and integrated in a new country. While belonging is the main subject of my research, I start by looking at the concept of integration because of its concern with the fundamental structural aspects of settlement such as employment, housing, language, health and education.

I start this chapter by exploring the concept of integration and the way it has been utilized in the literature. I then show how an understanding of integration can be enhanced by introducing an understanding of belonging to the process. Subsequently, from looking at integration I move on to the concept of belonging and explore how a focus on belonging can enrich an understanding of how integration is experienced among newcomers. While a sense of belonging will become the main focus of this research, I show that the literature suggests that an adequate understanding of belonging cannot be achieved without an analysis of integration and all that this process entails. In explaining the concept of belonging, I adopt the definition that emphasizes a need to look at subjective self, agency and structural positioning (Hamaz and Vasta, 2009). I then describe each of these three components separately while stressing the interdependence between them. In doing this, I hope to contribute towards an understanding of both integration processes and the development of belonging by focusing on people's own experiences. While exploring integration based on people's own experiences is not a new perspective, (see for example Ager, 1999; Atfield et al., 2007; Hamaz and Vasta, 2009; Warriner, 2007; Ager and Strang, 2008; Korac, 2001; Korac, 2003; Korac, 2005; Valentine et al., 2009), I ask whether an attempt to combine these two concepts enhances an understanding of the complex process of settlement. By linking integration and belonging with the everyday lived experiences of former refugees, I present a study of a community in the process of settling and building a new life.

To sum up: a theory of integration, together with a theory of belonging, can enhance an understanding of how to reach a ‘successful settlement’ in a new and unfamiliar country. By adopting this combined approach to both integration and belonging, I consider integration as an experience as opposed to a policy. Integration is analysed here principally as an experience and a reality for the participants in this research (as part of Hage’s multicultural Real). This necessarily involves looking at the subjective and emotional responses to aspects of the integration process. Belonging is considered the emotional state necessary to analyse in order to understand how people experience integration. This allows me to raise questions regarding people’s experiences of employment, of housing, safety, education and language, and how these experiences impact on and are impacted by the affective state of belonging.

### **Framing the question**

This research started out with a rather broad research question focusing on settlement and identifying factors impacting on the integration process. I intended to look at the South Sudanese people’s experiences in Australia – especially after public debates and comments from public figures regarding their capacity to integrate in Australia. I wanted to analyse people’s reactions to these comments, debates and media coverage and how it impacted on their lives. The main research question from the start was as follows: To what extent do the political, cultural, and social and policy circumstances assist or hinder the integration of South Sudanese refugees into Australian society? While starting out with broad ideas regarding policies and impact on integration into a new society, a much more intimate picture emerged during the initial interviews I conducted. Themes emerging early in the interview phase were related to emotional experiences of everyday worries, hopes, participation, isolation and recognition. These evocative narratives from the participants, together with further exploration of the literature on settlement and integration, made me shift the focus of my research towards a more intimate exploration of the settlement process. While my early expectations were to find structural and political influences on the integration process, such as policy and social networks, what I was hearing from refugees was much more related to everyday activities and emotional stories related to a sense of belonging. I therefore sharpened the focus on the link between self, agency and social structures through exploring emotional and subjective experiences.



From the literature that has been explored (to be discussed further in this chapter), and from the themes developed early in the interviews, the new hypotheses focused on: 1) the importance of recognizing people's past and present; 2) the importance of recognizing people's agency, and; 3) the importance of experiencing mutual recognition in quotidian activities.

## **Integration – a conceptual exploration**

There are two principal ways in which to understand integration: first, as a 'normative process where immigrants and refugees "become part of the receiving society" through a "one-way process of adaptation by newcomers to fit in with the dominant cultural and way of life" (Castles et al., 2002:117); and second, where integration is described as a "two-way process of adaptation, involving change in values, norms and behaviour for both newcomers and members the existing society" (Castles et al., 2002:117). The first understanding echoes the concept of assimilation and dates back to the White Australia Policy practiced in Australia from Federation until the 1960s. The second understanding describes integration as a process of mutual understanding and commitment where the newcomers as well as the receiving society undergo mutual changes necessary for successful settlement (Castles et al., 2002). As these two usages and a myriad of other understandings and definitions show, the concept of integration is "vague and slippery and seems to mean whatever people want it to" (Castles et al., 2002:117). Furthermore, Castles Korac, Vasta and Vertovec (2002:113) pointed out that meanings of integration "vary from country to country, change over time, and depend on the interests, values and perspectives of the people concerned". Most contemporary Western countries favour an integration policy where newcomers are expected to become part of the broader society: "...integration is understood as a process by which individuals and groups maintain their cultural identity while actively participating in the larger societal framework" (Castles et al., 2002:115). Castles et al. (2002:114) emphasized the involvement of all parts in society in such an integration process:

...how do newcomers to a country become part of society? The very broadness of the integration process makes it hard to define in any precise way. Integration of newcomers to a society takes place at every level and in every sector of society. It involves a

wide range of social players: public officials, political decision-makers, employers, trade union officials, fellow-workers, service providers, neighbours and so on. The immigrants and refugees themselves play a crucial role in the integration process. Developing the human agency needed to function effectively in a new environment requires the individual and collective initiative of the newcomers. Where restrictive rules and rigid systems confine them to a passive role, integration may be slow and incomplete.

This emphasizes the agency of the newcomers along with the rules and resources of the integrating society. Korac (2003:52), looking at refugees in Italy and the Netherlands, has noted the conceptual confusion associated with this process:

In the past decades, countries of the industrialized world have been struggling with the question of how to facilitate the settlement of the growing number of refugees and how to enhance their participation in new societies. Even the terms used to describe this process – absorb, assimilate, incorporate or integrate refugees – suggest the complexity, ambiguity and contention surrounding the issue.

Despite this complexity and ambiguity, Korac (2003:52), like Castles et al. (2002), settled on exploring integration as a two-way process affecting “both the established community and the new arrival, requiring their mutual adjustment and participation”. There is a general contemporary acceptance of viewing integration as this two-way process with a focus on a collective learning process, trust, recognition and respect (Skorgen, 2012). For example, Atfield et al.’s (2007:12), work on integration noted how integration was:

...a two-way process involving mutual adjustment and participation on the part of the host society as well as by refugees themselves, rather than as a process of *assimilation* in which refugees learn to adapt themselves to the prevailing culture of the host society. (my emphasis)

In Australia, integration is still the preferred concept used in discussions of immigration policies and, together with social cohesion and belonging, seems to occupy most of the current debates in the settlement of immigrants and refugees. For instance, one of the declared goals and functions of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship for 2011-12 was to promote “the benefits of a united and diverse society, including through

programs supporting the integration of migrants and enhancing social cohesion” (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2012). In 2011 the Labor Government reclaimed multiculturalism as a major policy area, reinforcing the fundamental idea of a two-way process behind integration.

While integration as a two-way process is an accepted part of the definition in a multicultural society, applying this definition is not always as straightforward as implied in policy documents. While there might be willingness among newcomers to integrate and to become part of the new society, this may not always be accommodated or even welcomed in the receiving society. As Zetter, Griffiths, Sigona and Hauser (2002:130) noted; “even if positive relations with larger (dominant) society are sought, the refugee may well be rebuffed by society”. Consequently, the refugees’ agency, as well as social barriers, must be analysed in assessing the integration process. Important aspects in an integration process are the structures the newcomers encounter, both in the new society and within their own community.

### *Some current critiques of integration*

A lack of an agreed definition of integration, together with the myriad of different usages, invites criticism of the concept. Recent debates relating to notions of common values, ideas and norms has led to the criticism that integration remains close to a process of assimilation rather than being a two-way process impacting on both newcomers and established communities. For example, McPherson (2010) used the concept of ‘integrationism’ to focus on how newcomers are expected to comply with ‘our norms and values’. In her discussion on integrationism, McPherson (2010:552 and 547) claimed that in Australia, the current “[C]onformance-based migration policies problematize outsiders”, and she argued that this integrationism “remains concerned with the adaptation by outsiders to local norms”, redefining integration as a one-way process.

Vasta (2007:6) has argued that the question of “how a two-way process of cultural recognition would work remains unclear”. She argued that current understandings of integration and cultural recognition do not “include genuine procedural changes in values, norms and behaviours for members in the existing society” (Vasta, 2007:6).

Vasta's (2007:6) own research on multicultural diversity argued for a two-way integration process that could support immigrants and refugees to become "full participating citizens". She (2007:10) added that there seemed to be "some confusion about the exact meaning of the process" of two-way integration in many countries, including Australia:

The prevailing meaning of the two-way process is that immigrants should integrate into the societal institutions, values, beliefs and social behaviour [...] this is a limited definition for it does not include the idea of mutual accommodation when it comes to cultural values and traditions. Unfortunately, this two-way process becomes a smokescreen for the contradictions within the policy and public discourses. (Vasta, 2007:11)

Vasta (2007:6) argued that commonly used two-way integration definitions did not go far enough:

Supporting immigrants and ethnic minorities to become full participating citizens in the receiving societies' culture and institutions is an important part of the process, but this is generally the extent of the two-way part of the process. It does not include genuine procedural change in values, norms and behaviour for members of the existing society. How it accommodates diversity is not necessarily a part of the equation.

This view that the two-way integration process is simply a "discourse of assimilation, within the framework of integration" (Worley 2005 in Vasta, 2007:12) is common in many current integration debates across the industrialized world. For example, in Norway, Olsen (2012) stated:

...many Norwegians are concerned with the freedom of the individual, freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom of sexuality. If we shall have such freedoms they must be for all, independent of ethnicity or identity. We cannot command that our neighbour makes the same choices as we do. (translated by researcher)

This mutual recognition of other's choices, values and cultures echoes Vasta's position, which emphasized the need for a "debate about the mutual recognition of values, for example, around the family, in relation to women, children etc. in policy and in public discourse" (2007:26). This claim reinforces McPherson's (2010) point that the

contemporary Australian policy of integration ('integrationism') is assimilation in disguise, where outsiders must adapt to local norms:

[C]onformance based migration policies are of social justice concern because of the ways in which they represent migrants and refugees as problematic against dominant norms" and "refugees [are] considered especially 'problematic' because of fears about the values they might import from dysfunctional home countries. (McPherson, 2010:547)

A more radical a two-way integration process involves changes from all levels of society – among neighbours, wider community and social institutions. To develop this genuine two-way process, Vasta (2007) suggested drawing on the concept of 'mutual accommodation' as a building block towards a policy of integration in a multicultural society. What was needed, Vasta (2007:27) claimed, was a "change in societal structures and institutions based on mutual accommodation". Mutual accommodation involves "an internalisation of difference" [...] it is not just about cultural recognition, but about structural changes where necessary and ensuring structural equality for ethnic minorities" (Vasta, 2007:26).

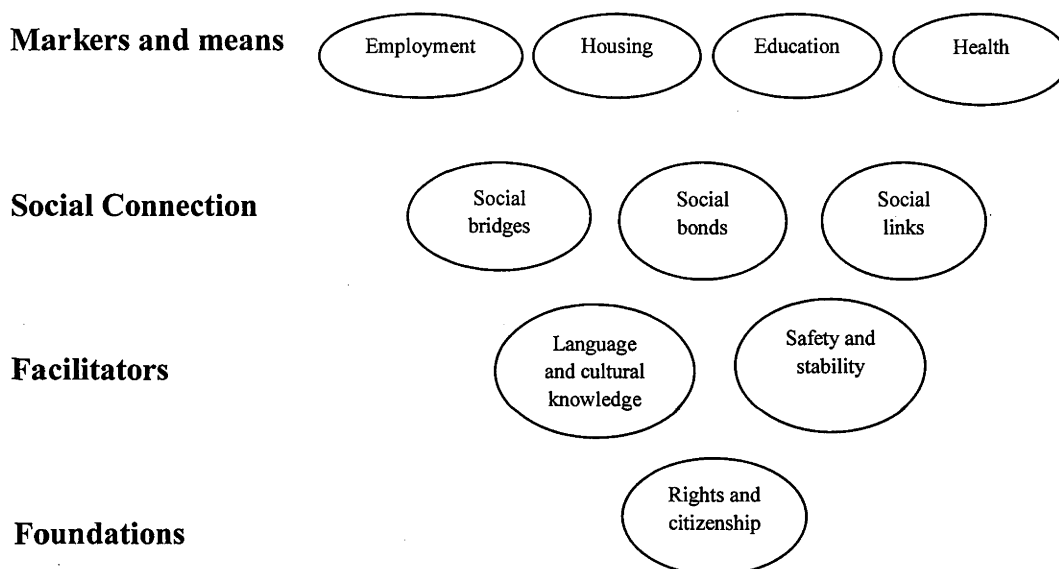
To move towards an understanding of how a two-way mutual integration process can develop, it is necessary to understand the subjective experiences of integration processes. This subjective focus allows us to link the structural domains of integration with the feelings of belonging that also are part of the integration process. To understand the meaning and the emotions that a sense of belonging evokes provides a broader insight into the integration process and what this process means for social actors. The domains of integration discussed in this thesis are those developed by Ager and Strang (2008) and explored in the next sections of this chapter. They are then enhanced within a framework of belonging focusing on self, agency and structural positioning (Hamaz and Vasta, 2009).

## **The components of integration**

In the current global environment, with increased attention on social cohesion within immigration policies, much research aims to determine what factors need to be present in order to minimize conflict and strengthen cohesion in multicultural societies (Berry,

1997; Castles et al., 2002; Korac, 2003; Korac, 2005). My research forms part of this research agenda. Research conducted by Ager and Strang (2008), as well as by Zetter, Griffiths, Sigona, and Hauser (2002), have attempted to measure the success of an integration process by focusing on various indicators of integration among refugee populations. Ager and Strang (2008) also suggested that a two-way understanding of integration was vital for a successful process. Ten core measurable domains were identified as central in the success of such an integration process, divided into markers and means, social connections, facilitators and foundations (see Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1: A conceptual framework of integration defining the core domains as outlined by Ager and Strang (2008)**



### ***Markers and means***

The first indicator of integration, identified by Ager and Strang as ‘Markers and Means’, includes the domains of employment, housing, education and health. Ager and Strang noted that each of the domains possess potential barriers hindering the integration process. Barriers relating to securing employment can be associated with the non-recognition of qualifications and previous experience. The other domains include: safety and security issues in certain housing areas; issues of racism, bullying and language difficulties in educational institutes; and language difficulties impacting on health issues. While these domains are “widely acknowledged by diverse stakeholders

to be key aspects of integration into a new society”, Ager and Strang (2008:173) noted the difficulties measuring ‘integration success’ in these areas due to major variations among the receiving population, such as in “income and employment, in housing status, in educational experience”. In my research, I focused on the *experiences* people have with these markers and means in an integration process, as opposed to solely measuring the success based on outcomes. At the same time I explored the impact these markers and means have on a sense of belonging. In doing this, I aimed to enhance the understanding of a two-way, mutually reinforcing integration process.

### ***Social connections***

The second area discussed by Ager and Strang was ‘social connections’. Social connections were identified as the “defining feature of an integrated community” (2008:177). If integration is to be defined as a two-way process, there is a consequent need to look not only at the experiences of the refugees, but also the host society and especially the connections between these two groups.

Drawing on Putnam’s (1993) concept of ‘social capital’, Ager and Strang identified three core domains within social connections: social bonds, social bridges and social links. Social bonds relate to connections with family and others within the same ethnic, religious or national group. While these bonds are often criticized for creating ethnic enclaves within a society (Putnam, 2000), Ager and Strang pointed to both their own research and others that demonstrated the positive role these social bonds *can* play in the integration process, especially related to feelings of settlement. Many refugees interviewed in Ager and Strang’s research emphasized the importance of social bonds, enabling “them to share cultural practices and maintain familiar patterns of relationships” (2008:178). Other researchers (Portes and Landolt, 2000; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993) also pointed to the importance of these bonds and networks in relation to access to jobs and other resources. My research also explored whether the existence of social bonds hinders or encourages a development of belonging in unfamiliar environments.

Social bridges refer to the connections between refugees and those within the host community. In Ager and Strang’s (2008) definition, social bridges referred to a general

friendliness among people and a feeling of 'home', as well as participation in activities external to the urgent community. Ager and Strang's (2008:180) research suggested that friendliness and recognition were considered important in regard to a general feeling of safety and security in a new society. However, a more intensive involvement with the local people "may be crucial in bringing longer-term social and economic benefits to a community". In my research, I also explored these experiences of friendliness, recognition and also the degree of involvement in host activities. I explored the degree to which this could lead to a heightened sense of belonging. More generally, I asked: to what degree does community involvement impact on the experience of integration?

Social links refer to relations between individuals and state structures, such as government services (Ager and Strang, 2008). Access to services can be hindered due to "refugees' particular circumstances" leading to barriers requiring "additional effort from both refugees and the wider community" (Ager and Strang, 2008:181). These "particular circumstances" can be a "lack of familiarity with the surroundings" (Ager and Strang, 2008:181) along with an inability to speak the official language. These barriers were also examined in my research in an effort find whether they linked to integration. In other words: in what way to the presence or absence of social links influence the process of integration?

### ***Facilitators***

In order to remove barriers to integration Ager and Strang (2008) explored the facilitating role of two major domains: language and cultural knowledge; and safety and security. Language and cultural knowledge directly relates to a two-way understanding of integration. For example, Ager and Strang demonstrated the importance of translating materials relevant to refugees. With regard to cultural knowledge, they noted how refugees could benefit from knowing about the culture they were entering, while knowledge of the culture of the refugees within the host society could facilitate the integration process and outcome (Ager and Strang, 2008). In my study, both language and cultural language were assessed in relation to the experience of integration. I ask how, and to what degree, difficulties with language have been experienced as a barrier to integration, and how cultural knowledge can manifest itself in a mutual process to increase sense of connectedness with the new society.



Safety and security is related to both personal and physical safety as well as community stability. These are both related to physical location. In other words, personal safety can refer to actual violence as well as to verbal abuse and ‘threatening’ locations. Ager and Strang (2008:184) found that “community stability is potentially an important facilitator of integration”. My research examined how this sense of safety and stability is experienced through looking at the participants’ neighbourhood, community and relationships with security organizations.

### *Foundations*

The final area Ager and Strang referred to was the ‘foundation’ for shared understandings of integration; citizenship and rights. Ager and Strang (2008:175) noted how “notions of nationhood and citizenship shape core understandings of the rights accorded, and the responsibilities expected, of refugees”. Citizenship and rights, as a domain of integration, include both privileges and responsibilities for newcomers, as well as the government’s obligations and responsibilities to involve “the contributions of all sectors of the society” (2008:175-176). In this regard, a two-way process explicitly emerges in the sense of a “mutual and responsible relationship between individual refugee, civil society and host states” (2008:176). I therefore looked at people’s experiences with citizenship – both people holding a citizenship and people without citizenship. Questions for analysis referred to how citizenship influences people’s lives and its impact on how refugees experience mutuality in society. Further questions probed the level at which people felt a strong sense of rights and responsibilities related to a citizenship.

Ager and Strang (2008) acknowledged that the ten domains of integration could not be analysed separately, emphasising their interdependence and the complexity of the process. They recommended more research towards understanding how the “‘pathways’ through which progress with respect to one domain supports progress with respect to another” (Ager and Strang, 2008:186). Castles et al. (2002) also noted that the complexity of integration makes it difficult to define. This complexity was reiterated by Atfield, Brahmhatt and O’Toole (2007:12), who used Ager and Strang’s model to

inform their research on the experiences of refugee integration in two different locations in the UK:

‘Integration’ is a highly complex and contested concept. There is a great deal of disagreement about what constitutes integration, how one determines whether strategies for promoting integration are successful, or what the features of an integrated society are.

While employing these ten domains of integration in my research, I test this interdependence between the domains and explore how each domain can enhance insight into the *experience* of the integration process.

In spite of recent critiques of integration, and concerns with the process not being a genuine two-way process (especially in contemporary immigration societies where focus has shifted from multiculturalism to social cohesion and values (McPherson, 2010)), the ten domains remain useful for my research purpose, which entailed looking at people’s *experiences* with employment, housing, safety and cultural knowledge, and exploring the ways in which these experiences impacted on their integration process. By analysing subjective experiences within these domains, it becomes possible to understand mutuality from the perspective of the participants, and to gain a meaningful sense of their connectedness with their new surroundings. As my research in this direction progressed, I also found that the concept of belonging was useful for understanding the subjective experiences of the integration process, rather than the end product of this integration process. Given this, it is necessary now to explore the literature associated with belonging.

### **Beyond integration – moving towards belonging**

This exploration of integration involves the question of how people live together in “multicultural societies with high degrees of social mobility, diversity and migration, and where identities are multiple and shifting” (Buonfino, 2007:5). Under these circumstances, questions can be posed relating to people’s ability and willingness to fit in to their new society as well as their sense of *connectedness* to social structures and institutions. Buonfino (2007:5) noted that current debates on “multiculturalism,

citizenship, integration and cohesion have largely dominated discussions on what belonging to a community should be about". She suggested "the need for a new frame of reference" that "takes a wider approach aimed at unlocking the need for people to find recognition, comfort and feel at home around others where they live, where they work or where they interact" (Buonfino, 2007:5). Atfield et al. (2007:17) also examined integration on this personal level through explaining "affective feelings of belonging", arguing that "subjective conceptions of integration, citizenship, home and belonging are highly significant for the ways in which refugees respond to strategies for integration, as well as for how they enter into social networks or develop social capital". As noted above, while the process of integration is understood by policy makers as well as service providers as an essential element in multicultural Australia, there remains less understanding of settlement from the perspective of new arrival themselves. The previous discussion suggested that analysing the experiences of integration involves understanding how *belonging* can emerge from these experiences.

In order to maximize the value of Ager and Strang's conceptual framework of integration, it is important to emphasize this 'subjective conception of integration'. Buonfino's appreciation of belonging is useful in this respect as a means of measuring recognition and connectedness at individual level. In my research, I examined these emotional aspects of integration, the yearning for something to call home and the need to belong, by looking at Ager and Strang's domains of integration through *a lens of belonging*. In other words, I hypothesized that an analysis of belonging provides a fuller account of people's experiences of an integration process.

Castles et al. (2002) also noted that integration could be understood as a "process by which individuals and groups maintain their cultural identity while actively participating in the larger societal framework". Therefore, they argued, "exploration of the process of integration is concerned with issues such as identity, belonging, recognition and self-respect" (Castles et al., 2002:115). By emphasising the participative aspect of an integration process, they accepted the concept of belonging as part of the emotional aspect of a settlement process, focusing on people's own experiences and understandings of the integration process.

To sum up, the literature suggests that a focus on a sense of belonging among South Sudanese Australians can provide valuable insight into important aspects of an integration process *from a newcomer's point of view*. Belonging is useful as it covers personal experiences and potentially impacts on the more functional aspects of an integration process, such as searches for employment or the difficulties associated with housing. In order to explain the linkage between integration and belonging, the next section explores the specific literature on belonging. This will help elaborate the definition of belonging that will be used in this research in order to better understanding the process of integration.

### **Exploring belonging**

The question of 'belonging' is often related to the concept of citizenship in the literature. According to Crowley (in Yuval-Davis et al., 2005), the concept of belonging involves the *emotions* that citizenship evokes through membership, rights and duties in the new country. Other research has also demonstrated that a feeling of belonging in a new place depends on more than citizenship and the obligations and rights that follow (Korac, 2001; Ager and Strang, 2008; Yuval-Davis et al., 2005). It suggests that an analysis of a sense of belonging needs to also explore the personal and subjective emotions, understandings and experiences of an integration process. Thus, the challenge of research in this field involves how to bring together the concepts of integration and belonging.

Belonging is thus a means of exploring integration from refugees' own perspectives and experiences. The emotional aspect of belonging adds crucial subjective feature to the understanding of this process. For example, while Ager and Strang (2008) argued that employment is an important domain in an integration process, it is possible to take this one step further and ask why this is important to agents; how does employment impact on migrants' lives? What does unemployment mean for a sense of belonging, and more generally how do Ager and Strang's domains of integration impact on a sense of belonging?

This link between integration and belonging has also been studied by Hamaz and Vasta (2009:5), who suggested that a "notion of belonging intersects most debates around

identity, transnationalism, multiculturalism, migration, integration and social cohesion, although it is not always specifically referred to". They proposed that a sense of belonging is not a "*natural* prerequisite for meaningful social and political action or wellbeing". Belonging, in other words, is not the end-goal of a successful integration process. It is something that needs to be nurtured and practiced through the process of integration. An analysis of a sense of belonging is a useful way of understanding how an integration process is understood and therefore experienced from the newcomer's perspective; how a process of settlement and integration is personalized and subjectified.

Connectedness helps constitute one's identity. Probyn (1996) even argued that a focus on belonging, as opposed to identity, "captures more accurately the desire for some sort of attachment, be it to other people, places, or modes of being, and the ways in which individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fuelled by yearning rather than the positing of identity as a stable state" (1996:19). In the context of migrant settlement, this can be translated to situations where identity relates to the ways in which migrants and the host society define themselves and each other, while belonging refers to emotional attachment, feeling at home, and security. Buonfino (2007:8) also referred to the link between belonging and identity in her study of belonging in the UK, "[A]t least since the time of the Neanderthals, doing things together has been part of a human need for belonging and identity". She emphasized the importance of "recognition from different concrete and generalised others" as underpinning the development of an identity (Buonfino, 2007:8). She also distinguished belonging from identity, arguing that:

Belonging is a different language to culture, identity and rights. It is a basic frame of reference which relates to human need, and encompasses the many ways in which people find points of recognition in their lives. (Buonfino, 2007:6)

Thus far, I have established how much literature suggests that belonging is an integral element of the integration process and I have examined how its constitutive elements are associated with the subjective experience of integration. The following discussion refines the discussion of belonging to operationalize my research questions into the migrant experience.

## **Refining the emotional elements of belonging**

As with integration, the notion of belonging is an often-used yet ill-defined concept. While referred to within contexts of integration, social cohesion, and community harmony both in public and policy debates as well as in theoretical discussion (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011-12; Humpage, 2003; Vasta, 2007; Ryan, 2012), there is a lack of agreement surrounding meaning of the concept. This confusion prevails even though within policy and public debates in Australia belonging is considered crucial to the process of 'becoming Australian'. With the reviewed multicultural policy introduced in February 2011 (see Chapter One), the goal was to "provide an opportunity for Australians of all backgrounds to come together for activities, programs and events, while promoting a sense of belonging for Australians of every race, culture and religion" (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2013b).

In existing literature, a chain of attributes is associated with the concept. These include issues of safety, collective identity, boundaries, citizenship, and a feeling of home. Yuval-Davis (2006) divided these usages in two ways. The first usage looks at belonging as a political tool which marks the boundary between 'we' who belong and 'them' that does not belong. Another usage views belonging as an emotional, personal and relational process. Given the discussion in the previous section concerning the emotive value of belonging, this thesis is mainly interested in the latter meaning of belonging. Yuval-Davis (2011:4) also emphasized this emotional element of belonging:

Belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home'. As Ghassan Hage points out, however, 'home is an on-going project entailing a sense of hope for the future'. Part of this feeling of hope relates to home as a 'safe' space. In the daily reality of early 21<sup>st</sup> century, in so many places on the globe, the emphasis on safety gets a new poignancy.

More critical literature has focused on how belonging generates a sense of 'here' versus 'there', which denies multiple belongings and creates a "false dichotomy between solidarity and diversity" (Parekh 2008 in Hamaz and Vasta, 2009:3). For this reason, Yuval-Davis (2011:4) points out that "it is important to emphasize that feeling 'at home' does not necessarily only generate positive and warm feelings". In contrast, transnational literature argues that simultaneous involvement in two or more countries

time does not necessarily impede integration (see Granovetter 1995; De Haas 2005; Guarnizo et al 2003; Landolt et la 1999 in Hamaz and Vasta, 2009). A useful example of how multiple constructions of home emerge was found in Hamaz and Vasta's analysis of belonging in everyday situations for Londoners from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds. These authors explored how Londoners "construct and negotiate their sense of belonging" (2009:4). By analysing the voices of the South Sudanese Australians and their experiences and understandings of integration and belonging, I follow the work by Hamaz and Vasta in emphasizing how belonging is a *production* involving the agency of migrants.

The study of everyday life helps link belonging to the fundamental sociological interest into the relationship between self and society (Jacobsen, 2009). For example, May (2011) used the concept of belonging, which she claimed is a fitting concept to help analyse the relationship between self and society for four reasons: it is person-centred; it "takes us into everyday lives where the official and unofficial spheres interact; it allows us to view the relationship between the self and the society as complex"; and "its dynamic nature allows us to examine social change" (2011:364). Belonging can therefore be defined as "a sense of ease with oneself and one's surroundings":

[B]elonging involves a process of creating a sense of identification with one's social, relational and material surroundings, or of recognising – or misrecognising – the self in the other. (May, 2011:368)

In their study of integration, Hamaz and Vasta (2009:7) also noted how "people construct their own definitions of citizenship, identity and belonging [...] belonging is formed through the interplay of the subjective self, individual agency and structural positioning". An analysis of this interplay between self and society, with a focus on the relationship between agency and structural positioning, is helpful towards an understanding of belonging among newcomers in a society, because it captures the emotional and subjective experiences of people. Meanwhile it also acknowledges the separation between 'us' and 'them' and the importance of structural positioning in society.

My research follows work by Hamaz and Vasta (2009) and defines belonging as emotional attachment, safety and feelings of home. I adopt the three aspects of belonging – self, agency and structural position – to underpin the forces driving a sense of belonging. Each of the three aspects provides a richer understanding of how a sense of belonging is related to the process of integration, and each aspect is explored below.

### *Exploring the self*

The concept of self and the development of a sense of self has always been part of sociological discourse. Stets and Burke (2003:130) defined the self-concept as:

...the set of meanings we hold for ourselves when we look at ourselves. It is based on our observations of ourselves, our inferences about who we are, based on how others act toward us, our wishes and desires, and our evaluations' of ourselves.

Emphasising the relational aspect of self, George Herbert Mead (1967:135) also looked at the development of self and how:

...it arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his (sic) relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process.

More recently, May (2011:368) reinforced the importance of such social relations when reflecting on the development of self, noticing how belonging is about creating a “sense of identification with one’s social, relational and material surroundings, or of recognising – or misrecognising – the self in the other”.

Miller (2006) also reflected on the relationship between belonging and self in her search for a definition of belonging. Echoing the relational aspect identified by Mead, Miller (2006:94) listed three “primary ‘senses’ of belonging and identity”: social connections; historical connections; and physical or environmental connections. With respect to social connections, Miller (2006:94) explored “some of the features, factors and structures that enable, support and draw people into social relations” and noted the vital role of ‘the other’ in developing a self. She drew on Tönnies’ work on the need for a



mutual acquaintanceship accompanied by sympathy, dependence and, most importantly, confidence in order for personal interaction to take place effectively:

...whenever and wherever these elements – acquaintanceship, sympathy, confidence and dependence – are absent so are the fundamental conditions for social bonding or belonging. (2006:100)

This influenced my decision in my research to explore ways in which relationships develop among the South Sudanese former refugees in Canberra. By looking at recognition, I analysed the conditions under which people form relationships and whether these relationships impacted on a sense of belonging. I asked whether recognition from others is germane to this sense of self; whether a sense of recognition can enhance the feeling of connectedness to society and in return encourage a feeling of respect as well as commitment to a society. I also analysed whether recognition from both the state and from other members in civil society can help people feel ‘settled’, positively reinforcing the self and one’s actions.

Miller (2006) argued that temporal and spatial connections impact on people’s current lives. She revealed how an analysis of such historical connections is crucial to a sense of belonging. The past and “the way we perceive our connection to it, impacts on our sense of belonging in the present” (2006:130). When people know their history, their understandings of their own selves and identities in present time are reshaped and sharpened: “[T]he desire to know the past is significant to us on a very personal level. The past seems indivisible from our sense of identity” (Miller, 2006:142).

Linked to historical relations are the memories and nostalgia people have towards their homeland. Nostalgic recollection can be one way to “come to terms with the present” (Miller, 2006:147) and can often foster a positive sense of self and a positive connection to the present. For instance, by being allowed to remember the past, to bring parts of one’s past to the present time and acknowledging a person’s history, a sense of belonging to a new place can develop more freely than if the past is denied:

Nostalgic experience enables a sense of self-continuity. However, it is also acknowledged that nostalgia is a means of reconnecting the self with community. Nostalgia provides an

effective structure not only to bolster a positive sense of self, but a positive connection with the world and others in it by re-enchanting the present with a sense of association, meaning and belonging. (Miller, 2006:147-148)

While this research does not analyse the time respondents spent in South Sudan or refugee camp, I nevertheless acknowledge the need to take into consideration how this important part of people's past impacts on their settlement. I explore the degree to which nostalgic recollections have an effect on their development of belonging in Australia. Does a longing for home and an opportunity to foster this longing make a development of a sense of belonging in a new country easier or more difficult? How do these nostalgic recollections influence an integration process?

Environmental connections refer to physical attachment together with the importance of familiar places. This contrasts with the sense of unease introduced by new or unfamiliar physical environment. Belonging to a place is often referred to as 'home' – a place where one feels safe and settled – and can produce feelings of 'homesickness' when one is removed from this environment. Miller (2006:257) emphasized the importance of 'home' in this context, noting:

...home bases are crucial for the social and psychological stability of individuals, and [...] therefore any separation from one's home base is bound to cause some degree of alienation or despair.

Nostalgic feelings and memories can play a major role for those experiencing settlement processes (see McMichael and Manderson, 2004). These emotions and their associated behaviour may impact on both a sense of self as well as a development of belonging. While bringing in the voices of the South Sudanese Australians, I sought to analyse the role of memories and how they impact on a sense of self and belonging. I explored how memories of home impacted on people's experience of their integration process in a new country and how these memories influence the development of belonging.

A final element of self involves self-evaluation. Stets and Burke (2003:6) referred to the evaluative aspect of self as self-esteem. They identified two dimensions of self-esteem: *efficacy-based* and *worth-based* self-esteem. The efficacy-based self-esteem is associated with seeing oneself as competent and capable, while the worth-based self-

esteem relates to a feeling of being accepted and valued (Stets and Burke, 2003:6). Self-efficacy is a “belief about one’s causative capabilities”, and an identity verification through this belief in one’s capacities to contribute in society “not only enhances feelings of self-worth... but also feelings of control over one’s environment” (Stets and Burke, 2003:7).

Amartya Sen (2006) discussed similar feelings of control over one’s own life when developing his theory of capabilities. A person’s capability, he claimed, is “the opportunity to achieve valuable combinations of human functionings – what a person is able to do or be” (Sen, 2006:153):

Indeed, even though the concept of opportunity is often invoked, it does require considerable elaboration, and capability can help in this elucidation. For example, seeing opportunity in terms of capability allows us to distinguish appropriately between (i) whether a person is actually able to do things she would value doing, and (ii) whether she possesses the means or instruments or permissions to pursue what she would like to do (her actual ability to do that pursuing may depend on many contingent circumstances).

My research looks at the way in which the participants have access to this opportunity to achieve their own goals and their ability to act on this experience, and I analyse the extent to whether this experience of opportunity influences their sense of belonging. I take into consideration the importance of this self-esteem and I analyse actors’ motives for forming relationships. This acknowledgement of capabilities, and how they impact on a person’s sense of self and their everyday actions, draws attention to how self is associated with agency.

### ***Belonging and agency***

In line with Hamaz and Vasta, the second component in the exploration of belonging in this research is *agency*. While the notion of self is useful in understanding the process of settling and feeling at home, the capacity to express self and act accordingly relates to the concept of self-efficacy. This offers a more active concept of self:

...human beings derive a sense of self not only from the reflected appraisals of others, but also from the consequences and products of behavior that are attributed to the self as an agent in the environment. (Gecas and Schwalbe, 1983:79)

In my research, while I acknowledged that the process of integration and belonging impact on and is impacted by a person's agency, there are social barriers restricting people's ability to act. This affects creating relationships, participating in the new society as well as developing trust in and knowledge of new institutions. Like Amartya Sen, Giddens (1984:9) noted that agency "refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place". In order to understand how, why and when refugees act, one must also understand the social obstacles that can hinder or encourage action. The capability perspective developed by Sen (2006:154) "allows us to take into account the parametric variability in the relation between the means, on the one hand, and the actual opportunities, on the other".

Korac (2001) has produced a useful body of work on refugees and immigrants that considers agency as vital in the process of integration. She observed a sense of belonging when discussing shared experiences, emotional support and "social interaction between refugees and the established community" (Korac, 2001:2). According to Korac (2001), when there is space for agency to develop and when agency is acknowledged, people feel respected and more willing to be part of the society. Adopting Giddens' approach, O'Byrne's (2012) work on Sudanese former refugees in New Zealand also emphasized agency and belonging in the resettlement process. Defining agency as an "individual's subjective evaluation of their ability to establish some degree of control over their lives", O'Byrne (2012:20) considered agency as a constituent part of both a settlement process and the development of a sense of belonging. Belonging involves "a sense of being aware of and grounded in an everyday environment which an individual has at least some understanding of and within which they have some *capability* to act and participate" (O'Byrne, 2012:107 my emphasis):

This is a sense of belonging dependent upon a sense of agency similar to Giddens (1984:9), who defined an agent as "a knowledgeable and capable actor". Giddens' agent is someone who not only possesses the knowledge and capability to act upon the situations and contexts of their life, but who is also knowledgeable about their capability to act upon those

situations. In this view, lack of agency is a fundamental cause of lack of belonging. Without a feeling of control over the conditions of life, an individual will be unable to develop or maintain an unambiguous or coherent sense of belonging.

I drew considerably on this understanding of agency in my research. This acknowledgement of the relationship between the ability to act and the ability to participate is also consistent with Hamaz and Vasta's (2009:7) definition of belonging as "formed through the interplay of the subjective self, individual agency and structural positioning". By exploring the influences on people's capabilities and, more importantly, their awareness of their own capabilities, I aimed to understand refugee experiences within an integration process through looking at how social structures hindered or encouraged migrants' active social participation.

A sense of inclusion also impacts on people's agency. Anthias (2006:21) observed that it is through "practices and experiences of social inclusion that a sense of a stake and acceptance in society is created and maintained". In other words, a sense of inclusion through participating in, and contributing to, society can enhance a sense of belonging (see May, 2011). This is consistent with the participation factor emphasized in Castles et al.'s (2002:114) two-way definition of integration where they argue that "restrictive rules and rigid systems confine them [newcomers] to a passive role", thereby inhibiting the integration process. The importance of agency is paramount here, due to not only the capacity to participate, but also to the knowledge of this capacity among newcomers.

As noted earlier, there are many barriers to expressing agency. While emphasising how nostalgia and historical relations can help overcome barriers in a new place, Miller (2006) also pointed to the negative experiences produced by historic memories and longings. Nostalgia, she claimed, "contains some element of felt loneliness, separateness or alienation" (Miller, 2006:148). A longing towards a nostalgic past back in home country in familiar conditions, can impact on people's agency and their capacity to feel a part of the new society. As noted in the discussion on self, memories and nostalgic feelings can promote a strong sense of self and a sense of connection with the new world, a platform for taking steps towards settling in a new country (Miller, 2006). Yet, at other times these memories can hinder participation in the new country

and provoke more passive behaviour and a loss of interest in present time and place. As Miller (2006:150) observed:

[O]ne feature of nostalgia is its potential to chain us to the past in such a way that we are immobilised there, unable to transport ourselves back into the present. What might ultimately occur in this case is that we end up belonging *there* rather than *here and now*. In this state we are unable to act.

While structural barriers may discourage agency, psychological barriers can also be important. The background and personal experiences of refugees can hinder them from exercising agency. While looking into the experiences of the South Sudanese men and women, I explored the possible positive and negative impacts that longing towards home can have on the development of belonging. Questions that arose included: Is a longing towards home in South Sudan so intense that agency is restricted? To what degree do people's nostalgia and longings for home represent such a strong emotional pull that everything new seems too alien?

No sense of belonging is final and it is possible for people to experience multiple belongings (Hamaz and Vasta, 2009). While I analysed the impact of these nostalgic relations on people's development of belonging in Australia, at the same time I kept in mind people's ability to belong both 'here' and 'there'. This required that I explored the relationships between agency and belonging – hindrances as well as encouraging factors – as parts of the settlement process.

### ***Structural positioning***

The final element of Hamaz and Vasta's development of a sense of belonging involves people's social status. The personal experience of settlement is increasingly emphasized as the starting point in research on belonging. Thus far in this part of the chapter, I have looked at the role of self and agency in the development of a sense of belonging. That discussion touched on the concept of recognition. Yet, to feel recognized is dependent on more than developing a sense of self and identity. These aspects of belonging rely on social structures and institutions. Being a woman, a refugee, a female refugee, a mother, a father, unemployed, a student, being highly visible, lacking basic education, lacking

basic language skill, are all factors that influence one's structural position within society.

In analysing structural positioning and its relation to belonging, my research drew on Yuval-Davis' (2006), discussion of the 'politics of belonging'. Yuval-Davis (2006:203) noted how belonging "is not just about social locations and constructions of individual and collective identities and attachments but also about the ways these are valued and judged". This, she claimed, marks the shift from the "realms of belonging" to the "politics of belonging" where boundaries are created separating "the world population into 'us' and 'them'" (Yuval-Davis, 2006:204). Yuval-Davis related this creation of boundaries to political goals and values. She criticized how:

...this dirty business of boundary maintenance that underlies the politics of belonging is all about potentially meeting other people and deciding whether they stand inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the nation and/or other communities of belonging, whether they are 'us' or 'them'. (Yuval-Davis, 2006:204)

Yuval-Davis' focus on boundaries moved from looking at belonging as ethnic or cultural identity, towards looking at belonging based on everyday experiences in the new society. How newcomers experience acceptance and recognition in a new society and whether they feel excluded from society impacts on their development of a sense of belonging in the integration process. This focus on the quotidian helps bring the research focus back to the subjective experiences of an integration process. The literature on belonging, especially Hamaz and Vasta's concepts of self, agency and structural positioning, highlight the notion of everyday practices. Wise (2005:179) explored multiculturalism through "place-sharing" or "cross-cultural interaction". She noted how it is through "simple forms of reciprocity and neighbours showing a 'little kindness'" that everyday belonging develops – through everyday activities marked by "manners, recognition, gratitude and hospitality" (Wise, 2005:182). It is in the everyday activities that a sense of belonging develops (Wise, 2005). This is reinforced May's (2011:367) findings, who also focused on the quotidian in her study of the relation between self and society. It is through the understanding and knowledge of the unwritten rules and norms of a society that belonging begins to develop. For this reason,

May emphasized the need to look outside cultural determinants and emphasized everyday participation and contribution (Shotter 1993 in May, 2011:368):

...a sense of belonging is not built merely on the existence of a collectively shared culture, but requires the right to participate in the development of the 'living tradition' or the reflexive argument of that society...that is, arguments about what should be argued about and why. [...] to be able to feel that in doing so one is contributing to one's own world, one must be able to participate in the argument.

This emphasis on participation in all aspects of everyday life, together with a recognition of self and agency through this participation, is therefore a crucial aspect of research into integration and belonging. In Chapters Four, Five and Six I will also emphasize the importance of participation in everyday life through employing Ager and Strang's domains of integration. By studying people's subjective experiences in the areas of employment, housing, education and security, I explored how belonging develops, drawing on Hamaz and Vasta's interplay between self, agency and structural positioning.

Everyday experiences differ depending on a person's structural position in society. Gender for example, has been identified as an important aspect in settlement debates, emphasising the different experiences between men and women both with regard to their situation in their new home as well as the structural differences associated with their home country. In her work on *Lost boys, Invisible Girls*, Grabska (2010:479) explored how "[F]orced migration challenges and changes gender relations". Yet Mahler and Pessar's have pointed out that "gender has rarely been a principal focus of studies in transnational spaces process, including transnational migration" (Mahler and Pessar in Grabska, 2010:481). In my research, a gender division emerged early from the interview data, emphasizing to me the importance of analysing these gendered subjective experiences of integration if a fuller understanding of the processes and experiences was to be achieved.

However, to look at gender independently of other variables would provide a distorted picture of integration and belonging. For instance, Hatoss and Huijser (2010:147) explored gender and educational opportunities for Sudanese refugees resettling in



Australia and noted how “gender is not the only potential barrier. Gender intersects in complex ways with issues of class, race, language, trauma and educational backgrounds”. Different social statuses, from man or woman, employee or unemployed, mother, father, daughter, son, with or without formal education, student or stay-at-home mum, also influence the experience of integration processes. With respect to gender, Hatoss and Huijser (2010:148) argued that “the aim of educational policies is to create wider access for newly settled refugees, particularly for women, to public spaces and paid employment, and thus to enhance their independence and opportunities, rather than being largely confined to and isolated in the domestic sphere”. They emphasized the need to acknowledge that “access to education tends to be a major barrier for women in large parts of the world” (Hatoss and Huijser, 2010:148). This example draws out two major traits that can influence the experience of resettlement, namely gender and education. Yet, it would be prudent for any research project to recognize that gender and education are linked to other structural forces, such as employment or parenthood. This openness to the diversity of structural forces also helped frame my research project.

### **Conclusion: integration and belonging in the everyday**

Research looking into settlement in the context of refugees and asylum seekers has increasingly focused on ‘fitting in’, or integration. In this chapter I have laid the foundations for an understanding of how a conceptual framework of integration can be analysed alongside that of belonging in order to grasp the complexities behind a settlement process. Ager and Strang’s domains of integration along with the components of belonging suggested by Hamaz and Vasta have been proposed as a useful means of accomplishing this task.

I have also argued that by looking at an integration process through the prism of emotional experience, it is possible to draw attention not only on newcomers ‘fitting in’ but also on an understanding of how the newcomers understand settlement and familiarize themselves in their new reality. This requires an approach that studies the agency of those who settle. It also involves appreciating how various institutional and structural process impacts on this sense of belonging through the domains of integration.

A focus on the self, agency and structural position in relation to the development of a sense of belonging highlights factors such as recognition, participation, contribution by and in society (Fraser, 1996; Fraser, 2000; Fraser, 2001; Honneth, 2001; McNay, 2008a; McNay, 2008b). I approached the research task by asking how we can reach a better understanding of achieving a 'successful' integration process, or the multicultural Real by analysing the development of a sense of belonging. Following Wise (2005), the approach I adopted involved focusing on the extent to which belonging develops through everyday actions – through the non-events and the ordinary activities that constitute the life world. The next chapter looks at the methodology used to undertake this task.

### Researching Experiences of Integration and Belonging

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The previous chapter explored theoretical discussions associated with the concepts of integration and belonging, both as debated in contemporary public and policy discourse, as well as in academic literature. I concluded that in order to appreciate the complexity of settlement processes, it is useful to consider the concepts of integration and belonging as intertwined. They operate in a mutually-constituting relationship. This chapter looks at the research design used in order to test this relation between belonging and integration. I describe the case study, which looks at South Sudanese experiences of everyday life in Canberra, and the research design used to examine these experiences.

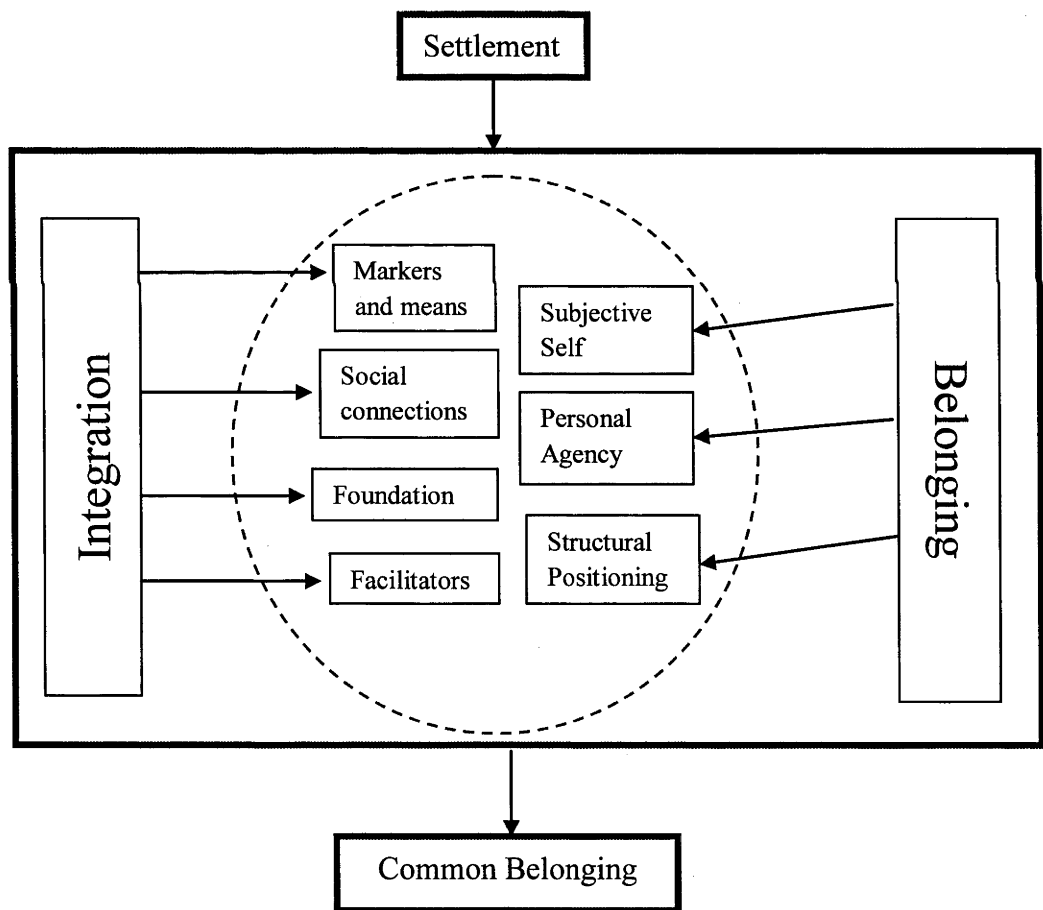
The chapter also looks at different parts of the research process from gaining ethics approval, the initial research plan and preparations for the fieldwork. Furthermore, it looks at the time-consuming process of getting to know the community and gaining access to people's lives, including the all-important aspect of trust. I also present an overview of the participants in this research. The chapter then examines the interview schedule, the methods used and early reflections on the results. Finally, the chapter explains the interpretation and employment of the data.

This research leans towards a phenomenological framework. This type of analysis that "emphasise[s] openness to human experience" (Schweitzer and Steel, 2008:10) was the most appropriate given the task of analysing the experiences of interviewees. The analysis of the data was conducted mainly through defining themes and concepts and then relating these to existing theories on belonging and integration. Broader issues related to settlement and integration, relations with and attitudes about Australian society, resources available on arriving in Australia, as well as generational issues, are then identified. Finally, I describe how a refined research agenda developed as a result of engaging with the literature and the data gathered through early interviews.

Belonging was identified in Chapter Two as the main focus of this research, and the South Sudanese Australians' stories and experiences were gathered with the aim of appreciating personal experiences associated with belonging. However, I do not claim to tell the whole story of the experiences of the South Sudanese Australians. To do this is beyond my reach and intentions. Instead, I aim to provide insight into personal experiences of integration and belonging based on intimate knowledge of the phenomenon in question – the complexities of a settlement process.

Based on the analysis of integration and belonging in Chapter Two, I developed the following diagram (Figure 3.1) to explain my intentions with in thesis:

**Figure 3.1: Diagram showing aspects of belonging and domains of integration explored in this research**



In the diagram, settlement and common belonging are placed on opposite ends of the figure in order to explain the ideal pathway from early settlement needs to the

development of a sense of common belonging to society involving all aspects of an integration process as well as personal experiences of belonging. I refer back to this diagram in each of the following chapters to explain the focus of the chapter in question and to alert the reader to the concepts germane to the chapter.

## **The ethnographic phenomenologist**

To analyse settlement from the point of view of those going through the process, a methodology that allows personal experiences and stories to emerge is required. I adopted an epistemological position where focus is on engagement with the participants and respecting their own stories. This focus on refugees' own stories is highlighted in the work by Hynes (2003:13), who emphasized the importance of refugees' knowledge:

[T]aking an ontological position that refugees' knowledge, understandings and experiences are meaningful and allow an insight into the refugee experience [...] allows the opportunity to consider that refugees are themselves 'experts' on the refugee experience.

By adopting aspects of the ethnographic tradition, with its immersing in the culture of the people, I focused on individual understandings of integration and belonging, or how the various participants experienced the settlement process. I aimed at participating in community events, being part of and gaining trust of the community and conducting face-to-face qualitative interviews based on a semi-structured interview questionnaire. I was present at and part of activities in churches, community meetings and sought opportunities to be present at other places where the South Sudanese community meet.

The emergence of themes associated with the subjective experiences of belonging, and an analysis of concepts such as self, identity and agency, involved investigating people's own definitions of their situations together with their hopes for the future and their longing for the past. These early findings led to an exploration and a leaning towards a phenomenological perspective. Lester (1999:1) noted that phenomenological approaches are:

...based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and emphasise the importance of personal perspective and

interpretation. As such they are powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom.

A phenomenological perspective therefore allows for an understanding of refugees' experiences, at the same time allowing for the researcher's "own as well as others' experience of the phenomenon under investigation in order to bring clarity to the researcher's own preconceptions of the experience of people from refugee backgrounds" (Schweitzer and Steel, 2008:11). Furthermore, as noted by Groenewald, (2004:44):

A researcher applying phenomenology is concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved, or who were involved, with the issue that is being researched. [...] The operative word in phenomenological research is 'describe'. The aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon...

In my research, I aimed to describe a settlement process through allowing personal experiences and stories to emerge in the interviews. This guided the research. The attempt to understand how structural positioning impacted not only agency but also self and affect provided the necessary framework to link experiences, emotions and interpretations. The aim of this research was not to make a generalization of the population but rather to provide a "smaller 'slice' of reality" (Korac, 2001:14) of the complex processes of integration and belonging, and to provide a rich understanding of the lived experiences of some of the South Sudanese in Australia, based on their own interpretations and experiences of an integration process. A qualitative research method was therefore chosen for this research. This method:

...provides perspective rather than truth, empirical assessment of local decision makers' theories of action rather than generation and verification of universal theories, and context-bound extrapolations rather than generalizations. (Patton 1990 in Baker, 2007:42)

Hynes (2003:1) also emphasised the suitability of qualitative research when doing research on refugees, as "refugees are the experts of their own experience". She also described the importance of the presence of trust between the researcher and the

researched in this process. This aspect of trust is addressed below in the exploration of the ethical and methodological considerations I encountered in approaching my research participants.

## **Gaining access and gaining trust**

This section describes the process of gaining trust and access to the South Sudanese community in Canberra. A major concern in doing research with refugees is this issue of trust. Hynes (2003) suggested that trust between the researcher and the researched is crucial in qualitative research in order to get access to the participants' experiences. She described how mistrust among refugees develops through a range of experiences before arriving in the country of settlement. Moussa (Moussa 1993 in Korac, 2001:12) also observed that the "experience of exile can make refugees intensely suspicious of institutions, government(s), and individuals representing these bodies, including researchers". Mistrust is often a self-protective response, based on experiences from their country of origin, flight and refugee camp, or a general fear of authorities or others asking questions about their experiences.

More detailed discussions on trust and mistrust among refugees, have been presented by Daniel and Knudsen (1995b) on *Mistrusting Refugees*, and Hynes (2003) on the issue of trust and mistrust between researcher and refugees. Daniel and Knudsen (1995a:1) examined trust and mistrust and noted how refugee status impacts on a person's life beyond flight and resettlement in a new country: "The crisis that precipitates the refugee status is at once personal and social, and therefore it is a crisis that pursues the refugee well into his or her life in the country where he or she seeks asylum". Trust, Daniel and Knudsen (1995a:1-2) noted, is "in the life of a refugee, ...overwhelmed by mistrust, besieged by suspicion, and relentlessly undermined by caprice". Hynes (2003:2) echoed this claim stating that "there is a boundless social universe of mistrust – much of which will remain unknown to the researcher – requiring consideration when conducting research on refugees". As stated by Knudsen (1995:23), refugees settling in a new country have already faced many challenges relating to trust and mistrust: "The newcomers have to devise strategies that enable them to deal with three sets of strangers: the relief workers responsible for their integration; the old-timers, that is, already settled compatriots; and the host population in general". In my case, the

possibility of mistrust among the participants and towards myself as a researcher needed to be addressed before any interviews could take place. As a researcher, I initially represented another stranger asking questions about their lives. For this reason, I needed to develop a relationship where the participants could have some confidence in me as a person and as a researcher, a relationship where they could feel safe that the information they provided would not be misused.

As a consequence, I approached the development of trust through employing a research assistant from the community, through participating in community events such as church services and community meetings, and through sharing stories and experiences from my own life before any interviews were conducted. The goal was to get to know people and for them to get to know me and my objectives. These approaches highlighted my ethical considerations, which are addressed below.

### ***The identification and use of a research assistant***

I understood early in this research that in order to gain access to the South Sudanese community in Canberra it would be useful to receive assistance from someone within the community. This would introduce me to potential participants as well as provide translation and interpretation when needed. I met a South Sudanese man with the necessary contacts at a conference on refugee settlement and recognized his engagement with and high status within the community. He was a local university student with a clear understanding of and interest in my research issue. At the same time, he could talk about the topic of concern both as an outsider and insider within the South Sudanese community. I employed him as a research assistant early on in the research process. He signed a statement of confidentiality (Appendix Three) before any work started, and we discussed issues relating to translations during interviews as well as the possible complications if he were to be present at interviews. The possible complications we addressed were related to his position as a person in a certain position of power within the community. The fact that he had higher education could possibly have intimidated others who had had their education interrupted, or who had not had any educational opportunity. Furthermore, his position of power was also related to his male status with many contacts both within and outside the South Sudanese community – with the leaders of the community and other institutions in the Australian society. This could



have influenced the answers that participants gave. The fact that he was a man could also possibly create tension and challenges in interviewing women. In the end, this was not a problem as he was only present at one interview where his interpretation was needed. For the other interviews, he was principally involved in preparations for the interviews, such as appointing a time and place to meet, as well as introducing me as a researcher to the community. Furthermore, with his knowledge about the community, as well as his own experience as a South Sudanese former refugee, I tested my interview schedule with him, both in order to check that it was suitable to draw out the experiences of the participants, and to form an impression of what feedback to expect.

There are methodological issues associated with the use of research assistants and translators. The fact that my assistant was part of the South Sudanese community could both assist and complicate matters. Two possible negative impacts noted already were his education and his gender. Grabska (2005:21) elaborated on this negative aspect of using a research assistant in her research on Sudanese refugees living in Egypt:

...using research assistants who come directly from the community might sometimes result in biased data and interpretation of the information. Often, it is difficult for such research assistants to disassociate themselves from the information they receive and gain an appropriate analytical distance. At the same time, due to the familiarity of the issues discussed, research assistants sometimes failed to fully listen to their respondents and tended to assume the answers.

Three positive traits associated with his status that outweighed any disadvantages were his familiarity with the language spoken by most South Sudanese men and women in Canberra, inside information on the community, as well as a unique opportunity for me to be introduced to a large and diverse group, due to his many contacts and well-placed position within the community.

Other researchers with refugees have also described how a well-placed research assistant can play a useful role in establishing early trust relations between the researcher and participants, especially when the research assistant is from within the community (Bloch, 1999; Hynes, 2003). Hynes suggested that the lack of trust could be alleviated by employing a research assistant from the community in order to "ensure that barriers arising out of a general mistrust of strangers and people perceived to be in

authority would be overcome" (Refugee Women's Association 2002 in Hynes, 2003:14). Furthermore, in Bloch's (1999:379) experience, "the fact that the interviewers were known within their respective communities was seen as a definite advantage". Early in the interview process I was able to understand the value of this claim when I experienced only positive responses from the community after being introduced by, and working with, my assistant. It was clear that his position within the community placed me in a positive light. I often heard that the only reason some people accepted the invitation to participate in the research was because I was working with my research assistant in whose support for the project they trusted.

Ethically, I also had to consider the research assistant's position of authority within the community and whether these power relations forced people to participate out of fear of retribution if they refused. This, however, was a risk I minimized by thoroughly explaining the voluntary aspect of the research for both the assistant and the potential participants (see Appendices Two and Three). Overall, the use of a research assistant proved beneficial throughout all the initial stages of the research project – introduction to the community and finding participants, translating the research information sheet and consent form, 'inside' information about South Sudanese culture and traditions, and as an interpreter in one of the interviews.

### *Access to the community*

As mentioned in Chapter One, the South Sudanese community in Canberra is relatively small compared to other South Sudanese groups, for example in Melbourne and Sydney (Robinson, 2013). Numbers from the 2011 census revealed Victoria and NSW as having the largest presence of Sudan – or South Sudan-born people (31.5% and 27.1% respectively). The ACT population represented 1.9% of the total (Robinson, 2013). This meant that out of the total 22,855 who "reported being born in Sudan or South Sudan" at the 2011 census, a total of 434 lived in the ACT (Robinson, 2013:8).

It is important to recognize some particularities about the location of the study. The relatively small community of South Sudanese in Canberra may have had different settling and living experiences compared to other places such as the metropolitan or regional areas. In Canberra, public housing, often the first encounter in the rental market

for refugees arriving in Australia is widely dispersed across the city. The South Sudanese population tends to reside in the far north and the far south of the city with only a few members of the community located close to the city centre. This can produce a sense of isolation due to separation from others in the community. Furthermore, public transport in Canberra is limited, especially during weekends, which is normally an opportunity for community gatherings such as church services. At the time of the interviews, there was one church with services in the Dinka language. This church was located in the far south and people living in the northern areas were dependent on transport provided by friends and relatives to get there. Canberra has also been experiencing a chronic housing shortage (Nicholson, 2012) with high rental prices (Spiller, 2012:3) putting a further strain on people needing to apply for accommodation because of increasing family size or insecurity in their current housing. Finally, as regards employment, Canberra has relatively small demand for unskilled labour. As a public servant city with two universities, most employment opportunities are geared to those with post-secondary level of education or to students attending universities. This disadvantages many South Sudanese migrants, whose education has often been sporadic and curtailed as a result of their flight from conflict and their refugee status.

Despite the relatively small South Sudanese population in Canberra, there is a strong community who meet regularly to discuss topics of interest. The Sudanese Australian Community Association is located in the middle of the city at the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT (MARSS). This is where community meetings, celebrations and other gatherings are held and where the community leaders have their offices. With the help of my research assistant, I was given a chance to introduce my work at a community meeting organized by the South Sudanese community. Approximately 30 people attended the meeting. While women were underrepresented at this meeting, it gave me the opportunity to talk about my project as well as to meet some of the leaders of the community and some potential participants. I continued this introduction phase by regularly attending church services in order to help people become familiar with my presence and to initiate conversations about my work.

Through talking to people in church and through meeting South Sudanese students at the University of Canberra, I recruited my first participants for interviews. I then used a snowballing method to reach others to be part of the research. After several interviews

organized in this manner, I noticed similar demographic characteristics for all the participants: most were male, young and with advanced education. There was also a significant lack of female participants. I therefore contacted one of the older women I had met in church and subsequently was invited to a community meeting organized by Companion House (Canberra's centre for assisting survivors of torture and trauma) where several women were present. I gave another presentation on my research and spoke with the women about the possibility of interviewing them. Because of the women's limited English skills and the difficulties of organising separate interviews due to time-constraints, transport and various commitments, we collectively agreed to a group interview as the best option for interviewing these women. We decided to conduct the group interview at my home, with my husband providing transport for them. As a result, the women met my children and this proved to be a highly positive experience that opened up discussions on men's role in the community, their roles as parents, the lack of transport in Canberra, and other issues relating to everyday life. This group interview with six women, including a female translator, took approximately 5 hours and in the end it was agreed to continue the discussion at another date. The openness among the women and the relaxed atmosphere during both this and the subsequent interview initiated the development of a sense of trust between myself and the community.

The other interviews were conducted at various locations. I initially found available rooms both at the ANU and at the University of Canberra. After a while, I was invited to people's homes to conduct interviews there. This indicated an additional sense of welcoming, trust and acceptance of my research project. At the same time, it made the interviews easier by providing a more relaxed feeling shared between both the participants and myself.

Apart from the two group interviews were held with the same group of women most of the other interviews were conducted one-on-one. A total of six women participated in the group interviews. Conducting two group interviews with the same people was highly successful as the participants felt increasingly relaxed during the proceedings. The interview setting moved more easily from a formal interview to an informal one, where we discussed issues of concern and interest. While I also aspired to create this informal structure in the other interviews, it did not always happen, especially in the

interviews conducted in a more formal space such as at the universities or other public spaces. The most successful interviews were those conducted in people's homes where an implicit level of trust had been created in advance.

In one of the one-on-one interviews I needed my research assistant to stay as interpreter. The remaining participants all spoke English with the exception of those in the two group interviews. In those cases, we discussed whether the research assistant would interpret for these women but decided against this, due to both his background as an educated man within the community as well as there being a better opportunity for a much more open and relaxed atmosphere with only women present. Through his contacts and in collaboration with the group of women, I found another woman who was willing to participate in *and* interpret the interviews as well as contact the women, and organize the time and place for the group interviews. This process turned out to be neither fast nor easy. Time restrictions, transport issues, and reaching an agreement on both place and times for interviews, proved to be the most challenging aspects of the interviews overall.

During both the one-on-one interviews as well as the group interviews, I was constantly aware of the generosity of the participants. Not only did they give me much of their personal time (considering their very busy lives with many commitments such as employment, studies, exams and child responsibilities), the participants also generously shared their stories and their experiences concerning life in Australia. Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman (2010) reflected on the 'principle of reciprocity' when conducting research with refugee populations, suggesting the importance of giving back to the communities we study: "the risks and costs associated with participation in research can be offset by the delivery of direct, tangible benefits to those who participate" (2010:234). This reciprocity could entail giving money and/or food vouchers to the research participants to compensate for the time given in interviews. This mirrors Hynes' (2003:16-17) experiences with refugees, which emphasized how this "'principle of reciprocity and feedback' ... allows a degree of trust to be established". For a research student on a minimal budget, resources were not an option for me. In my situation, I found it useful and mutually beneficial to be present at community meetings and remaining at and participating in the informal meal and gathering afterwards, opening up my home for the interviews, and sharing my

experiences as a mother, and as a foreigner in Australia, as well as offering transport when needed.

Lammers (2007) suggested that trust and respect between the researcher and the researched is often dependent on context. Yet, at the same time, it has usually “something to do with dynamics of giving and receiving. It may entail being an attentive listener, disclosing intimacies about one’s own life, assisting a person to take her child to hospital, or to school, or simply sharing a meal” (Lammers, 2007:76-77). In a similar context, Marlowe (2009a) spoke of ‘being’ and ‘doing’ in accessing an ‘authentic story’ when conducting interviews with refugees. ‘Being’, Marlowe (2009a:44) explained, involves “informal and everyday interactions” where the researcher participates “more fully with the participants” through informal everyday interactions rather than as a researcher constantly with pen and paper in hand for note-taking. This ‘being’ helped me to appreciate the quotidian aspects of the participants’ lives, an important of refugees’ sense of belonging (Wise, 2005). “Doing” involves reciprocity between researcher and participants and “a sincere engagement”, where the researcher may “need to step outside the researcher’s initially established timelines and scheduled milestones” (Marlowe, 2009a:45). The researcher may be expected to help out with bureaucratic issues, problems relating to institutions, or translation and understanding of paperwork. In my case, providing more of my time through going to church, staying for food gatherings after church services, accepting invitations to lunch after interviews and joining in special events and celebrations, demonstrated my commitment to the community and my respect for their experiences. This involvement helped me understand these experiences better. This was confirmed to me after most of the interviews when the participants expressed their appreciation and enjoyment for being able to tell their story to someone who would listen and pay attention to them.

A final aspect of trust that emerged was the fact that I am Norwegian and my previous job was with the non-governmental organisation Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA). Most of the participants had heard about NPA through the organisation’s work in South Sudan associated with mine clearance and education. While I had not worked specifically on Sudan, my identification with the organisation, together with being Norwegian, was perceived by participants as a highly positive and trustworthy trait.

### *Ethical considerations*

I received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the Australian National University before any fieldwork started. While the project was approved, there were some limitations on the questions I was allowed to ask. Due to fear of provoking unnecessary feelings of despair or anxiety, I was not allowed to ask questions about the participants' past and their experiences during the war or in refugee camps. The risk of these topics emerging during the interviews was met by an agreement with Companion House to refer any participant with signs of distress to Companion House for support. These limitations proved fortuitous rather than a negative restriction because I was able to focus my questions on participants' current activities and experiences of living in Australia, without too much emphasis on the past. This corresponded with my emerging appreciation of the symbiotic relationship between integration and belonging (see Chapter Two).

Yet, early in the interviews, I realized it was difficult to avoid discussing people's past experiences in Sudan and refugee camps. The participants themselves raised these issues when discussing their experiences in Australia. References were often made to their lives in Sudan, and to both positive and negative experiences in refugee camps as well as during flight. These references to the past often involved a comparison with their life in Australia, engendering both positive and negative memories. After the interviews, all participants agreed that it had been a positive experience to talk about these issues and have someone express an interest. A similar finding was recalled by Drygerov, Drygerov and Raundalen (2000:414), who conducted interviews with people that had recently lost a loved one: "bereavement studies reveal a positive effect of being the focus of interest and concern". They found the same positive feedback when they examined how refugees responded to participating in research:

[Refugee adults] ...were really glad that researchers would come and talk to them and appreciated strongly the interest shown in them as a people and the problems they experienced in Norway. ... Refugees said they strongly wanted Norwegians to learn more about their situation and life as refugees in the country. (Dyregrov et al., 2000:418)

In my case, I found that participants' ability to tell and reflect upon their stories, combined with their curiosity about my own life and my openness in sharing personal

stories, helped access the participants' narratives and experiences. This emphasizes another reciprocal process between the researcher and the participant; a sense of mutual recognition and willingness to share stories which can develop into a level of trust between researcher and participant. Hynes (2003:14) concurred that:

...refugees are quite often glad to tell their histories to researchers, particularly if they have politicised the experience and recognise it in a political context. In fact, it has been argued that the telling of their stories, or 'bearing witness' actually assists in this process. ... [T]here needs to be recognition that a certain amount of intrusion into the life of the researched will occur.

I experienced similar feedback from my interviews and, despite sometimes struggling to get people to commit to an interview, all reflected positively on the experience afterwards. This occasional struggle with people's commitment to an interview represents another ethical dilemma. While I respected people's decision not to participate, my research assistant was persistent that people needed to be encouraged in decision-making. While I never received a direct 'no' to my request, it was difficult to set a time for the interview. I was often asked to call a person back or they would say that they would call me the following week: "I will come back to you". The importance of letting the participants make the decision whether to participate guided the whole research process. With the help of my research assistant, we managed to set dates for interviews with most of those who hesitated. Even those who hesitated expressed gratitude and gave positive feedback afterwards.

It was also vital to take into account my role as a white academic woman interviewing an African refugee population. Marlowe (2010b:66), suggested that as researchers we are "part of dominant culture compared to that of the Sudanese participants who represent an outside minority and marginalised community". This observation made it even more important to establish a relationship of trust and to adopt a "reflexive critical stance towards trying to understand what it might mean to be dominant" (Marlowe, 2010b:66). Within this context, I focused on developing rapport with the community based on similarities between me as a researcher and the participants. The fact that I was a student helped when interviewing other students, and the fact that I was female, married, a mother and also an immigrant separated from my family, helped in many



ways to develop a relationship of empathy with the community, especially with the women.

## Demographic characteristics

A total of 21 Sudanese men and women took part in this study – 10 men and 11 women. The participants ranged from 18 to over 55 years of age. Of the 21 participants, six women did not speak sufficient English and I used an interpreter during these interviews. For the protection of the participants I selected pseudonyms using common South Sudanese names. Table 1 provides an overview of the research participants and a brief introduction to the men and women who shared their stories with me.

**Table 3.1: Participants' demographics**

Name	Age	Education	Time in Australia	Occupation at time of interview	Level of English
<b>Group 1: men with formal education</b>					
Madiing	35-44	University	8 years	Student	Fluent
Garang	25-34	University	6 years	Student	Fluent
Yong	25-34	University	8 years	Student	Fluent
Mamer	25-34	University	8 years	Student	Fluent
Majier	25-34	University	9 years	Student	Fluent
Ater	25-34	University	6 years	Student	Fluent
Pajok	25-34	University	3 years	Student	Fluent
Anyang	35-44		5 years	Community worker	Fluent
Maduk	55+		7 years	Cleaner	Fluent
Chol	35-44		8 years	Priest	Fluent
<b>Group 2: women, mostly without formal education</b>					
Adhieu	45-54		4 years	Home duties	Beginner
Salma	45-54		5 years	Home duties	Beginner
Ajok	35-44		6 years	Home duties	Beginner
Ayen	25-34		6 years	Home duties	Beginner
Ladie	45-54		2 years	Home duties	Beginner
Ajang	25-34		8 years	Carer	Fluent
Adit	35-		2 years	Job searching	Fluent

<b>Adau</b>	44-54		7 years	Cleaner	Beginner
<b>Akoul</b>	18-24		1 year	Receptionist	Fluent
<b>Nyakor</b>	18-24	University	4 years	Student	Fluent
<b>Nyakiir</b>	45-54		9 years	Retired	Fluent

Time in Australia refers to time from arrival until 2010 when most interviews were completed. While most of the participants had completed the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) there were still significant differences in level of English knowledge among the participants. This was mainly due to previous education in South Sudan or in refugee camp.

As mentioned earlier, I employed snowball sampling in an attempt to reach people who would be interested in participating. One of the criticisms of the snowballing technique is the risk of attracting participants who are too similar due to a dependency on one network, thereby “producing a biased sample” (Jacobsen and Landau, 2003:12). As previously mentioned, after a few interviews I did notice demographic similarities among the participants. The decision to expand my networks and aim for greater diversity among the participants was made in order to increase the representativeness of my sample. Castles et al. (2002:184) echoed the same sentiment on qualitative research and reflected on “the need to make the voices of immigrants and refugees more representative”. They pointed out that it would be “crucial for this type of research not to rely on only one network” and to cover a variety of groups for such research” (Castles et al., 2002:184). I diversified my sample through attending church gatherings and women’s groups.

The interview phase of this research was time-consuming and often exhausting. The logistics involved attempts to set times for interviews and making sure the time and place for the interview was made in collaboration with the participants. As noted by Marlowe (2010b:37), “[C]ollaborative research requires a commitment and sincere engagement with process that may necessitate stepping outside a study’s established timelines and scheduled milestones”. Hence, the timeline for my interview period was prolonged due to unforeseen circumstances and the process of gaining trust with the community and the participants.

Rather than aiming for a specific number of participants, the goal was to have a sample with a broad demographic profile and to include young as well as older men and women, employed and unemployed. In my case, I discovered early on that there were a

certain number of topics that were of concern to all the participants. While they all discussed experiences with employment, or the lack thereof, safety and the important role of citizenship, I continued the interviews until I felt that the experiences expressed were following similar trajectories. Once I had saturated the topic together with broadening the demographics of the participants I could withdraw from data collection and start focusing on an understanding and analysis of the narratives (Groenewald, 2004).

I also soon became aware that I was dealing with two different groups among the participants – a division largely based on gender. The first group consisted mostly of young men currently studying or recently finished at university who demonstrated a generally positive outlook on their life experiences in Australia. This group also included three other men. These men already had employment and shared the educated young men's relatively positive view on life in Australia. The second group consisted of women without adequate knowledge of English and without employment. These women will be referred to as the 'women's group' whom I interviewed together in focus-groups. The other women spoke English (one of them still fairly basic) and were working, studying or a combination of both. My first impression during these interviews was that they had relatively negative experiences with Australian society through a thoughtful concern with their roles as mothers, and their lack of understanding of the 'system' involving schools, social services and housing. However, they also expressed a gratitude for landing in a safe and stable situation in Australia. The women with some English language skills and employment shared the women's group's frustrations and concerns on many aspects of Australian society through their role as parents. Some of these frustrations were related to generational conflicts and concerns with the expectations of raising their children in Australia. In some cases, there was a fear of possible intervention by state authorities in their children's upbringing. This reinforced a more negative experience of Australia among the women.

As the research continued, I distinguished more systematically between these two groups due to their different experiences. While I heard the shared stories of settling in Canberra, at the same time I was struck by their different experiences through structural domains of integration such as education, employment and gender. These structural differences among the participants are highlighted in later chapters.

### *Qualitative interviews*

The interviews began with an explanation of the consent form (Appendix One) and the research information brief (Appendix Two). We discussed possible areas of confusion and the participants had the opportunity to ask any questions that arose. The fact that the participants could withdraw from the interview at any point was also highlighted. I used a tape-recorder during the interviews with the approval of the participants. The interviews lasted between an hour-and-a-half and two hours. The two group interviews both lasted between 4 and 5 hours, coming to an end only due to other commitments among the women. The interviews were in-depth and open-ended as my intention was to let respondents tell their stories of settling and living in Australia as freely as possible. This relates back to the phenomenological framework where the focus is set on experiences of phenomena. These experiences were what helped give meaning to the development of belonging. While the interviews were guided by pre-set questions, I was open to any change of structure or change of focus with the aim of letting the conversation flow. I personally transcribed the interviews word-for-word “in order to allow the voices of research participants/informants to speak” (Groenewald, 2004:48) and added observation notes to each interview in order to complete the narrative. The recordings from the interviews were transferred into Microsoft Word documents and kept in a secure place.

I developed questions relating to Ager and Strang’s domains of integration (see Chapter Two) in an attempt to explore the everyday experiences of the participants. I wanted to understand whether these social relations were necessary for the development of a sense of belonging. While the interview schedule involved contacts both within the South Sudanese community and the wider Australian society, I was also interested in their emotional experiences associated with Ager and Strang’s domains and how their sense of self and their capabilities evolved from these experiences. While I started out with a theoretical background of the development of a sense of belonging, I became more attuned to participants’ *experiences* in the domains of employment, education, language, housing and safety, and how a sense of belonging related to these domains.

The interview schedule was based on five topics (see Appendix Four). The first focused on demographic background of the participants, beginning with personal information

including ‘ice-breaking’ questions relating to the participants’ age, marital status and number of years in Australia. This set a conversational tone for the interview and helped participants to relax.

The second part of the interview schedule examined the participants’ daily life in Australia. By asking questions about their relationships (in their private lives, at work and at university) together with questions on their social contacts and how they perceived the current political context in Australia, I tried to form a picture of people’s everyday lives. This second section also involved questions relating to participants’ subjective experiences of settlement in Australia, and their emotional response to settlement needs and rights.

The third part of the interview schedule dealt with relations, commitments and contacts that the participants had with family and/or friends back home in South Sudan or in exile elsewhere. The aim of these questions was to analyse whether these contacts influenced their daily life in Australia. Increasingly, research on refugees and migrants is dealing with these transnational links (see for example Horst, 2006) and their impact on people’s integration and their sense of belonging. While I wanted to explore the impact these transnational links had on the forming of relations in Australia, I realized early that these questions were not as fruitful as I had anticipated because most of the participants were not as willing to talk about their family in South Sudan. Furthermore, as a condition in my ethics approval, I was not permitted to ask too many questions about the participants’ background.

The fourth section examined the issue of citizenship, settlement more generally and specifically integration in relation to the political context in Australia. Topics relating to differences between South Sudanese and Australians were canvassed, especially relating to the public and media debates on the South Sudanese community (as discussed in Chapter One) where the community was ‘labelled’ as unsuitable for integration into Australian society. The aim of these questions was to explore the participants’ subjective responses to these debates and to analyse their impact on people’s experiences of integration.

The fifth and final section dealt with settlement procedures, the assistance they received on arrival and how this assistance influenced their initial and ongoing perceptions of Australia. The aim of these questions was to explore people's sense of control over own lives, both at the initial settlement process and also at later stages where assistance declined. Furthermore, I wanted to discover which links the participants had established with institutions such as social services and the police. These questions were designed to explore issues relating to agency and social structure.

Inspired by the phenomenological tradition, I endeavoured to let the voices of the South Sudanese men and women come through in order "to hear the description of their experiences and the impact of those lived experiences on their daily lives" (Baker, 2007:36). While I had prepared questions for each section in the interview schedule, some questions were omitted while others were added, based on the discussions and the sense of ease with different topics in the interviews. The use of qualitative interviews enhances the chances that the participants' own experiences are heard. Korac (2001:9) discovered that qualitative interviewing "is an important way of learning from refugees because it permits the fuller expressions of refugee experiences in their own terms". Qualitative interviews allowed the participants to be active parts in the interviews and in sharing details of their experiences, while reducing the sense of "treating refugees as data generating objects". It secured "their active involvement in the construction of data about their lives" (Korac, 2001:15). This focus encouraged me in the analysis process to remember that an important aspect of the analysis was to let the voices of the participants test the value of the theories and frameworks of integration and belonging.

As the research developed, I gradually became aware that a sense of belonging was integral to the process of integration, rather than an end point of the process. In this way my analysis emphasized personal experiences through aspects of belonging: subjective self, agency and structural positioning. By listening to the participants' experiences with Ager and Strang's various domains of integration I began developing themes from the interviews which are discussed in more detail in the next section. The questions asked in the interviews led to the emergence of these themes related to the participants' daily life: their experience of feeling settled; what had encouraged this process; networks and trust within the community and towards the wider Australian society; and everyday social interactions.

## **The emergence and recurrence of themes**

Throughout the fieldwork process, I realized that the stories unfolding were multilayered tales of everyday struggle, joy, frustration and achievement. Together with these observations their stories reinforced the importance of belonging, as the themes revealed stories of connection, lack of connections, expression, value, engagement in everyday activities, and equal participation, together with the inability to participate and a lack of engagement. The emergence of these themes of worries, frustrations, isolations, hope, participation and aspirations led to the identification of key concepts such as participation, recognition and respect, contribution, redistribution and misrecognition. I charted how these concepts related to self, agency and structural positioning.

I coded each interview and recognized narratives relating to the abovementioned themes. I then grouped the different themes and developed categories relating to the domains of integration as explored by Ager and Strang (2008). These domains had different meanings for the men and women. The domains of primary concern for the women were housing, employment, language, safety and stability – the indicators of markers and means and facilitators. The men were concerned with employment, education, citizenship and rights, safety and stability – the markers and means as well as the foundations. While some domains were important to both men and women, it was the gendered differences in the experiences within the domains that set the participants apart. Out of these experiences, the themes of isolation, frustration and worry emerged in the narratives by the women, while the themes of participation, hope and aspirations emerged among the men. For these findings to emerge, I had to read and re-read the interviews numerous times to identify and isolate common themes. I regularly went back to the complete transcript of each interview in order to obtain an accurate context of a quote and to understand the background of the narrative.

### ***Defining, elaborating and understanding themes***

The gendered themes that emerged from my data during the early interview phase continued throughout the elaboration and understanding of the data. I noted how they correlated closely with the domains of integration developed by Ager and Strang

(2008). In an endeavour to contextualize the possible development of a sense of belonging, I explored the topics and themes expressed by the participants when discussing these domains of integration. To do this, I analysed these domains within the framework of belonging adopted by Hamaz and Vasta, which focused on self, agency and structural positioning. This allowed me to appreciate the subjective and emotional experiences of the participants' settlement process.

Focusing on concepts in the literature relating to self and agency, I then analysed the interplay between participants and their structural positions. I linked the integration domains to the concepts of participation, opportunities and contribution, isolation and barriers, recognition and respect, disrespect, frustration and fear, misrecognition and labelling. These were concepts that emerged in the interviews and also in the literature on belonging. Table 3.2 lays out my grid of the various themes and concepts that emerged in the interviews.

**Table 3.2: Layout of analysis section – chapters 4-7**

Specific themes relating to integration	Focused Concepts	Aspects of belonging	Thesis chapter
Language and cultural knowledge, housing, safety and stability	Hopes and worries, frustrations and relations, acceptance	Self	Chapter 4
Citizenship, education, employment, relations	Participation and contribution, barriers and isolation	Agency	Chapter 5
Housing, employment, racism	Recognition, redistribution and misrecognition, status and identity Labelling	Status, self and agency, structural positioning	Chapter 6
Gender and being a refugee Two-way process	Mutuality and common belonging	Emotions, longing and relations	Chapter 7

To retain the subjective experiences as the main focus of this thesis (in the spirit of the phenomenological tradition) I decided to highlight individual stories throughout the chapters. This research therefore narrates direct experiences of integration and belonging and aims to make meaningful the 21 participants' social world in Australia. What emerged from the analysis was how their lives in Australia – with the struggles,



hope and achievements this entail – are based on a longing for satisfying quotidian life experiences. This was what belonging meant to them.

While some of the participants in this study are given a more detailed background, this does not mean that their experiences are more valuable in the overall analysis. This detail is used as a means of giving the narratives a more ‘personal tone’. Outside these personal stories, I present quotes from all the participants in shorter indented text in order to further develop the stories of integration and belonging. The aim is to provide an understanding of the experience of a settlement process through letting the voices of participants of this research emerge while keeping my integrity as a researcher, along with respect and understanding of the uniqueness of each individual story.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presented the methodology, the participants and the data gathering for this research project. Adopting a phenomenological framework, I have emphasized the need for understanding integration as subjective experiences based on narratives that emerge from interviews with participants.

This methodology allowed me to explore the links between belonging (through Hamaz and Vasta’s focus on self, agency and structural positioning) and integration (through Ager and Strang’s ten domains within markers and means, social connections, foundations and facilitators). The research emphasizes the interplay of belonging and integration set in a context of the public and political landscape at the time of the interviews (see Figure 3.1). Through qualitative interviews I conducted the conversations and discussions around these domains. Subsequent data analysis led me to shift the research focus from a wider approach of integration policies towards a more intimate focus on quotidian experiences of belonging and mutuality.

An important factor that emerged early in the interview phase was the different experiences of the integration process based on gender. This gendered separation is analysed and explored throughout the thesis as a way of explaining important differences in experience, while also bringing in other dimensions that can explain some of the gender differences, such as employment, language knowledge and family

relations. The following chapters contain the narratives and the themes that I build on in the analysis of the development of a sense of belonging as the process of integration unfolds.

### Everyday Hopes, Worries and Self-Esteem

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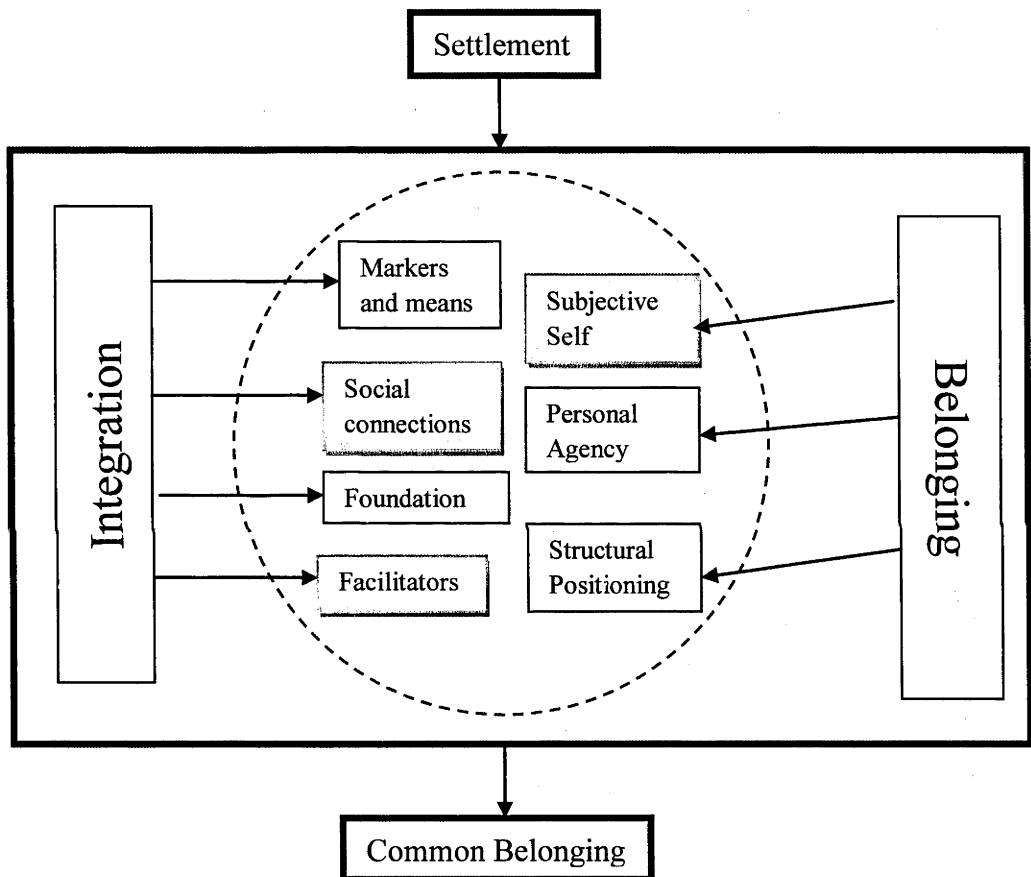
**T**his study explores the relationship between integration and belonging based on narratives developed from interviews with South Sudanese Australians living in Canberra. In Chapters Two and Three, I suggested that a refinement of the integration framework proposed by Ager and Strang (2008; 2005), linked to Hamaz and Vasta's (2009) concept of belonging can enhance an understanding of what settlement means to those who experience it. This linkage helps to emphasize how integration and belonging occurs in quotidian events where people conduct their lives in daily interaction with others.

So far in this thesis I have looked at past and current contexts in Australia and also worldwide trends associated with immigration, settlement and integration. Chapter One looked at public debates as well as recent trends in refugee policies, especially those related to South Sudanese former refugees. Chapters Two and Three explored the concepts of integration and belonging as the main focus of this thesis as well as the methodological issues that arose in conducting my research. In the following chapters, I bring in the voices of the South Sudanese men and women who participated in this study, focusing attention on conversations regarding issues of settlement, integration and belonging. In the pursuit of everyday experiences I split the remainder of the thesis into four substantive chapters where Chapter Four examines belonging and self; Chapter Five looks at the relationship between belonging and agency; Chapter Six takes into account the theory of recognition and redistribution and explores further aspects of belonging and structural positioning; and finally Chapter Seven brings together the three previous chapters and analyses the interdependence of self, agency and structural positioning by discussing concepts of mutual accommodation and common belonging.

This chapter starts with a more detailed look into the pathway from exile to arrival in Australia as refugees. From here I move to the analyses of the narratives from the interviews. This chapter focuses on the *self* within the exploration of belonging.

Looking back at the diagram introduced in Chapter Three, this chapter examines participants' sense of self and its relationship with Ager and Strang's domains of language, safety and cultural knowledge – the *facilitator* indicators. This chapter also explores the influence of *social connections* on a sense of self, and how this is interlinked with issues of safety and cultural knowledge.

**Figure 4.1: Diagram showing aspects of belonging and domains of integration explored in Chapter Four**



### **Experiencing the domains of integration**

Throughout my fieldwork and early in the analysis process, I identified the development of two separate but interrelated narratives. The first one engaged with opportunities within, and positive attitudes towards, life in Australia. The other narrative was occupied with isolation and expressed a more negative outlook on life in Australia. There were several nuances in the stories unfolding from the interviews, and I explore

these nuances throughout the following chapters. These two narratives eventually formed the basis of my analysis and led me to divide the participants into two groups.

The first group, mainly men, expressed a more positive outlook, while the second group, the women, represented a more negative outlook on life in Australia. There were two main areas that stood out from the conversations with the men: (a) the importance and the benefits of a citizenship, and (b) the opportunities associated with education and employment – Ager and Strang's (2008) foundations and the means and markers of integration (see figure 4.1). Within these two areas there was a myriad of topics that the men were concerned with which interacted with other domains of integration.

Among the female participants a rather different story emerged early in the interviews. While the women expressed a sense of security as a result of feeling that they were in a safe country, they also voiced anxiety as a result of the limited connections they had formed within Australia. An all-important factor for the women was knowledge of the English language (facilitators) and this was linked to all other areas such as the means and markers (especially employment and housing), foundations, and social interrelations. Issues of language, employment, housing, intergenerational conflicts and understanding of Australian laws and norms were pervasive and preoccupied a large part of the discussions I had with the women.

In this thesis, I look at these different experiences and show that some of the many differences between the two narratives were based on people's different status and roles in society – parent versus childlessness, student/employed versus unemployed, young versus old, and male versus female. While I did not start out with gender differences in mind as part of my research agenda, I realized early during the research that this dimension could not be ignored.

As will be elaborated further in the following chapters, many of the narratives developed in the interviews with the men can be placed within the indicators of *means and markers* with their focus on opportunities in the domains of education and employment. Other themes I discussed with the men could be placed within the *foundations* indicators due to their emphasis on the domain of citizenship. With women, the central topic that emerged was the issue of language; thus I placed their narratives

under the indicators of the *facilitators*. Language was also discussed in association with various other themes but mainly through indicators of *social connections*, through their relations, or rather lack thereof, with both the Australian community and government institutions. In the interviews with both men and women, I focused on the *experiences* the participants had in the abovementioned domains. Men and women also experienced differently other domains of integration such as safety and cultural knowledge (facilitators).

Ager and Strang sought to “provide a coherent conceptual structure for considering, from a normative perspective, what constitutes the key components of integration” (2008:167). They emphasized that none of the suggested domains were more important than any other and that they were interlinked (Khoo, 2012). My research supports this finding. However, I contribute to this model of integration by showing how the concept of belonging is integral to these domains and by focusing on the subjective and emotional experiences associated with the domains. While the *interplay* between self and agency is decisive in my narratives, analytically I need to examine self and agency separately due to the different gendered narratives that emerged from the interviews. This allows me to emphasize the link between structure and subjectivity. By looking at belonging and integration expressed through a sense of self (discussed in this chapter), agency (discussed in Chapter Five) and structure (Chapter Six), I make the different experiences among participants more meaningful.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the narratives developed by both men and women during the interviews. It looks at the sense of *self* among men and women and it depicts two quite different descriptions of their lives in Australia in relation to language, cultural knowledge, safety and stability. I begin, however, with a brief description of South Sudanese culture, the Sudanese conflict, and the plight of refugees in order to contextualize these experiences.

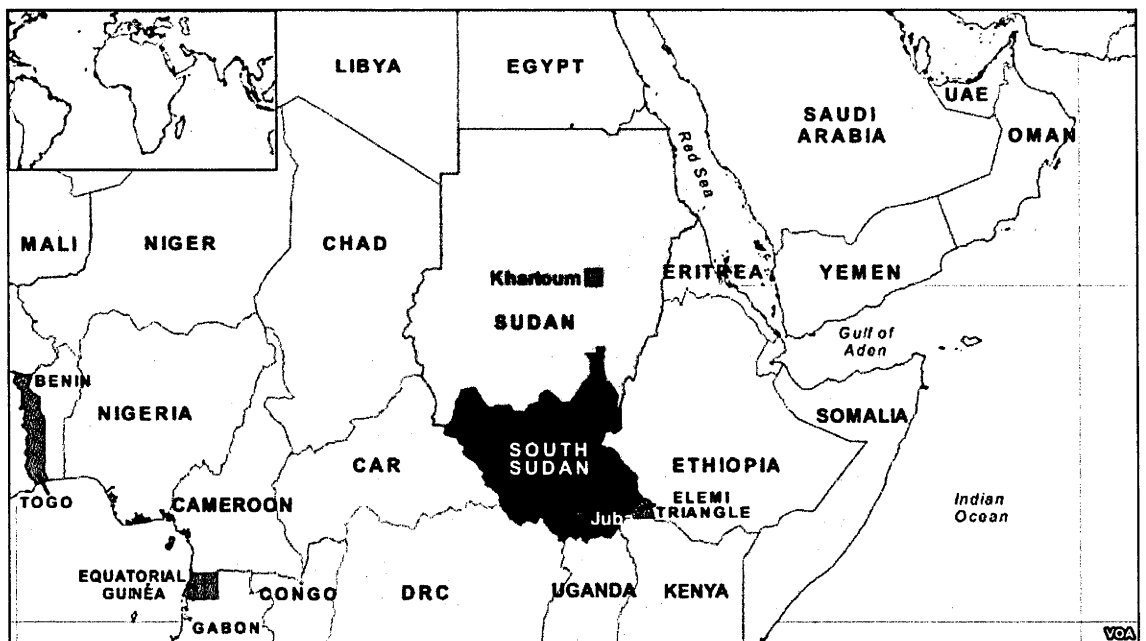
### **War, flight and life changes**

On 9 July 2011, the South Sudanese in Canberra celebrated their independence from Sudan and the ‘birth’ of a new state – South Sudan. I joined them in the celebrations at Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT (MARSS) along with most of the

participants in my research present. What they celebrated was the end of an almost ongoing conflict in Sudan since the year before Sudanese independence from the British in 1956 (Deng, 1998; Browne, 2006; Scroggins, 2003). The conflict has been described as representing “a struggle between the non-Muslim, black African rebels in the South and the Muslim Arab dominated government in the North” (Shakespeare-Finch and Wickham, 2009:3). Rogier (2005:5) however, refers to the conflict as two wars that “stopped between 1972 and 1983” and while the North-South conflict can describe the first war, this is “an oversimplified and therefore largely inaccurate description”. According to Rogier (2005:6), the two wars have been “highly complex and this complexity has fuelled various interpretations” including a war between the north and south “rooted in racism, slave trade, and British ‘Southern policy’”, conflict due to economic exploitation, and a “war over leadership” (Rogier, 2005:6). A Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CAP) was signed between the southern rebels and the Khartoum government on January 9, 2005. The CAP gave the “the people of southern Sudan their first opportunity to exercise the right of self-determination” (L. Deng in Shandy, 2007:21). Following the CAP, the referendum was held on 9 January 2011 on secession between Sudan and South Sudan, and the independence of South Sudan was achieved in July 2011 (see Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2: Map including Sudan, South Sudan and bordering countries**

(Source: Voice of America, see <http://www.voanews.com>)



During the two wars in Sudan, approximately 2 million people died, about 5.5 million were displaced and of these 600 000 men and women, children and adults left Sudan, ending up as refugees and asylum seekers (Shakespeare-Finch and Wickham, 2009). Of these 600 000, approximately 22 000 arrived in Australia.

For South Sudanese men and women leaving their home, the main routes and destinations were to Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia. Others fled further north to Egypt as their first country of asylum. Shandy (2007:69) has observed how the “flight from the country of origin [is] not always a linear journey. The promise of improved conditions in Sudan or, as was more likely, the deterioration of conditions in the country in which they were seeking refuge [...] prompted a retracing of steps back to Sudan”. Constant fear and insecurities marked the flight to their first country of asylum. Beswick (2001:85) presented one example where a total of 4,000 men and women left the area of Malwal Dinka country together but only “approximately 2,000 made it; the others died of thirst, hunger, and lion attacks”. Along with many similar stories, it is now acknowledged that the experiences of refugee migration have been both horrific and dangerous, adding a level of anxiety for people fleeing, despite their enormous strength and survival instincts. Their determination must not be forgotten when considering their arrival in a third-country settlement. This and the ability to survive under the most horrendous situations can lead to later trauma and other problems (Bracken and Petty, 1998; Marlowe, 2010a; Schweitzer et al., 2006; Westoby, 2005). However, it can also lead to a strong and dedicated population grateful for their safety and a persistence in creating a future for self and family.

South Sudanese men and women in Australia belong mainly to one of the two main tribal groups, the Dinka or the Nuer. Most often, they came through Kenya initially, where they had spent years in refugee camps. Most of the arrivals in Australia are from the Dinka tribal group, meaning that the main languages spoken are Dinka and Arabic (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007b). The gender balance among the people arriving from Sudan and South Sudan is almost equal with males constituting 53.3% of the total arrivals (Robinson, 2013).

Conflict and flight impact greatly on family relations, community relations and community structures (Shandy, 2007). Shakespeare-Finch and Wickham (2009:5) have



shown that “[c]oping and resilience themes for life in Sudan included family and community support, religious faith, and personal qualities such as acceptance of the situation or determination to survive”. Loss of loved ones and of family and community networks due to war and flight means that support from traditional sources diminishes, raising the risk of isolation, loss of guidance and a lack of immediate networks in a difficult phase of people’s lives. These difficulties are reinforced when refugees settle in countries where family reunion processes are restricting. Robinson (2013:13) has explained why so many South Sudanese seek to reunite the family in Australia and the obstacles they face:

Many Sudan- and South Sudan-born residents have cherished the dream of reuniting their family in Australia and have worked hard to save the money needed to sponsor family members. But they perceive that the door to fulfilling their dream is now closed. By 2011-2012, both the total number of places in the offshore humanitarian program offered to Africans (20.1%), and the share of this allocated to Sudanese people, had dramatically declined.

War and flight also lead to changes or a complete break in employment and/or education. This leads to a deficit in human capital that people bring with them to third-country resettlement. Gender differences in education levels can in part be linked back to the ‘phenomenon’ of the ‘Lost Boys’. The ‘Lost Boys’ was the name given to numerous boys who were separated from their parents, families and communities during the Sudanese conflict and were forced to walk, often “incredible distances and surviving vast deserts, hunger, sickness and conflict settings to find relative ‘safe’ haven in Ethiopia from 1987-1991, and then arriving at Kenya’s Kakuma refugee camp in 1992” (Marlowe, 2010b:9). As noted by Harris (2009:2): “[D]espite the worldwide attention received by the Lost Boys in media, academia and popular culture, Sudanese young women remain relatively invisible”. Further, Hatoss and Huijser (2010:154) noted how the Lost Boys often “were educated in the refugee camps when they fled from Sudan and went to Ethiopia and later to Kenya where they had more stable and structured classes. In contrast, the girls typically stayed behind in their homeland and joined the boys later”. This situation together with “the way Sudanese traditional culture views women ... women are expected to be at home and support the family, while men are expected to find a job and make enough money to support the family” (Hatoss and Huijser, 2010:156) meant that women met even more barriers than men in their

educational opportunities: “women have many barriers mainly due to their household chores and the duties associated with bringing up their children” (Hatoss and Huijser, 2010:156).

Shifts in the value of existing human and social capital occur in situations where people experience hardships and where they must rely on new relations and unfamiliar situations when re-establishing their lives. These backgrounds and resources which the South Sudanese brought into Australia, lead to the following questions:

1. What impact does education have on a sense of belonging in a new country?
2. How does knowledge of the language in the host country influence a person’s experience of integration and belonging?
3. How do new and unfamiliar institutions and laws impact on refugees’ experiences in a new country?

These questions are addressed in this chapter by looking at their impact on self, self-image and self-esteem.

### **Language and the ‘chain of belonging’**

The first group I came into contact with were men undertaking a university degree. The majority were young men continuing the education they had commenced either in Sudan or in a refugee camp. These seven men were Madiing, Garang, Yong, Mamer, Majier, Ater and Pajok. Many of them were working part-time to support their studies, and many aspired to undertake a PhD. This meant that I could share my experience of studying with them. They understood my intentions and the experiences of research and most were more than willing to assist in my research. It also meant that a rapport was formed between the men and myself early on in the interviews.

An easy-going, friendly manner was also established in dealing with the three other men interviewed for this study. Anyang, Maduk and Chol were already employed and two of them had children. Maduk was observably older than the rest. In spite of being in a different situation from the men at the university, these three also shared an understanding of why I was conducting my project. They were all positive about being

interviewed and were willing to share their stories in order to help highlight the South Sudanese situation in Australia. With most of the men, the interviews moved through reflections on issues of social participation and contribution, together with a hope for a future that involved family, access to education and employment. This positive outlook on life in Australia was evident, in varying degrees, in all the conversations with the men.

I developed a different kind of platform for conversations with the women. As pointed out in Chapter Three, the interviews with the women were conducted in two different ways: the focus group interviews on two different occasions, and the face-to-face interviews. The group referred to as the 'women's' group throughout the thesis consisted of six women: Adhieu, Salma, Ajok, Ayen, Ladie and Ajang. In my interviews with these women, there was a strong sense of privacy regarding husbands and family matters. This was linked to a discussion on what information was legitimate to discuss with others and what was considered the realm of the intimate family. For example, there were many discussions and lots of laughter when it was observed that my husband would take children out to play while I could sit inside and talk with the women. According to the women, this was something a Sudanese man would rarely do. Expanding on these differences between our cultures made it easier to explore the topics of gender, women's roles, and children. While some topics were difficult to discuss due to concerns of privacy, the focus group still managed to broadly cover the daily lives of the women. The women were especially open to discuss matters that did not directly involve what happens within the four walls of their homes.

I initially grouped the other women as a separate category due to their ability to speak English and their experience with employment or education in Australia. All but one spoke English so I conducted these interviews on a face-to-face basis. A translator was present with the one woman, Adit, who spoke limited English. Adit, Adau, Akoul, Nyakor and Nyakiir were all either working, studying or recently retired from working in Australia. While this made their experiences different from the women without English knowledge, employment or education, I soon realized that the topics and themes emerging from these interviews were very similar to the ones from the women's group. With all the women, the frustrations with Australian institutions and the worries about the future were present in their interviews. Furthermore, when discussing

settlement, integration and belonging, their identity as women and their strong sense of being mothers (with all the responsibilities that this entailed) gave an overarching impression of worry in their daily lives.

All but one were mothers. The one woman not a mother at the time of the interview was expecting her first child shortly after the interview. As a mother myself, this not only meant that we could share similar experiences of bringing up children, but also that there were areas of concern that related specifically to being a parent. These areas of concern emerged as important to their sense of self throughout the interviews both within the focus group and with the face-to-face interviews. It framed many of the specific topics discussed. Their experiences of frustrations and unfamiliarity with social institutions in Australia lowered their self-esteem, as will be explored further below.

I start by looking into the role of self and the narratives developed in the interviews with the women. The first aspect I examine is the role of language. Considered by Ager and Strang (2008) as fundamental in the settlement process due to its basic role in most daily interactions, the influence of language on a sense of self emerged very early on in the interviews – especially among the women who spoke little English.

### *Language and ‘culture shock’*

Language is much more than the physical act of speaking, as confirmed by Atwell, Gifford and McDonald-Wilmsen (2009:678) who noted how language had a major role in the settlement and integration process:

Mastery of the language of the host country is not purely instrumental – being able to communicate and access information – but also fundamentally about power and an individual’s position within the broader social structure of society.

As an important domain, language is “consistently identified as central to the integration process” (Ager and Strang, 2008:182). I will here demonstrate how both language and cultural knowledge, as ‘facilitators’ of integration, were strongly linked to the realisation of a positioned sense of self. There was a clear difference between men and

women in terms of language ability. Women tended to lack knowledge of the English language and this emotionally impacted on their sense of self. The women, especially those in the women's focus group, spoke about the lack of an ability to speak and understand English as impacting on most areas of their daily lives, from everyday conversations with neighbours and involvement with schools, to understanding of social norms and institutions.

The men in this study all spoke fluent English and were therefore less concerned with the issue of language. They discussed language mainly in reference to how South Sudanese women arriving in Australia often spoke little English. For instance, Maduk expressed concern for such women. He was one of the older men in this study and knew English before he arrived in Australia. While he had years of experience working in political affairs in Sudan, as well as in his first country of exile, Maduk had experienced downward social mobility in Australia. Since arriving, he had worked as a cleaner, while providing some translation work on the side. By helping others in his interpreting and translating work, he was able to reflect on the benefits of language for people and the difficulties for those who were not proficient. He spoke of the difficulties women without any former education experienced in learning English:

I think because some of our community, especially ladies, who will never go to school, they find it very difficult to find a job in Australia. And they need more time to learn the language, they can do the job but they cannot communicate and communication is very important. If you work with someone and you don't know his language or his...it is very hard. That is why it is a disadvantage for them, they are eager to find a job but because of language failure and their limit of communication language it is very hard for them settle here in Australia. (Maduk)

Relating language directly to the difficulties of settling, Maduk echoed the concern of the women interviewed. For instance, the importance of language was emphasized by Nyakiir, one of the older women with fluent English, who was very concerned about women arriving in Australia without this advantage:

Language is the key for everything. If you know the language everything is going to be easy for you because if you know the language you can communicate, if you can't communicate you can't do anything but if you got a language you can do whatever

you want. Like Australia here, if you know the language everything is going to be easy for you.

This strong statement of the value of language was common among the participants, and even more so for those without sufficient knowledge of English who had experienced these difficulties first-hand. Even the men and women who spoke English more fluently could still empathize with this difficulty. They all considered knowledge of the official language in the receiving country as one of the most important factors for a successful integration process. As expressed by a member of the women's group: "you haven't settled because you don't speak English, you are still starting to learn English and if you learn English how long will it take to...for then to get a job or something so..." (Selma). Because the women without adequate English experienced a lack of ability to communicate with others in society, they felt left out of many social activities. Without adequate English there were fewer (or no) jobs available and the prospects of continuing to study English after the compulsory English classes were limited due to lack of childcare, lack of family support as well as a lack of the necessary qualifications to study. (All entrants to Australia on a Humanitarian Visa are entitled to and expected to complete up to 510 hours of free English instruction, see Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), Department of Immigration and Border Control (2014)). These difficulties associated with language impacted on the women's self-esteem and the way they experienced their own worth in the society:

Language is a problem, if you don't have the language then you can't do anything, you can't work, you can't go anywhere. It is good to sort of get a job and then understand what the job is saying, to read papers and instructions and...but if you don't really read English or speak English it is hard, you can't follow anything up...so language is a big barrier. (Adhieu)

Many women also commented on how language impeded all other aspects of everyday life: "because there is no chance of getting a job because of the English, you cannot work, you cannot change your life and it is not settlement" (Adhieu). As apparent in this statement, language and employment were both seen as something more than the advantage of earning a living and being able to communicate. At the heart of the conversations with the women was the claim that settlement was a difficult challenge without English.

While government advice and finance in the early phase of the settlement process were appreciated, the inability to participate like those around them became a frustrating aspect of their lives in Australia. For the women, this settlement started back in Africa. They counted as early government assistance: the early information sessions about life in Australia; help with flights from refugee camps; together with the initial reception at airports in Australia. This help was highly valued, as expressed by one member of the women's group:

So it all starts, it all starts when you come to Australia, maybe from Nairobi, you will go on the plane and prepare for coming to Australia and then they will start at the airport, start doing good things, until you come to Australia. They give you food and show you where to go and what do to and things like that, which is really good. (Ajok)

All women agreed that the assistance they received after they arrived helped them significantly during their initial days in Australia:

When you come here from Africa you come with your hands, you have nothing, but when you come the government will support you, they will give you money to live on, they will give you a house, like a government house or whatever, they will help you find a house and then you will start your life, so it is a good thing, it is a good start. (Selma)

"We all wished it continued", the members of the women's group stated while laughing. Yet, when this initial help stopped, the women started to recognize the difficulties of settlement. This was when everyday activities began to absorb their efforts:

When all these things are settling down and you are in the house the government gives you with your kids and you have to wake up in the morning and go to school and you know, you have to think of what to do and then you know...life goes on. (Salma)

Many women discovered that this stage of settlement was far more difficult than they anticipated. Unable to support themselves, their sense of control over own lives diminished and this greatly influenced their sense of self-esteem. For these women, the inability to find a job, mainly due to child responsibilities, influenced how they saw themselves in their life in Australia. Their aspirations and dreams had involved the

ability to look after themselves, to bring up their children and to live a life like their neighbours, as exemplified by Ayen in the women's group:

If you compare yourself with the neighbour that is next to you, they can wake up in the morning, then jump in the car and then go to their workplace and then work and then later on come back and just come to the house whereas I can jump on the bus and then another bus and I can take three buses just to go to school and then when I comes back there is another bus...I guess that is not integration, we haven't settled if I can put it that way.

Language also impacted on the ability to form broader social relations. Ager and Strang (2008:177) refer to the bonds (relations within the Sudanese community), bridges (relations into the wider community) and links (relations to social institutions) as fundamental "in driving the process of integration at a local level". For the South Sudanese women, social relations with others in the community, especially Australians, were cherished, yet difficult to form. While some of the women expressed difficulties communicating with Australians due to their language difficulties, a simple act of acknowledgment by, or attention from, neighbours was highly appreciated. This experience of being noticed by others heightened their positive sense of self. As expressed by Adhieu in the women's group and told by the translator:

Adhieu has an old man that lives next to her and what he does when there is grass in her backyard he comes and just mows it and then there is a police at the other side and that police always comes and says hello to her...she is saying that her neighbours are really good. And she is saying that if I lock the door and go away I never bother to worry about the neighbours because her neighbours are good, good. And the neighbours know...if someone comes and knock on her door and she is not at home the neighbours will come and say that no, she is not at home.

This statement reinforces Buonfino's (2007) point about the vital role of neighbourhood in the integration process. Even without language, there were ways of developing a sense of 'knowing' and relating to the neighbours: "[D]espite not knowing them, people share space with them and a relationship of mutual respect can go a long way towards creating a good sense of place and belonging" (Buonfino, 2007:15). As the above quote illustrates, this often alleviates some of the language barriers that migration can create.



The same appreciation of a 'two-way' process of integration was noted by the working women with fluent English. Adit made special mention of the teachers she met when studying English. What made this domain of language even stronger for some of the women was the positive experience of *recognition* in other places outside the classroom. In some cases, the teacher would offer them a ride home after class or home from the shops. On other occasions, when asked about new friendships in Australia, teachers were again identified, as described here by Adit:

I have a teacher, she is a really nice lady, she talks to me...she is my friend here because one day she saw me on the street, she pulled up the car and stopped there and she came and greeted me and yes, she is a nice lady.

Such simple acts of recognition can play an important role in people's sense of connectedness with a new society. While the social connections – the bridges between communities – were not discussed in great detail, the few that were discussed were highly valued. Furthermore, when discussing other areas of importance for the women, such as employment, housing and generational conflicts, the presence or absence of social relations stood out. These relations are vital for the acknowledgement of self and for the development of a strong sense of self-esteem. As explored by Buonfino (2007:12), social connections can inhibit depression: "Having no or few points of reference in life can lead some individuals to experience loneliness, depression or anxiety". A sense of mutual acquaintanceship between the South Sudanese women and their neighbours – through a smile and through helping out – were interpreted by the women as a strong indication of feeling welcomed.

Men also discussed bridges with Australian society, and related these directly to a sense of belonging. Mamer explained how his sense of belonging in Australia was dependent on feeling welcomed by the friends he had made:

Yes, I feel I am, I feel that I am settled in Canberra [...] I made some friends, Australian friends, I don't mean my Sudanese friends...so I feel there is a chain of belonging here...yes, so I think I have settled here. And it would be very good if I find a job in Canberra, then I wouldn't move anywhere. ...one of the factors that I feel...what make me belong here is the help from other people, organisations and individuals.

This 'chain of belonging' articulates how a sense of belonging develops through a step-by-step, two-way process of interaction in the new society. For Mamer, developing relations not only within the South Sudanese community but also with the wider Australian society was followed by a sense of support from organizations, such as the Companion House and MARSS. His aspirations of a job in Canberra would further enhance this chain of belonging. This step-by-step process emphasizes the mutuality behind an integration process where people experience a feedback from the new society in the practice of social relations. As noted by Buonfino (2007:6):

Belonging is as complex as it is intuitive: in day-to-day life, people exhibit a need to belong in their desires to have a family, be a part of a community, a member of a church, a player in a team, a part of a gang. Belonging can connect people to others around them, as well as leading to a sense of being valued, recognised and listened to.

For Mamer, this chain of belonging was part of strengthening his sense of self and self-esteem through the increased social contacts, especially the bridges and the links. Also important was the hope of future employment. As a student, he developed relations with other students as well as with fellow employees in his part-time job. For Mamer, language acquisition eased his process of settlement and a feeling of belonging:

I give credit to the language because without the language I would I would never be able to get friends...I was able to get help from the... I had...I had an employment agent, my employment agent became a friend because I could understand what she said and she could understand what I wanted and from there I think I got my first paid job and then I actually worked hard to help people back. And then I think, with the language I...it was helpful...very helpful...

For many women, the inability to speak English, and the limited knowledge of how state institutions operated, negatively influenced their sense of belonging. This permeated the conversations of the women and was expressed by some as a 'culture shock'. Many women felt overwhelmed by the Australian laws, norms and social services and, as a result, felt a lack of control over their family's circumstances. Again, it is important to note that all these women were mothers, or a mother-to-be. Both the mothers without English knowledge as well as those who spoke English expressed this same lack of comprehension. This minimal English, together with minimal involvement

at school, led to many misunderstandings which heightened the frustration felt among the mothers. Ladie, in the women's group explained how frustration was due to a lack of mutual understanding:

The teachers at school...don't understand our problems, like we have kids that come from Africa that don't eat, they don't eat breakfast, they don't eat lunch, they don't eat...lettuce...you put lettuce in their bread it is like eating grass, like that, they don't know it, but then we have trouble these days with teachers that are saying that we don't feed our kids. But then the kids are terrible...imagine if you come from the refugee camp where there is no food, and then you come to Australia where there is a lot of food, it is difficult for the mothers to even do the shopping, because I myself, it took me a long time to even eat...what is it called, lettuce with tomato, to put them together and eat them, it has taken me a long time to do that, and as well as the kids, the food that we cook home is more soup, the kids cannot take soup to school.

As Ladie illustrated above, even with language knowledge, cultural knowledge and more general understanding of Australian life and laws were relatively low among many women. Those who experienced this 'cultural shock' when they arrived soon learnt that 'ways of doing things' were dramatically different from South Sudan. This was reinforced when women talked about how family issues were resolved. Only in very rare cases would people from outside the extended family be called upon in situations concerning the family. As explained by Akoul, who was expecting her first child at the time of the interview: "when it comes to family issues we keep it internal and it has to be an extreme thing to take it external, but I think in Australia it seems like you would just go to court if you have issues, but with us you would try to fix it within the immediate family, then the external". The impact these frustrations had on self-esteem and feelings of self-control influenced the women's sense of belonging. This confirmed Buonofino's (2007:6) observation that: "Weak belonging or lack of belonging can explain the way newcomers may fail to feel at 'home' in a new place; it can explain why many people experience loneliness or isolation".

Many participating women felt that they were isolated as a result of their lack of cultural understanding. Even more concerning for some (given the privacy attached to South Sudanese family life), was the fact that police and social services *could* be involved in family issues. This was a shock for some South Sudanese participants:

I guess it is kind of a culture shock where we didn't expect things to happen the way they are happening nowadays. We didn't expect that the kids would not listen to their mothers, to their fathers, to their parents; we didn't expect that Australian police or Australian government would actually have a right to say that you don't have a right for your child or that your child has rights that they can do what they like, which we didn't have. (Ajok, in the women's group)

This lack of understanding of the Australian social norms and laws exacerbated their feeling of isolation and disorientation. It also produced a longing for familiar cultural practices. This longing back to what was known negatively influenced self-image and self-esteem among many participants through heightening sense that they didn't belong, as explained by Ajang:

In Africa, you would be proud of yourself, you would be happy of yourself, life...like in this country now, I feel that I am in a free country but I still feel like I am not free for some reason, I feel that something is holding me apart, I feel that I don't belong to this place.

This nostalgic recollection is one of the three primary senses of belonging as explored in Chapter Two by Miller (2006:94): social, historical and physical connections. Miller placed this nostalgic recollection as part of historical relations involving memories and nostalgic feelings towards a homeland. They can also produce a strong sense of self-esteem:

At the most specific level nostalgia refers to direct individual experience—a specific episode, person, place or event in an individual's life. In this sense nostalgia is self-referential or self-relevant. Nostalgic experience enables a sense of self-continuity. However, it is also acknowledged that nostalgia is a means of reconnecting the self with community. It has a powerful social element, memories typically involving shared experiences. One might also add that the nostalgic recollection of places and events, whether in memory these places and events are shared or not, serves to revive past connections with them and establish new ones. Nostalgia provides an effective structure not only to bolster a positive sense of self, but a positive connection with the world and others in it by re-enchanting the present with a sense of association, meaning and belonging. (Miller, 2006:147-148)

However, strong nostalgic memories can also produce a passive behaviour caused by a loss of interest in participate in “here and now” (Miller, 2006:150). In other words, nostalgia could in these contexts positively influence the strength of bonds while at the same time negatively influence the development of useful bridges in the new society.

Many in the women’s group expressed this “discontinuity between past and presence” (Miller, 2006:148), or a ‘culture shock’ where their memories of a known and familiar home, structures and institutions were replaced by unfamiliar situations. As noted by Ajok above, this cultural shock, together with limited English, often led to a conflict between parents and children. For instance, in Sudan, sons and daughters traditionally have been treated as children until they are married and have moved out from the family home. A high degree of respect is expected within the extended family: “[I]n most cases, children are expected to obey their parents and it is considered disrespectful for children to question their parents and elders, and disciplinary practices which include physical punishment such as smacking can be applied” (Hebbani et al., 2010:40). Salma, in the women’s group, described a rift in this traditional family structure when arriving in Australia: “So the kids are higher than the parents nowadays, which is very wrong”. The women’s group was fearful that their children would be taken away if they did something that was not accepted in Australian society:

...what happens with the police is that if you have an argument with your child or something then they will call the police and when the police come they will try to take your child away, instead of telling the child you should listen to your parents they will take the child away and they have the right to answer the child so that the child can tell them what they like and if they say that I like this or my mum did this...because kids lie all the time, but they are accepting the lies of the kids and this is what the police do, if they child say I want to sleep in Sydney the police will take them to Sydney. (Salma)

While there were no experiences of incidents like this, as far as I was aware, among participants in my research, the *fear* that this could happen to them was based on both rumours and actual events elsewhere. This realisation was confirmed when attending various conferences on Africans in Australia where the subject was often discussed, together with examples where children had been taken away from families due to

difficulties, but often difficulties not understood by the women due to a lack of English and lack of explanations from the authorities in a language they could understand. There were several incidents within the community that could have exaggerated these fears based on rumours. One example from a conference in Melbourne particularly stood out where the case ended up with a mother committing suicide after confusion and lack of understanding of the reasons why her children were taken away from her. The fact that the women were often excluded from the conversations due to low English proficiency and few links to the social institutions led to an absence of misunderstandings of legal processes. It fuelled rumours that could result in a sort of grassroots model of “moral panic” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994). This “grassroots model argues that panics originate with the general public. The concern about a particular threat is a widespread, genuinely felt – if perhaps mistaken or at least exaggerated – concern” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994:161). This fear of authorities was strong among the women. It represented “a real and present threat to their values, their safety, or even their very existence” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994:161).

Underlying this fear, the women expressed frustrations that if the police were brought in then they would be unable to communicate their side of the story. In such case, the mothers felt that their lack of English also undermined their status within their own families:

The kids speak English and the parents do not speak English but the police are doing ... they should actually call someone that could speak English and listen to the parent before they take the child away because this is lies. The children protect themselves that is what they do. But the kids trust the police more because whenever they say something the police will listen to them and the police don't listen to the parent. (Salma)

While discussion on these matters often ended in laughter among the women, I sensed that some women were fearful of such situations arising. Their anxiety was compounded by the fact that South Sudanese family problems traditionally are not discussed with strangers. Nyakor expressed this anxiety over her concern about what this unfamiliar authority could do to her family. Her African upbringing was not acceptable in Australia: “here if you strike your child they will go to school and tell the teacher...and then it will be a big deal”. This different means of disciplining the children

led to further frustrations and anxiety that their children could be removed. Along with other women, Nyakor was concerned that her daughters might be taken away from her due to issues beyond her control:

I don't feel safe sometimes because I...nowadays the way our people discipline children is not accepted here and it is kind of...it makes our young generation go away [...] and they describe us as irresponsible of kids [...] like we can get confused...and they call the cops and they come and take the kids away...that one is so...it is very hard...yes, that one reminds me that I am not at home...

While Nyakor was a young woman who spoke English fluently, had held several part-time jobs, and was studying at the time of the interview, her lack of understanding of Australian norms and laws was palpable, especially in relation to children's rights and support agencies:

...the authorities, like everything you have...if something happens, something insecure and you report it, they are really slow, yes. And sometimes there is little understanding of other cultures so it makes you feel the hard work sometimes when those situations come you feel like you want to cry...Like there is no trust, they don't trust us, they might think you are making it up...I am not sure...it's what mostly happens yes...

Frustrations, worries and lack of trust towards Australian social institutions impacted negatively on the women's sense of belonging, amplifying their difference from the wider Australian society. Furthermore, these frustrations are exaggerated by the absence of links (social capital) to service institutions. Their sense of self-efficacy through "feelings of control over one's environment" (Stets and Burke, 2003:7), was diminished and their negative experience of integration through the domains of language and cultural knowledge led to a weak sense of belonging. It also exaggerated this nostalgia for home.

Overall, most women felt misunderstood, and this heightened their sense of difference. As Ladie expressed: "All they say is that Sudanese people, they don't feed their kids food, but in reality, if you have money you will never ever leave your kids behind, because this is the only thing that you can do." The women sensed that Australian authorities lacked respect, especially in cases where outsiders intervened. Traditionally,

South Sudanese women look after and bring up the children (with assistance from the whole community), although the men are responsible for speaking on behalf of the family. This gender divide can create conflict in Australia if outsiders intervene in family life. Ladio expressed this concern when discussing her difficulties dealing with her children's school:

...and all of a sudden they will meet with men, our men in particular that don't actually look after the kids and the women are more...they are the more people that look after the kids, they are the ones that knows what to put in the lunch box and stuff like that, but men don't know...

This quote reflects a diminution of the women's efficacy-based self-esteem and their inability to use their own capabilities. This loss of self-esteem was experienced as a loss of the identity as a mother, an identity that was core to their esteem back in South Sudan. Stets and Burke (2003:11) emphasize this link between self-esteem and identity: "the core of an identity is the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role, and incorporating, into the self, the meanings and expectations associated with the role and its performance". Without language and without employment, many of the women were forced to draw more heavily on their identity as mothers. However, even this role was marginalized by authorities and institutions in the new environment. To go unrecognized as a mother then reinforced a sense of isolation and frustration with both the Australian social system as well as with their own family life.

Adit, a mother who spoke fluent English and expressed a very positive attitude to living in Australia, articulated similar frustrations regarding child-parent conflicts with authorities. Despite her language fluency, she still expressed a lack of control over own life with regard to understanding of, and frustrations with, Australian institutions, especially social services, and was concerned by the way this impacted on her relationship with her child:

...this is what we have been talking about as mothers or parents...we would like our children to...we would like to discipline our children our own way, and like...in terms of financial like money, when the child is 18 he is given his own card, because before when we were in Sudan no one got his own card, the husband works and then provide the money to their wife or the mother.



The high degree of independence for children at what the South Sudanese mothers considered an early age was an extra worry for all the mothers participating in this research. The independence of Australian youth translated into a further experience of loss of identity and authority for South Sudanese parents. As explained by Adu, one of the older women with full-time employment:

In Africa what happens is, children grow up with their parents and they know the parents are the ultimate authority because the parents are everything so if someone was going to get married it was the parents who would assure that they paid the dowry<sup>4</sup> and then they move on as a family, but here if you are trying to assert that, what happens is that the kids will just go to the government or Centrelink or they would just go and try to get a house, get a place you know, so that's none of that control and solving that problem is going to be difficult because who is the authority here? No one, you try to, you know, bring in some sense to this and then the kids will not accept you because they get their own money from Centrelink or whatever so who are you as a parent to tell them, because you give them nothing really.

This lack of a sense of parental control impacts negatively on the women's sense of self. It produced a failure of recognition of the mother's role from both the Australian social services and police as well as from their own children. Furthermore, the diminished agency generated in these situations is exacerbated under conditions where mothers recall how traditionally they possessed control over such situations. This only added to the overall sense of powerlessness resulting from language problems. In other words, marginalization and lack of understanding of the receiving society's institutions, norms and regulations meant that the women often looked back to their life in South Sudan with an expression of longing.

For the men, this worry about children was not discussed with the same intensity and urgency. Part of the reason for this was that most male participants were not yet parents. Another reason was the fact that bringing up children is traditionally the role of South Sudanese women. Furthermore, the men in this study were more concerned with other

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<sup>4</sup> Dowry is what is paid by the man's family to the woman's before the marriage as a payment for the wife – most often paid in cattle. When in Australia, this tradition often continues and the payment is commonly in cash.

fundamental domains of the settlement process: employment and citizenship (see Ager and Strang, 2008). When discussing children, the men expressed a sense of hope that the *next* generation would feel a stronger sense of belonging in Australia, while at the same time retaining their parents' South Sudanese culture.

Culture shock, feelings of loss, language difficulties and the absence of social bridges, bonds and links meant that the women in this study did not express connectedness with Australian society in the same manner as the men did. Their experiences of belonging were inhibited by frustrations and worries, together with a sense of loss of self and loss of identity in Australia. An important cause for this loss of self-esteem was the non-recognition of their role as mothers. Reflecting back on self and identities, Stets and Burke (2003:14) noted how “[H]aving multiple role identities may be good for the self. ... the more one accumulates different role identities, the more positive its effects on mental health”. For the women, a strong identity of being mothers was diminished due to loss of control in their children's lives and loss of understanding of social institutions. This weakened their feeling of belonging in this new environment.

## **Difference and identity**

Both men and women articulated the desire to be accepted and valued by members of the broader community and to learn about the new culture. In the process of taking control over their own lives and becoming a part of the new society, participants described how they occasionally met with negative feedback from parts of Australian society. This feedback, which affected the self-esteem of both men and women, was often related to the fact that they were culturally and visibly different. Whether based on curiosity or shared interest, participants did not always appreciate the unwanted responses from Australians.

One example of this unwanted feedback was to be frequently asked about their background. For Garang, one of the educated young men, this was a reminder that he was different and heightened his sense of being an outsider:

...some people ask, you know if they meet me and they want to get to know me, they will ask, you know, where are you from?

This is a general question from some people, but other people will use the same question in a way that...you know, to segregate you, segregating in a kind of thought, where are you from, do you like it here. Of course I like it here that is why I am here. [Laughing] So, I am not saying that I hate the question but some people, you know close-minded people use it as a...as very discrimination, yes. That is what I dislike.

Many of the research participants described how being different impacted on their daily lives. Constantly being asked “where are you from?” was an ever-present reminder that they were not ‘from here’ (Hatoss, 2012). As noted by Akoul, one of the young employed women:

I think Australians, well in general I would say people...Australians have a tendency...they are very curious about where you are from and they get very insensitive about some of the questions that they ask you and sometimes they don't understand to what degree that can be annoying. I am just as curious about them but I wouldn't be so blunt as to ask them that. You can find other ways to answer your own questions without being insensitive. But I always find that people will sometimes ask me questions and you will think how am I supposed to know that you know, from my skin colour?

Like Garang, curiosity among Australians as to where she originated was a constant reminder for Akoul that she was different. Even though she was employed, spoke fluent English and spent many years in the USA before arriving in Australia, Akoul still felt a sense of being different. When asked to describe a typical Australian person, her answer came quickly: “It wouldn't be me!”. This sense of being an outsider, and the constant reminder of difference, impacted on a participants' self-esteem (Stets and Burke, 2003).

Maduk, the older employed man who spoke English, experienced similar feelings. He believed that all other Australians are migrants or are descended from migrants and that everyone should be treated equally. While expressing a moderate sense of belonging through his employment and through his many friends in Australia, certain episodes in daily life still reminded him that he was an outsider. This sense of ‘otherness’ diminished his sense of belonging and his feeling as a ‘third-class’ citizen:

...every time you meet someone and have a chat with them the first thing they ask you, from which country you are from, and if

you ask him the same question he will be upset. Because you know, Australians...there are indigenous people and first settlers and we appreciate that they built this country, their grandfathers and...and they worked very hard to build Australia, they contribute to this Australia, but they have to apologize now...everyone who came here are Australian and he became an Australian citizen, we should have the same degree of citizenship, we don't have to feel that we are second-class citizen. Or third class...

This sense of difference could be found among both men and women. While the women in the women's group who spoke little English reflected upon the fact that they felt 'left out' of social relations and social structures and norms, even the educated young men who expressed a stronger sense of belonging still felt frustrated with frequent reminders of being different. As expressed by Majier, one of the young university students:

You know for months sometimes I do forget that I am different until someone does something very strange and, you know, ask where are you from, that immediately, you know, communicates difference or that you are different, and that is when you say oh...I am different, you know and that is when you start consciously thinking about it but, you know, I have been here for so long that I don't really see difference before I go to someone and they see that I am different and ask where I am from and I don't understand you and you know...it is only on those occasions that I get reminded that I am different and, you know and that there are people who not prepared to accept you...

While difference in certain situation can provide positive self-esteem, an acknowledgement of a different culture and a simple curiosity to 'otherness', the South Sudanese experiences must be linked back to the public debates in Australia at the time of the interviews. The negative stereotyping in the media, as explored in Chapter One, was at all times at the back of the minds of the participants. To be asked where they were from and reminded that they were different could, in this context, make it awkward to reveal their South Sudanese identity. For Ater, regular questions on background and reminders of difference tended to oversimplify the complexity of his own self-identity:

It is very hard sometimes to explain yourself in a simple term and forget about the past because you want to try to do...not because you don't want to let people know where you come

from but if you are trying to tell people you also belong to this place, you know.

It was difficult for Ater to retain aspects of South Sudanese culture and at the same time try to fit in to the Australian society. This resulted in frustrations associated with 'balancing' two cultures. Marlowe (2010b:1) referred to this as "walking the line", or the "multiple challenges of reconciling one's past within the present contexts of life in a new host country". This emphasises the "dynamic and interrelated" (Marlowe, 2010b:3) aspect with identity that influences a complex sense of belonging. While Ater expressed a wish to belong both 'here and there', he found this difficult when his South Sudanese identity was constantly upheld.

Ater also felt that other Australians had little understanding of important aspects of his culture:

Sometimes there is this conflict, conflict of the cultures, Sudanese culture and the Australian culture and it is very hard sometimes to explain it to someone, an Australian, to understand it properly, and sometimes this brings in a misunderstanding...this becomes a big issue that I can see between the Sudanese and the Australians at the moment. Mostly on the family level and the way we live, we Sudanese have a different way of living. We like living together, we like walking together, we can walk in groups, we can play in groups, we can share things together. But sometimes, here this is kind of not easy...Sometimes it is very hard here in Australia where normally a family is wife, husband and one child.

Reflecting on the reactions in society to his South Sudanese way of life – demonstrated by living with large families in small houses – Ater found it challenging to manage his sense of self and identity as a South Sudanese man 'caught' between two cultures. Gecas and Schwalbe (1983:79) also explored how "human beings derive a sense of self not only from the reflected appraisals of others, but also from the consequences and products of behaviour that are attributed to the self as an agent in the environment". The response from others in relation to Ater's 'way of life' impacted on his sense of belonging. He was made to feel different and at the same time wanted to keep these aspects with the South Sudanese tradition. It created a constant conflict in his own life between his Australian and South Sudanese identity where reconciling his "past with the present is...part of the necessity of living" (Marlowe, 2010b:4).

Participants were continuously made to feel different and were reminded of this difference in everyday interaction and through the media. This adversely impacted on their experiences of acceptance within society. Negative feedback through frequent questions on their background meant that both men and women experienced the boundaries separating 'us' from 'them' (Yuval-Davis et al., 2006). Many of the participants articulated a conflict between trying to fit in while being reminded of their South Sudanese identity. How this impacted on the domains of safety and stability are explored in the section below.

## **Safety and stability**

Safety was another domain related to self and belonging that participants discussed. Together with language and cultural knowledge, the domains of safety and stability are part of the facilitating indicators in Ager and Strang's (2008) integration framework. In spite of different experiences based on the ability to speak English, both male and female participants agreed on one aspect of their new life: the importance of keeping safe and secure and being able to care for self and family. Ager and Strang (2008:184) defined this sense of safety and stability as a personal issue based on safety from both actual violence and verbal abuse, along with the more general issue of community safety:

...community stability is potentially an important facilitator of integration. This has wide implications for refugee integration policy, not least in the area of housing, where short-term accommodation, insecure tenancies and certain forms of dispersal strategy all serve to promote instability in refugee settlement.

Many of the men related citizenship not only with a sense of self-identity but also with safety under the protection of laws. Some of the men took this further, emphasizing the importance of stability and the security of knowing what would happen tomorrow. Garang reflected on his life in Australia with an emphasis on this sense of safety:

...being in Australia means a lot to me because...I am in safety, you know...I am not scared or I am not afraid of anything that will come maybe at night and kill me. I am not telling you that I

don't know people that have been killed in Australia, but generally when it comes to the protection of citizens in Australia – it is a safe country so I am also feeling safe to be Australian. So that is one, the security reason. ...one of the most important things is security, once you lead your life you don't know what is going to happen to yourself to your life to other people that are surrounding you so the important thing is you feel secure, that is the number one thing...once you have freedom you know, it always has to do with security, if you have security you have freedom to associate with people, you know, you can do anything you want you know, as long as it isn't contrary to the rule of the country and the important thing is that you can better yourself, you can work hard and achieve you know...like, the more you work the better you become so...

Garang's safety principle was expressed as the fundamental aim in an insecure world, and this influenced his sense of self. Having confidence in his safety meant that Garang felt strong enough to form relations with others. Linking safety to further opportunities was explicitly stated by most men. For them safety gave an existential sense of hope.

Meanwhile, the women experienced safety more in the context of everyday practical needs. Most of the women in this research were more concerned with the immediate needs in life, such as housing. In spite of the negativity expressed about many aspects of their lives in Australia, the women recognized that, on one level, arriving and living in Australia had provided safety and security. While there were insecurities and strains associated with living in a country where language was a challenge and where the norms and laws of the country were unfamiliar, one of the members of the women's group reiterated that arriving in Australia presented a real chance to become settled and secure:

...since coming to Australia you just have to settle at one place, you don't hear any bombs, you sleep at night and don't think whatever is going to happen, because always in Africa you have to sleep thinking that something is going to happen tonight and I might run from this place...so this is what you are thinking in your mind, but it has settled since you came to Australia so that a good settling, your brain is settling down. (Ladie)

This sense of safety also reflected the emotions expressed by the educated young men as well, and implied a relief with living in a country where there was a physical sense of safety. In spite of frustrations and worries about language, employment, housing and

children, there was a feeling of ease, a *settling down of the brain*, that most women considered vital for integrating in a new country. While this sense of safety reflected a feeling of ease with being in a place secure from war, many women expressed a worry about the insecurities associated with their immediate needs once this safety was achieved.

### ***Safety and housing***

Feeling safe, stable and secure was especially important for the women. However, everyday issues qualified their experience of security in Australia. In particular, those without English and without employment expressed more worry about the future. A major reason for this was housing. Adau, an older employed woman with little English, felt afraid because she was getting older and her children had moved out of home. She was worried that this new status would mean that she would have to move into a smaller house and be unable to accommodate her children if they needed to return home. While this is a common worry for elderly Australians in rental accommodation, being a refugee woman intensified Adau's anxiety about housing. For Adau, this lack of secure housing was directly related to her sense of feeling unsettled in Australia:

...we are settled but still unsettled because you are here, it is a strange country, this is now a government house, we don't have our own house so it is still like this is someone else's house, you know, it's not like this is my own house, you know...

Having a home to call her own was central for her sense of belonging, especially under circumstances when her South Sudanese home was inaccessible:

... we feel that we are here, this is home, Australia is home, but you know...there is security here, the life is OK, you don't worry about anything but still you haven't got like anything that you could actually really call your own, it is all still, you know, so there is not that stability...

The women in the women's group all echoed Adau's thoughts on housing and safety (see also Atem and Wilson, 2008). They agreed that owning a house was vital in order to feel secure in Australia:



...we are still receiving government assistance and we still live in government houses but in Africa or in Sudan you would be an Australian or a Sudanese person if you had your own house and that will make you an Australian... if you buy your own house in Australia, but without that there is no meaning of you being an Australian. (Ayen)

Home ownership was linked to successful settlement. Because they lived in government housing, they felt a sense of 'missing out' on an important part of the Australian way of life and the 'great Australian dream' (Greig, 1995; Paris, 1993).

While all participants voiced housing issues, the group that expressed most emotion when talking about appropriate housing were mothers, both those without knowledge of English as well as those with adequate English. Furthermore, all women noted how a dependency on government assistance undermined the feeling of settlement:

...settlement in this country means that you have something you do...you don't settle with the government money, I don't think so because, they are good for you to survive but then you don't get more out of it so...(Ayen)

This notion of powerlessness over housing contributed to low "efficacy-based self-esteem" (Stets and Burke, 2003:5) where women saw themselves as incompetent and unable to change their situation. This was reinforced by comparisons with how their lives would have been back home in South Sudan, where possessing a home provided a strong statement about a person's ability to care for themselves. For the women in particular, there was a strong desire to own a house as this ownership reflected a safe future where they had some control over their location. Without this control, they experienced a sense of voicelessness, helplessness and passivity (Castles et al., 2002). This undermines agency and produces low self-efficacy (Stets and Burke, 2003).

This lack of control related to housing was also linked to the neighbourhood in which the participants lived. While some of the women were happy in their neighbourhood and praised 'good neighbours', others held a contrasting opinion. Living alone with two small daughters, the government housing allotted to Nyakor did not feel like a safe place: "My neighbours don't talk to me at all, they are terrible ... I don't feel safe here. I have asked for a transfer but the housing (department) is just ignoring me". This

inability to change her own housing situation and a sense of misrecognition was heightened by the lack of commitment from the housing services. This lack of control over her own life negatively influenced her sense of belonging in Australia in spite of her participation in other areas such as employment and education.

This section has explored how men felt that safety was important for their new lives and for their sense of belonging. It allowed control over their own life and an ability to plan for a future. Their sense of hope was strengthened by a self-awareness of their own capability to change their current situation. This issue of agency will be explored further in the following chapter. The women acknowledged the positive aspect of physical safety in Australia, but were left with few resources to 'move on'. They described their dependency on the government and how this impacted on many areas of their lives. It meant that they could not share the same positive attitudes as the men regarding a sense of belonging. This diminished sense of safety was linked to their lack of 'bridges' to the wider Australian society and relations to institutions. A mutual understanding had yet to develop. These gendered differences reflect the way the experiences of integration are negotiated in everyday life and influence the way belonging is felt by migrants.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the narratives from the interviews surrounding language and safety. I have explored the concept of the self through applying Ager and Strang's (2008) domains of integration, covering safety and stability, language and cultural knowledge. These are all part of the *facilitating* indicators of integration. Further, the chapter explored narratives related to the indicators of *social connections* as intertwined with these domains of language, safety and cultural knowledge.

The sub-heading of this chapter, 'Hopes and Worries', highlights the different sentiments expressed by the men and women regarding how they experienced issues related to safety, stability, language and cultural knowledge. The women expressed frustrations not only with Australian government institutions but also over their relations with their children. In contrast, the men articulated more of a sense of hope when talking about safety. The stability of life in Australia gave them a sense of a future, along with a vision of future family and employment. Their ability to speak

English, to study or to work, gave impetus to the men's hopes rather than worry over their future. The men did not, however, divulge as much about their personal, everyday social relations. For the women, the absence of such social bridges and links were mentioned to a greater degree.

These gender differences reflected the participants' structural position within society and can be traced to women's traditional roles of being a mother with responsibility for children. In addition, women experienced lower levels of education in South Sudan and refugee camps. These factors heightened women's anxiety over future needs and safety. The practical problems of home life, and worrying about the future were compounded by the women's sense of lack of recognition both within their former home and host society. Lack of feedback from others negatively impacted on their efficacy-based self-esteem. As a result, the women did not see themselves as having the capacity to perform their social roles, nor did they feel supported in these roles.

In contrast, the men received more positive feedback from others in their relations at work, at university and in society more generally. This was, in part, due to their ability to communicate better in English. This more positive feedback led to stronger self-efficacy and a confidence to plan their future. The men, however, like the women, were conscious of feeling different. For the men, this sense of being the 'other' was triggered by people asking about their background. Their identity was frequently questioned and this generated a conflicted sense of self. Yet, the experience of positive feedback on self through the domains of employment, education and social relations helped them cope with these conflicting identities.

The development and maintenance of a sense of self, described in this chapter, is linked to self-efficacy and capabilities; the awareness of one's own ability to act and change situations. The next chapter examines this concept of agency further by analysing the participants' sense of their own capabilities in relation to the domains of citizenship, employment and education. Narratives of participation, aspirations and hope help reveal how agency is essential in an understanding of self and to belonging.

### Everyday Possibilities and Exercising Agency

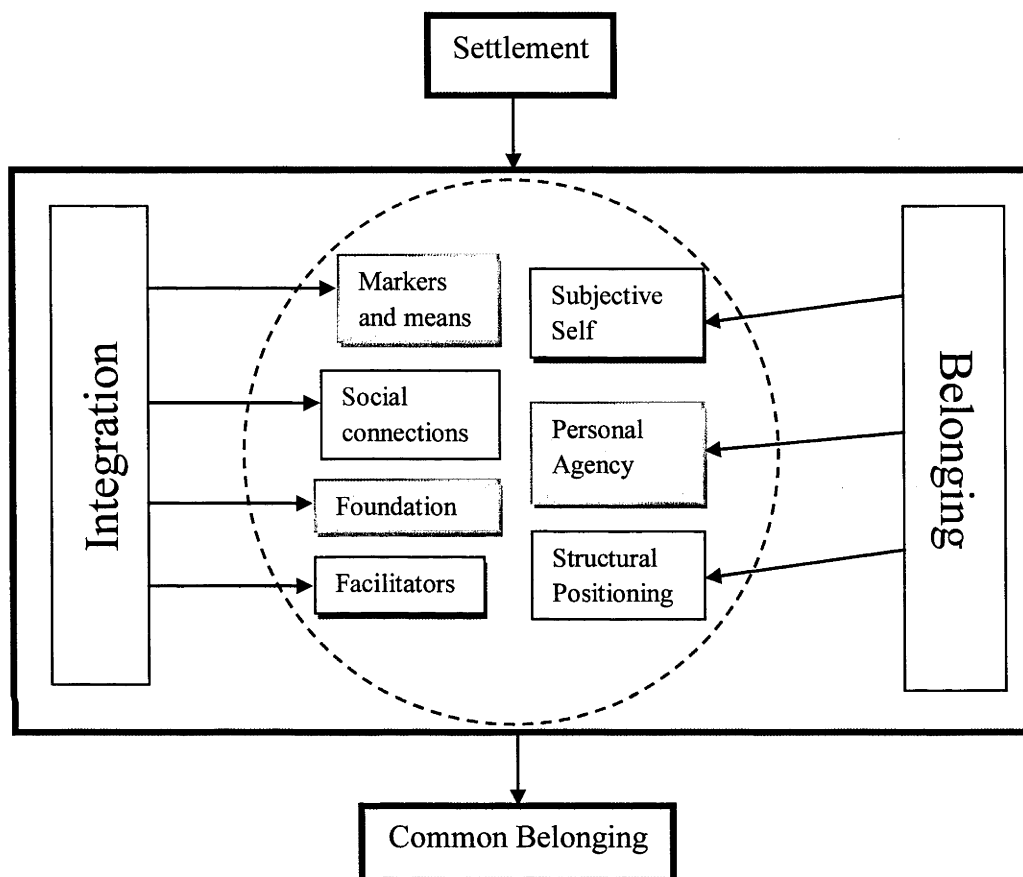
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Chapter Four looked at factors influencing a sense of self, and how they impact on migrants' development of a sense of belonging. In the previous chapter, the role as a mother took centre stage in the discussions with the women. This identity as women and mothers underpinned the frequent worry they experienced in their daily lives. Meanwhile, for the men, their role as students and workers helped anchor their identity in ways that encouraged more hope in the future. In this chapter I explore the role of agency further, to gain a deeper understanding of the sense of belonging among the participants in my study. The gendered difference emerges again when discussing these experiences of settlement. The men expressed a stronger sense of being able to build a more connected life in Australia, and saw opportunities and the capabilities to achieve this. In contrast, the women tended to experience more restrictions on their agency. Building on Chapter Four where I discussed belonging and self, I bring in the concept of 'capacities' to the understanding of self and explore self and agency as mutually constitutive. Agency is here defined as the "individual's subjective evaluation of their ability to establish some degree of control of their own lives" (O'Byrne, 2012:20), and I explore this in order to understand the social forces that affect refugees' sense of belonging.

This chapter looks at the links between agency and belonging through using Ager and Strang's domains of integration (2008). This chapter also explores agency as part of Hamaz and Vasta's definition of belonging, through relating it to the domains of citizenship and rights (the foundations) and employment and education (markers and means). I start by looking at what many of the educated young men considered the foundation for a successful integration process, namely the role of citizenship in Australia. From here, the men discussed the importance of broader participation in Australian life. This included employment, education and wider connectedness with the Australian community. I also look at the way both men and women related citizenship to social rights and obligations. In discussions about citizenship, the men highlighted rights and obligations through participation and contribution, linking these to the

domains of education and employment (Ager and Strang's means and markers). Women tended to be more concerned with restrictions on their sense of belonging, caused by lack of employment. The content of this chapter is illustrated in the diagram below:

**Figure 5.1: Diagram showing aspects of belonging and domains of integration explored in Chapter Five**



### **Narratives associated with citizenship**

Following from narratives presented by the women in the previous chapter and contrasting these with the narratives of the men, I argue here that a significant reason behind the gendered different experiences of integration and belonging can be traced back to agency, in particular how recognition of agency from government institutions and everyday encounters influence these experiences. Looking further into these differences, I explore notions of citizenship, one of Ager and Strang's foundations of integration (2008), which entails rights *and* obligations. The experiences of citizenship

will be explored through focusing on participation, recognition and capabilities – substantive citizenship.

Citizenship is often considered fundamental for an integration process as well as for the development of belonging (Buonfino, 2007; Hamaz and Vasta, 2009) (see Chapter Two). Ager and Strang (2008) placed the domain of rights and citizenship within the indicators of *foundations* and observed how citizenship relates to the *expectations* surrounding an integration process. Access to citizenship and the rights and responsibilities entailed within citizenship are considered crucial for a successful integration process. This is reflected in much academic literature as well as many countries' immigration policies. For instance, Castles et al. (2002:121) noted how citizenship is often “seen as a mark of full integration into society”. However, they also pointed to problems with the citizenship process in some situations (Castles et al., 2002:21):

People who have formal citizenship may not enjoy full access to important rights, as a result of racism or social exclusion. In such cases, citizenship may be seen as a necessary, but not sufficient condition for full integration.

In my study, for most of the men access to rights – together with obligations and responsibilities – was a vital aspect of citizenship and also an important part of an integration process. The men talked enthusiastically about their experiences of becoming citizens and their hopes and expectations related to this, such as education and employment. Many of the men also linked citizenship to a fundamental sense of safety through a reinforcement of their identity as a citizen as opposed to a refugee. Most of the educated young men discussed citizenship as a *necessary first step* towards integration. They cited examples of the rights and obligations that come with citizenship, especially employment and the right to participate on equal ground as the rest of society. The women also felt that citizenship was related to employment, rights and obligations. While some women noted that being a citizen would increase their social involvement, they also spoke of citizenship as something that would give them capabilities through as access to work and education. Other women, however, commented more on the *lack of* employment and involvement in society, which suggested that they perceived barriers to substantive citizenships rights.

Out of the male participants for this study, all but four were citizens of Australia. One non-citizen, Pajok, had only been in Australia for about three years at the time of the interview and before then he had spent six years in refugee camp in Kenya. He was not yet a citizen of Australia at the time of the interview because citizenship “requires a total of four years lawful residence in Australia, including 12 months as a permanent citizen” (Department of Immigration and Citizenship [DIAC], 2012). The men’s language proficiency, either upon arrival or through an early training on arriving in Australia, made the citizenship process relatively easy. Furthermore, many of the men had spent considerable time in Australia and had participated in both the workforce or in university study. These experiences made the necessary citizenship test more easily accessible.

Among the women, four were without citizenship. Akoul, who had recently moved to Australia from the USA, explained that her non-citizenship status was due to her failing to meet the time requirements for eligibility. The second woman without citizenship, Adit, also had only been in Australia for a short time and was ineligible for citizenship. The third woman, a single mother, Nyakor, explained that she was not yet a citizen of Australia due to lack of time to complete the process. The fourth woman, Adhieu, felt that she was too old to take the citizenship test.

Adhieu was the oldest of the women taking part in the focus groups, and also the most outspoken. She had been in Australia since 2006 and before migrating had been in a refugee camp in Kenya. The fact that she was not a citizen of Australia caused her stress as it prevented her from travelling to visit her family overseas. While her understanding of the limitations of her permanent residence was often based on her own perceptions rather than reality, the way these perceptions impacted on her life made it real for her. Adhieu related the lack of citizenship to other anxieties in her life, including her lack of employment. She could not understand why it was so difficult to find a job in Australia when she had worked for many years in South Sudan. For example, her lack of English did not prevent her from understanding the basic knowledge of a cleaning job. Adhieu had five children but had recently lost one son and was a widow. She struggled with English as well as learning computer skills. Therefore, the introduction of the

citizenship test (see Chapter One) made the citizenship process even more difficult for her.

Travel was a major issue for Adhieu as her children and grandchildren were living in Canada. Due to serious family-related events in Canada, Adhieu wanted to stay with her grandson in Canada for an extended period of time. Yet, her perception of the residency-related restrictions impacted negatively on her quality of life at the time of the interview. As explained by the translator:

She did go to Canada but she had trouble getting into some areas because they would tell her, “you are not a citizen so you are not allowed to travel all the time”. Yes, so she is saying it would be really nice if I get a citizen so that I can go and visit my grandchild.

Adhieu blamed her lack of citizenship for this sense of a loss of freedom to visit her own family. She felt it excluded her from the rights possessed by others. She also blamed her lack of language and her old age. In other words, this lack of control over her own life impacted on her sense of agency and self-efficacy.

Gecas and Schwalbe (1983:80) have also related a sense of control over one’s own life to agency and well-being: “The importance of sense of control, agency, and self-efficacy for psychological well-being in general, as well as for self-esteem in particular, is increasingly evident in the psychological literature”. Adhieu felt that her loss of control over her circumstances had worsened since the introduction of the citizenship test in 2007, which meant that all refugees and migrants had to pass a written test before they could receive citizenship. This presented additional difficulties for both her and other women without sufficient knowledge of language, and older men and women with no computer skills. In Adhieu’s words, this citizenship test was a serious barrier for many newcomers:

The government is telling them, even though they are older...they are matured age, like they are telling them to sit at the computer and do the citizenship test but this is very, very difficult, they cannot do that because it takes a lot of time and they don’t even know how to do that and it takes a lot of experience, but they are telling them to do that so that they can be citizens. How they are going to learn English is a big thing



so...and the test it's like about history and all that so it is difficult.

This citizenship test reinforced how the sense of loss of control can ultimately act as a barrier blocking the efficacy of the agency of migrants such as Adhieu. It impacts on their quality of life as well as their ability to feel a sense of belonging.

Returning to the key theme of Chapter Four, many of the women linked language to citizenship. This imperative role of language was ever present among the women. As emphasized by Ager and Strang (2008:182): “[B]eing able to speak the main language of the host community is “consistently identified as central to the integration process”. While language was mentioned as essential among the men, this was mainly when they contrasted themselves with the women in the community and the problems they faced. Among women, Adhieu articulated these worries with language by again noting the difficulties associated with old age: “because we are getting old and to be in Australia you need to be a citizen of Australia, but they are making it hard for us to do the test then we don’t have the English and we cannot actually access the internet and do whatever they want us to do”. Adhieu expressed concerns with the substantive rights following citizenship, suggesting that citizenship, or rather the lack of it, can have a negative impact on people’s lives by restricting access to travel and employment.

Adau, another of the older women with limited English, but with full-time employment and citizenship, reflected more positively on both opportunities and responsibilities when talking about citizenship. She had been in Australia for about seven years at the time of the interview, and was also a widow with four children, all living in Australia. She arrived in Australia one year after the rest of her immediate family and only had a few months to spend with her husband in Australia before he passed away due to illness. In spite of this distressing start to her new life and her difficulties with language, she articulated how becoming a citizen helped familiarize herself with her social surroundings:

The citizenship enables you to be part of this community and it enables you to know how things work, it happens because when you are a citizen you sort of just you know...if you are not a citizen really you are just detached from what happens. Also becoming a citizen you feel it is your responsibility to let your

neighbour know you, and to get to know people and learn about things...and try always to do the right thing because you are a citizen and part of this community.

A dau showed an awareness of the two-way process of citizenship discussed in Chapter One. Her notions of inclusion and participation in the new society speak of how agency is enabled through acceptance. A dau articulated one of Ager and Strang's (2008:175) key aspects of citizenship – “the rights accorded, and responsibilities expected”. As May (2011) stated, belonging is about creating a sense of “identification with one's social, relational and material surroundings”, of being acknowledged and recognising oneself in the other. While citizenship is not enough for the development of a sense of belonging, it can play a vital role in a person's sense of self and agency. For A dau, citizenship meant a connection with the Australian society. Her strong self-esteem was enhanced by her knowledge that she was a part of the host society. By feeling part of the society through her citizenship, A dau could act on this sense of connectedness: ‘get to know people...learn about things...try to do the right things’. Agency and belonging are here mutually interconnected through her sense of recognition from society. This recognition made A dau feel valued and accepted (worth-based self-esteem), strengthening her capacity to act by seeing herself as competent and capable (efficacy-based self-esteem) (Stets and Burke, 2003). This recognition enhances a sense of belonging.

The women who could speak English expressed similar sentiments as A dau when talking about citizenship, despite the fact that some had yet to become citizens. A dit, who had only been in Australia for about two years and was therefore ineligible for citizenship lived with her teenage son and partner. Having had extensive work experience in both Sudan and in Egypt, at the time of the interview, A dit was studying while looking for job opportunities. She was fairly content in her neighbourhood and she had contact with other South Sudanese living nearby. When asked about what citizenship would mean when she could achieve it, she expressed a similar view as many of the men: “being a citizen gives you opportunities to *do* things” (my emphasis). This situation hints at the capabilities that participants associated with citizenship. While still looking for a job and finding this process challenging, A dit acknowledged that opportunities were available. She felt a greater sense of acceptance and participation in Australian society as a result of her ability to speak and understand

English. She had developed relationships both within her own community and with the receiving society through her language classes. For Adit, it was both the relations she had developed with the South Sudanese community as well as with the ones with the broader society that gave her a sense of recognition. This sense of recognition together with English language knowledge gave Adit a sense of hope for future employment. The combination of social relations, language and citizenship offered opportunities and the ability to act on these opportunities. Her awareness of the “capability to act” (O’Byrne, 2012:107) strengthened her sense of agency and her sense of belonging through this hope for future possibilities.

Like Adit, Nyakor also spoke English and was not a citizen. She also had a positive outlook with respect for what citizenship would mean to her. She was a single mother, studying and working part-time. She aspired to citizenship and related it to both her identity and to being part of the Australian community:

When I am a citizen it will mean a lot, I will feel like more...like more Australian, I will feel that I am an Australian, like I have an identity and everything, and I will be considered as one.

Nyakor appreciated the positive aspects of becoming a citizen that results from being treated like others. This would facilitate her search for employment. There was consensus in the women’s group on the relationship between citizenship and employment, as articulated by Nyakor: “The first thing that you will be asked is, are you a citizen. If you are not, chances of losing that job are high. That is true.” Even though she had high hopes of greater connectedness within Australian society through citizenship, Nyakor currently experienced barriers to two domains of integration considered vital for a successful settlement: citizenship and insecurity of employment.

Citizenship in Australia was for the participants in my research a reflection of opportunities and connectedness in and with the society. While some of the participants had yet to become citizens, they still expressed an expectation relating to both rights and obligations when they would become citizens. A connectedness with society through citizenship together with a sense of identity-change, or rather an additional identity (a citizen as opposed to a refugee) meant that many of the participants anticipated a

strengthening of their self-esteem. It was related to a sense of “control over their own lives” and something the participants required “to gain a sense of belonging” (O’Byrne, 2012:13). A mutual dependency between self and agency, where a strong self-esteem depends on actual participation and action, and where the capacity to act depends on a strong self-esteem, was highlighted in participants’ feelings about citizenship. The next section looks further into the participants’ views of social participation in society.

### *Citizenship, participation and mutuality*

Among the men, citizenship reflected a new start in a new country, with new opportunities and new social roles. Mamer, for example, viewed citizenship as an important foundation for settling and belonging. He arrived in Australia on a scholarship visa in 2002. He had lived in a refugee camp in Kenya for about 12 years where he had the opportunity to continue the education he had started in Sudan. While expressing his wish to find a wife and start a family, Mamer was single at the time of the interview, had no children and had arrived in Australia alone, except for his cousin who went to Tasmania at the same time. He spoke with enthusiasm about the opportunities he had found in Australia. My first meeting with Mamer was at the Australian National University where, along with his cousin, we discussed my work and the possibilities of setting a date for an interview. After exchanging a few emails, Mamer and I agreed on a date to meet. He arrived very much prepared for the interview. He had already read through the research brief and the consent form and had clear ideas of what he wanted to discuss. He had also organized his thoughts on what would be important for my work, showing a capacity to actively contribute to issues surrounding him. In particular, he had ideas on how to successfully settle in a new country.

Being able to obtain his desired education and to create the life he aspired to was central to Mamer’s vision, and he attributed this to his ‘easy’ access to citizenship. As he explained:

Australia is a good country, it is a good country in the sense that they welcome people, they actually welcome people, and it is the first country where I feel that I am living again, like...I feel a sense of human life .... when we first came to Australia we were granted permanent residency and within two years, after two years we were asked whether we wanted to remain

permanent resident or whether we wanted to become citizens .... for 15 years I have lived as I don't know...a refugee, that was the...that was my status. So to be given a citizenship in Australia is good thing because I feel that I am living again .... you feel that you are living the life of a human being again. So I feel that I am a part of this community.

For Mamer, this importance of citizenship for his sense of identity and connectedness – the emergence into something other than a refugee – was an essential part of belonging in Australia:

I have been in Kenya for over ten years, and while I was an African...I was in Africa there but I didn't feel that I was...the independent kind of feeling there like I am finding in Australia. It was a very hard time there. I lived there for ten years as a refugee. A refugee is a refugee you know and they don't...they don't have to intermingle with the citizens.

Mamer remarked that the capacity to express a sense of self other than the status of refugee was essential to the experience of integration. An identity other than refugee, in addition to being a student, an employee, and an Australian citizen made Mamer aware of his opportunities and capacities. As Stets and Burke (2003:9) noted: “making roles and accumulating role identities fosters greater psychological well-being”, reinforcing a sense of agency through “making behavioural choices and decisions and engaging in negotiation and compromise as well as conflict” (Stets and Burke, 2003:9). Mamer's ability to be in control of his own life through his status as a citizen, through being part of the community was a strong contributing factor towards his sense of belonging. One example of this agency was when we discussed bureaucratic difficulties here in Australia. Mamer explained how he found some procedures difficult, especially as it was presented in English. Yet instead of dealing with these difficulties himself, he actively went out and sought help to sort these issues:

So, it is worse for those who learn it as a second language like myself, you just don't understand you know...certain writing, like this compound, sentences are put together and you have to go to someone to actually explain it to you otherwise you sign what you don't even know, so that is when I will go to someone to help me.

His ability to take his problems to someone and ask for help emphasised his connections with society and his agency. This was strongly contrasted in his discussion of his status as 'a refugee', where he felt excluded from the community. It also showed how migrants themselves can activate a two-way process of integration.

Garang was another man who viewed citizenship as crucial to the settlement process. He had lived in Australia for about six years at the time of the interview. Before this, he had also lived in a refugee camp in Kenya. Garang was a student, was single but had two children who were not living with him. He was studying while working part-time. He shared the positive outlook on life in Australia with other young male participants such as Mamer. Despite his shyness throughout the interview, Garang did open up and talked enthusiastically about his ideas on settlement processes. For him, an essential part of the settlement process was to be a citizen and he stressed how recognition and acceptance based on equality was part of this citizenship process. Along with stressing the importance of language he emphasized citizenship as a fundamental part of the opportunity to call somewhere 'home' after years spent in a refugee camp and in flight. When asked what becoming a citizen meant for him, Garang replied that it allowed him to *contribute* to society:

... because after a very long time without a place to call home...some of us never really know what citizenship is because you know...at the time we left Sudan we were very young and we don't know much about Sudan except the crisis that is going on, and being a citizen of a nation gives you an identity, you feel you belong there, and being in Australia there are many benefits you get from being a citizen and also you believe you have a duty to the country so...you can pay taxes like any others...

Being a citizen meant that he felt he could pay taxes and also receive benefits when needed enhancing his experience of community participation. For example, if he had issues with housing: "...because at the moment I am living in a Government house so yeah...in case of anything I just contact them and talk to them":

If things get tough I have to console a few of my friends, if anybody could be able to help me out... and after then if they are not able to then I could maybe seek some help out of that,

maybe like Companion House or multicultural youth and they could give me some sort of advice of what to do next.

For Garang, as with Mamer and also Adau, becoming a full member of the new community (and no longer being identified as a refugee) was a major advantage of citizenship. This renewed identity where the men saw themselves as citizens of Australia as opposed to refugees strengthened their self-esteem and gave them the ability to act upon their citizenship rights. Experiences of inclusiveness through access to citizenship were, for the men in particular, a signal of recognition and indicated a way to participate in society. Their strengthened self-esteem helped them develop and access necessary community relations they could employ in everyday practices.

The participants like Garang who were already Australian citizens articulated the value of becoming part of the community. For young men especially, citizenship represented something that fostered their agency through their knowledge of, and access to, many of the rights involved. Men like Garang were expressing gratitude for the rights they obtained through citizenship and also their capacity to take advantage of these rights through the social relations they had developed at work and university. Added to this was the hope that they would be able to contribute to society through working and paying taxes.

Yong, a man active in the Southern Sudanese community, was interested in political activity and had many aspirations for his community. He had been in Australia since 2002 and was at the time of the interview waiting for an opportunity to bring his pregnant wife into the country. As with most of the other educated young men, Yong received education in Kenya. He then, like Mamer, arrived in Australia on a student scholarship. He settled first in Tasmania and had many positive experiences with living there, before he arrived in Canberra. Despite experiencing early cases of racism – one where he was bombarded with rotten eggs from a car window – he was not disheartened, explaining it as an act of ignorance and ‘not knowing better’. His thoughts on inclusion in Australian society involved people needing to get to know each other. He expressed a feeling of gratitude at the opportunity to be part of Australian society – a feeling of being an important part of something bigger: “It [citizenship] means that I become part of Australian community and it also means that I can *contribute* to the

Australian community in whatever form I can...and live in Australia” (my emphasis). This feeling of being an active participant in the society was simultaneously part of Yong’s sense of self and efficacy-based self-esteem where he saw himself as competent and capable and being *able* to contribute to the new society. This view of citizenship as a dual process of both rights and obligations was a recurrent theme among many of the participants, especially the men. The awareness of their capacities and ability to make their own choices enabled the men to feel part of the new community. The mutual responsibility of not only receiving but also being able to give back gave them the confidence to enact their agency. O’Byrne (2012) has labelled this the “subjective evaluation of their ability to establish some degree of control over their lives”.

While the value of citizenship was partly its ability to reinforce agency, an integration experience and a development of a sense of belonging is more complex than these initial discussions of citizenship suggest. Receiving citizenship opened promises of employment and participation in the receiving society where they could *act out* their citizenship in a substantive and meaningful way. Participants also stressed that the capabilities to *use* citizenship rights was essential in the citizenship process. Citizenship as a *mutual* process was especially meaningful for men who could see how this citizenship not only gave them certain rights but also obliged them to participate in and give back to society. This ‘giving back’ implied employment in, as well as acknowledgement from, the receiving society.

### **Working at recognition**

As noted earlier, education and visions of employment are key elements of integration identified by Ager and Strang (2008). They are grouped with housing and health in the *markers and means* indicators of integration. Suggested “as indicative of successful integration” (Ager and Strang, 2008:169), this section will reveal how education and employment also impact on a sense of belonging among newcomers through experiences of access, or barriers, to these domains. In her research on belonging, Buonfino (2007:16, citing Eurobarometer 2004) also emphasized employment in this process:



[P]eople can feel valued (or not valued) and recognised through their status and their economic place in society – through employment, access to networks and opportunities. According to an EU wide public opinion survey on citizenship and belonging, work was rated as one of the three most important elements of 39% of EU citizens' lives.

Recognition of their status in society through paid work positively influenced their agency. Access to money provided opportunities for people to change their situation. For example, Garang explained how his life situation has changed since he arrived in Australia: "...here you can plan things, you know what you want to have and all that but before you didn't have money you know, like sort of...even if you wanted to get something you didn't know what to do". Being able to plan for the future was part of this strengthening of agency.

Citizenship and employment meant for the participants a stronger sense of self-esteem, a sense of recognition and acknowledgment from the wider society and, as a result, an ability to plan for the future and enacting their agency. The gap between worries and hopes, as well as isolation and participation, was reflected in the narratives of participants. There were many nuanced sides to the stories from participants, but it was possible to pinpoint various crucial issues associated with the settlement process. As noted in Chapter Four, one of these issues is gender, but at the same time gendered difference must be analysed together with employment and education along with the ability to speak English. An important aspect in the narratives on citizenship and employment was the hope both men and women expressed that future employment would increase their sense of belonging. Fozdar and Hartley (2012:72) referred to this as a "sense of hopefulness that they might one day feel that they belonged – a sort of 'aspirational belonging'".

The men I met at the university had yet to apply for full-time professional employment based on their qualifications. However, their positive outlook on life in Australia was often related to the perceived opportunities they *hoped* to encounter when they would complete their university degree. Mamer, with strong views on the rights and responsibilities that followed citizenship, did express some negative experiences of work in Australia. These were associated with difficulties accessing part-time work while he was studying, which he found unfair and limiting to his abilities. He felt this

difficulty was partly based on the fact that he was a 'stranger', black and had a foreign name. While having had this negative experience finding employment, Mamer still appreciated the opportunities that living in Australia provided for him:

... the system of education is where you don't have to be rich to go to the university, you have to go and prove that you can be at uni and that you can finish, and when you finish you will get a job and you pay the money back. This is sometimes very difficult in other places.

Emphasising the universal opportunities to attend university, together with the anticipation of work when he finished his studies, Mamer's hope reflected an awareness of own potential agency through acknowledgement of his own capabilities. While his sense of belonging was demonstrated through his sense of feeling welcome in Australia, his hope and aspirations for a stronger sense of belonging in the future was emphasized by his self-esteem and ability to work.

Majier, who had work experience both before and during his university degree, also focused on the economic opportunities that Australia provided:

The opportunities here, the opportunities to study and *make something out of yourself*, and...and *build* a career, there is great potential for that here. There are two opportunities here in Canberra that really makes me want to stay, and that is employment and education. (my emphasis)

This promise of contributing economically to the new society reinforced a sense of self-worth among all the educated young men, illustrating the strong link between self-esteem and agency (see Stets and Burke, 2003).

This appreciation of the Australian education system, along with the aspirations of giving back to society, was evident among all the young educated men. It was part of their understanding of the *mutuality* involved in integration. This was echoed by Pajok:

The thing is, there is a lot of information, like if I want to go to school I can get information, somebody can direct me, if I want to go for a job I have some people to contact...it is really simple things, like if I want to do something it is not that hard, that is why I feel settled because I find these things here.

Pajok's emphasis on his capacity to *seek* information about employment and education, and his access to this information, signified a positive experience with these two domains of integration. These positive experiences meant that the men had more possibility of knowing how they could contribute to society and feel a sense of belonging within the society. In Putnam's (2000) terms, the men possessed social capital, reflected in their ability to access the necessary networks in order to obtain the information they required.

My point here is that this access to education, together with a hope for fulfilling employment, was directly related to the participants' feeling of settlement. Yong, who was in the process of finding employment in order to bring his wife and child to Australia, made the link explicit:

I know very well...to have money to...the very important thing is to...for you to settle is to get an accommodation, another way is to say you have a job, if you have a job you are also settled, and if they have kids if they have money for a good school they can also feel that they are settled. And if you happen also to be schooling somewhere next to where you live...and then if you have all these things you then feel that you become part of the community.

For Yong, the basic necessities for settlement were money, school, employment and family. Like many other men, he was confident that he could achieve these necessities, and his strong sense of hope was reinforced through a sense of inclusion in the community.

Ater, a young educated man with a sense of ambition, was another male participant who had spent years in a refugee camp. While in Kenya, he finished high school, followed by early-childhood teachers' training. In line with the traditional custom in Sudan, Ater had assumed the responsibilities for the support of his brother's wife and children after his brother died in Sudan. He lived with in Canberra at the time of this research with what was now his family. Ater was studying at university while looking forward to working in a safe job that would give him peace of mind and a secure income. As with many of the other educated young men, Ater appreciated the opportunities that life in Australia had given him. He expressed how being needed motivated his aspirations:

You feel you are settled, at home, because you have a kind of a contributing to the community. If you work with people you are kind of integrating with them because you have a duty of task, someone who needs you and someone depending on you to do it, like you have a supervisor and for you to work in harmony with him or her, to do what they want you to do.

This direct link between settlement and social and economic contribution emerged in many of the interviews with the men. Being relatively positive about life in Australia, Ater noted how it was important for him to be recognized as someone who *could* contribute to Australian society:

If I work I help myself and I help the nation because I pay the taxes and obviously this tax will help others, maybe centrelink or the pensioners or other people like that ... at the same time if I don't work but study I am also on the side trying to get a greater skill that might have a positive impact in the future and these are the things I can do... people trying to talk about Sudanese [but the Sudanese] may not be the problem, it might be a problem with the whole thing, the whole system you know, if we have a tree, it is not a tree without the leaves, no tree without the branches, and there is no tree without the wood, so they are all kind of supporting each other despite of what...despite of the function of each and every one.

This emphasis on mutuality was echoed by other men and women. This form of agency, associated with the capability to contribute back and being part of making the social system work, was central to Ater's self-esteem. It formed another important sense in which belonging was integral to the experience of integration.

When asked about the chances of developing a greater sense of belonging in Australia, Ater wanted to be recognized as a person with potential:

In working with Australians and involve myself in the kind of work they are doing, ah...contribute what I know, to create kind of success, and I also...yeah...mostly for me it is more about understanding also because the more I will be working the more they will understand me and the more I will understand them, and this will bring kind of integration because they say that...they say don't judge the book according to the cover, and I can't actually know exactly what they are saying, you know,

who they are and how they do things unless I involve in what they are doing and this way I will exactly know people.

Together with this desire to contribute on the same level as other Australians, Ater felt that Australian society had to get to know South Sudanese. Like Pajok and Majier, Ater felt strongly that their capacity to participate and contribute to Australia was an essential part of the integration experience, but that this also required access to participation and contribution. His recognition of mutuality in his relations with the wider community, such as access to education and employment, led to a desire to give back to the community. His experience of this mutual recognition enabled him to act upon his capacities through a positive influence on his self-esteem. In this way, agency and self are joined in a mutually constitutive relationship. Reflecting on the interplay between self and agency (essential concepts in the development of belonging), the men sought acceptance and sought being valued for their capacities to contribute to society.

### *Language, employment and agency*

While the knowledge of English impacted on the women's sense of belonging in Australia, as discussed in Chapter Four, I revisit this issue here because it also illustrates the strong interconnection between self and agency. An inability to speak English was one of the reasons that many of the women participants struggled with accessing employment. Without access to employment and with limited relations to the wider community, they experienced a lower self-esteem than the men. This section looks at how a low sense of self-esteem also impacts on people's capacities and sense of agency.

For the women who were unemployed and with limited knowledge of English, concern over employment was pervasive. Only one of the women in the women's focus group could speak English adequately, and the majority repeatedly referred to language as the main reason why they struggled to integrate into Australian society. When asked about employment and language, they all agreed with Ajang that language:

...is connected to work and a lot of other things that you cannot *do*. If you don't know English you can't get a job. Although you are very strong and can do a cleaning job or you can do something, you can take care of the kids, like a lot of these people [the women in the group with limited English] can do

this kind of work, but because of their English people will say no...So, a lot of things like...like every one of them they all have their own kids and they are able to take care of their kids and everything, they are able to give the kids food and everything but now they are told that they don't know English, they don't know what food to give to the child, they don't know what medicine, how much medicine to give...but they were taking care of their kids without English but it is difficult in Australia to prove to yourself that you are right and you can do that. (my emphasis)

The women expressed their frustrations with this inability to exercise their capabilities, in spite of their willingness and prior experience. This reinforced their feeling of powerlessness. These findings conform with those that Stets and Burke (2003:6) who identified two dimensions of self-esteem: *efficacy-based* self-esteem and *worth-based* self-esteem. Both dimensions relate to a sense of power, where (as discussed in Chapter Two) the former involves “seeing oneself as competent and capable”, while the latter dimension is about feeling “accepted and valued” (Stets and Burke, 2003:6). With limited chances of employment due to language difficulties the women did not feel accepted nor valued, negatively influencing their experiences of themselves as competent and capable. These difficulties with participating in mainstream society can lead to the adoption of passivity and, as a result, “integration may be slow and incomplete” (Castles et al., 2002:114).

Employment was one of the biggest worries among the women's group, and this was one of the domains of integration along with housing, education and health expounded by Ager and Strang (2008:170) under the indicators of means and markers:

Employment has consistently been identified as a factor influencing many relevant issues, including promoting economic independence, planning for the future, meeting members of the host society, providing opportunity to develop language skills, restoring self-esteem and encouraging self-reliance.

For the women in my research, self-esteem and self-reliance were the two most prominent factors discussed. This emphasizes the need to explore *experiences* of an integration process by analysing the *interplay* between self and agency. Ager and Strang (2008:170) stressed how employment could restore “self-esteem” and encourage “self-

reliance”, while Stets and Burke (2003:9) also linked agency to well-being in their analysis of self:

As agents, individuals can make or create a role by making behavioural choices and decisions and engaging in negotiation and compromise as well as conflict. Research finds that making roles and accumulating role identities fosters greater psychological well-being.

The issue thereby becomes how migrants assume the capabilities to make and accumulate such role identities. The relationship between language and employment, between means and markers and facilitators, was clearly articulated by the women. Adhieu was particularly concerned that there was no employment available to many of the women, despite having worked in Sudan and being able to undertake many different economic roles. She felt strong, fit and capable to work, yet she was frustrated that without a job she was forced to sit idly inside her room. This made her feel useless and unwanted:

It is hard to get a job in Australia. Like you can try to get a job but it is really, really difficult. Sometimes you can get someone to look it up on the internet whereby they put jobs in place but then to follow that job up is really hard...if you go you can't even find that job because they will advertise it and they will probably give it to someone else or something...

The fact that Adhieu had worked for many years as a cleaner in Sudan made it more difficult to come to grips with Australian realities. She expressed this frustration as a failure to be recognized as a person *able to* participate in and even contribute to society.

In relation to recognition and ability to participate in mainstream society, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003) reflected on different settlement styles in their research on the process of resettlement among refugees in Perth, Western Australia. Colic-Peisker and Tilbury noted how a sense of control and a sense of “own ability to overcome practical and emotional difficulties” (2003:78) depend on refugees’ own resources (human and social capital) as well as “the philosophy and politics that inform the resettlement support refuges receive in Australia” (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2003). Reflecting on agency, in the form of sense of control and ability to change own situation, the work by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003:62) identify “a four-element typology of refugee

settlement styles". The 'achievers' and 'consumers' are "marked by a predominantly active approach to settlement", while 'endurers' and 'victims' are marked by a "predominantly passive approach" (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2003:62). Colic-Peisker and Tilbury's differentiation between active and passive settlement style suggested the importance of recognising agency by both researchers and service providers. They argued that "a greater emphasis during early settlement should be placed on employment and stable housing" (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2003:61). In their work, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury demonstrated how service providers could add to the passive settlement style through "learned helplessness" and by pushing "refugees into an aid recipient role" (2003:79). As demonstrated in the participants' quotes in this research, employment and the sense of control over own lives through English skills and participation was highly valued. Quotes in this section by Ajang and Adhieu demonstrated how lack of English skills and lack of employment meant a sense of frustration and a lack of belonging in Australia. It also meant a feeling of not being recognised as a mother and as an employer. Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003:73) also discussed how the "passive resettlers are often nostalgic about their pre-war life and tend to be loss-oriented" and isolated from the mainstream society. As discussed further in Chapter Seven of this thesis, this nostalgia and longing was often a result of non-recognition of agency.

Participation in all levels of society, either through employment, education or simply participation in everyday events enhances the feeling that people have agency and this plays a significant role in their sense of belonging. Participants in my research expressed this sense of belonging to different degrees, partly depending on their structural position and their past experiences. Being an educated man with good English boosted their prospects for employment, while an unemployed mother, unable to speak English and with little education minimized prospects for a feeling of integration.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have used Ager and Strang's domains of integration concerned with citizenship (foundations) as well as employment and education (markers and means). Building on Chapter Four, the aim was to analyse how agency relates and intertwines with a sense of self.



The participants expressed positive reflections on their citizenship status, or, as in the case of others, on their future citizenship status. The men tended to relate citizenship to aspects of safety and of 'fitting in' (facilitators), with establishing relations with Australian society (social connections) as well as with aspirations and hope for a stronger sense of belonging in the future. The women shared many of the men's views on citizenship, especially those associated with being part of Australian society (social connections). For the women without citizenship, however, some expressed anxiety over the difficulties associated with the citizenship test.

Both men and women considered citizenship as fundamental for an integration process. For a sense of belonging to develop, however, it is necessary to look beyond the formal and substantive citizenship rights and obligations towards the emotional experiences of these important aspects of being a citizen. The role of citizenship was related to self-esteem based on recognition of their worth from the wider community and the ability to act and change own situation.

Access to employment was another important dimension of recognising agency. All participants expressed the willingness and hope to participate and contribute through work, but the ability to do so differed between men and women. These different experiences were linked back to educational levels and level of English. They were also linked to knowledge of how to access assistance from others within society and formal institutions.

Participation and isolation indicate opposite ends of the settlement spectrum. The narratives associated with participation reveal that men were more positive than women. Reasons for this gendered difference included the involvement men had with employment, more positive experiences with citizenship and their access to the substantive opportunities offered by citizenship. In contrast, women spoke about employment principally in terms of a deficit caused by language difficulties. As a result, they felt more isolated. While most women were citizens, it was significant that those without citizenship dominated the conversations on the topic. Their concerns were expressed as frustrations and a sense of missing out on the rights and obligations that

they felt would follow acquiring citizenship. These women also articulated greater lack of control over their lives due to their inability to access work.

This chapter has further enhanced the argument that integration and belonging are intertwined. People's sense of belonging was linked closely to their sense of self, their ability to act in various spheres, as well as their structural position in society. Furthermore, the interrelationship between self and agency has also been emphasised. Through the analysis of citizenship and employment, the narratives from the participants have emphasized how an exploration of both the structural integration domains as well as the emotions attached to the domains are necessary in order to reach an understanding of the development of a sense of belonging. The chapter also suggested that the rights and obligations experienced by the participants were related to their structural position in society. This is further discussed in Chapter Six where the interplay between self, agency and structural positioning is analysed.

## The Structural Foundations of Belonging

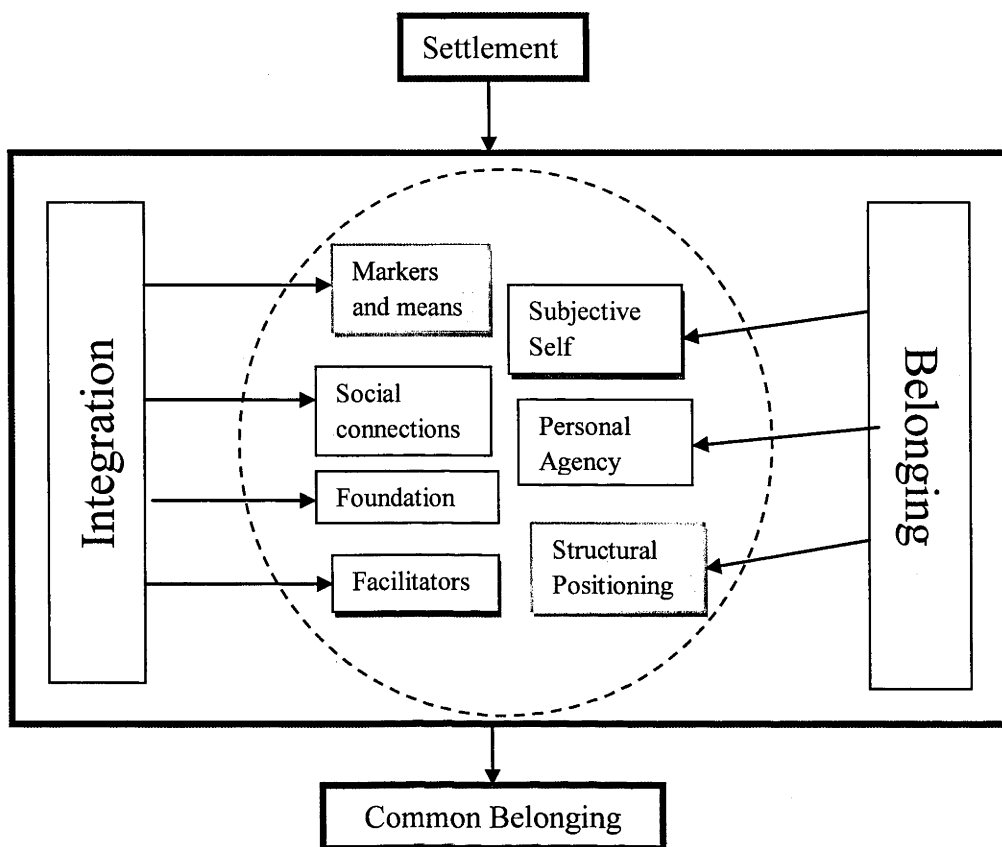
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Thus far, this thesis has looked at how different experiences of employment, education and language shape self and agency. In turn, these experiences influenced participants' experiences of integration and a sense of belonging. Different gendered narratives emerged from the interviews, revealing how structural positioning impacted on the migrants differently (as woman or man, parent, student or worker). This structural positioning influenced the extent to which participants could control their own lives. While more women expressed lower self-esteem and lack of control of their own lives, more men expressed a stronger sense of control and a more durable sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy. The differences were reflected in level of cultural knowledge and ties to social institutions. Education and employment enhanced hopes and aspirations of substantive citizenship and a feeling of belonging.

Chapters Four and Five also revealed certain experiences that emerged as being important for *all* participants in the development of a sense of belonging. A common theme linking these experiences was the search for acceptance and recognition. More generally, Tully (2000:480) stated that "participation in activities of disclosure and acknowledgment generate a sense of belonging to and identification with the larger political society". This identification with wider society impacts positively on both self and on agency through a feedback of acceptance and recognition. It provides a sense of self-worth through participating in society together with a feeling of *being able to* contribute.

This chapter focuses on the structural position of the participants and how this influences, or is influenced by, a sense of belonging. After looking at different forms of participation for both men and women, I illustrate how 'redistribution' is an important aspect of this concept of recognition. Fraser's theory is used to illuminate how people's sense of self and agency is enhanced through redistribution. This argument is illustrated through participants' experiences of employment and housing (within Ager and Strang's markers and means indicator)

**Figure 6.1: Diagram showing aspects of belonging and domains of integration explored in Chapter Six**



While the concept of structural positioning was discussed briefly in both chapters Four and Five, this chapter delves deeper into how the participants' status within society influenced their sense of recognition and acceptance. The focus is primarily on Ager and Strang's indicators of markers and means, and the domains of employment and housing. These were two areas of particular concern among both men and women. Chapter Four and Five revealed how the participants' narratives on both housing and employment were strongly directed towards a sense of control over their own lives. Further, a strong self-esteem allowed the participants to act move forward. These two chapters therefore underscored the interconnection between self and agency. This chapter discusses how recognition and redistribution play an essential role in people's experiences of self and agency and this is an important part of the development of a sense of belonging.

This chapter also emphasizes the impact of social structures on belonging by considering the concept of misrecognition. Chapter One presented the Australian political context in which the South Sudanese men and women found themselves before and during this research. They were the object of media, political and public controversy which depicted them as unable or unwilling to integrate. This chapter reveals the emotions expressed by the participants in response to this negative labelling of their community, and how this corresponds with their sense of belonging.

## **Structure and recognition**

The findings that emerged in Chapters Four and Five were that Ager and Strang's domains of integration are also a valuable way to approach the subjective and emotional experiences of belonging, defined as the interplay between self, agency and structural positioning (Hamaz and Vasta, 2009). This chapter shows how these subjective and emotional experiences relate to a sense of recognition in everyday life. While a subjective experience of recognition is important in order to understand the experiences of integration, Fraser's (1996; 2000; 2001) politics of recognition sheds light on the structural conditions that underpin a sense of belonging.

We have also seen how a strong sense of self-esteem – efficacy-based and worth-based – is necessary for people's capacity to act and change their situation. Furthermore, people's access to and participation in workforce and in the broader community influences their sense of self and self-esteem through feelings of self-worth and control. This mutually constitutive relationship between self and agency is an essential part of the development of a sense of belonging. Buonfino (2007:6) noted how:

the need for happiness, recognition and self esteem are seen to be at the very base of human need...people exhibit a need to belong in their desires to have a family, be a part of a community, a member of a church, a player in a team, a part of a gang. Belonging can connect people to others around them, as well as leading to a sense of being valued, recognised and listened to.

Among the participants in my research, both self and agency were influenced by social recognition. This experience of recognition from the wider society differed greatly

among the participants depending on their capacity to participate in social structures. Buonfino's (2007:22) discussion on belonging explored how "[B]elonging and finding recognition from structures and surroundings can help people live better and happier lives, improve self esteem and can significantly help in reducing tensions and societal problems". This close relationship between belonging and social structure was also highlighted in Hamaz and Vasta's (2009) exploration of belonging, which emphasized the *interplay* between self, agency and social structure.

As demonstrated in the two previous chapters, an analysis of self as separated from agency is useful as a way of exploring different aspects on belonging. However, as also demonstrated, in real life the two are inseparable and bound together in a mutual relationship. A strong sense of self and self-esteem is achieved through feedback from the wider society and through knowledge of one's capacities. Agency involves acting upon these capacities and research demonstrates how agency is more efficacious when self is in a stable and psychological position of well-being position (Stets and Burke, 2003). The way structural position interacts with self and agency are further discussed in this chapter through looking at recognition, redistribution and misrecognition. I employ Fraser's theory on recognition and redistribution in order to highlight the structural conditions in society hindering or encouraging participation.

Recognition, according to Fraser (2001:24 emphasis added), is a question of social status based on participation "*as full partners in social interaction*". Fraser further claimed that "justice today requires both redistribution and recognition, as neither alone is sufficient" (Fraser, 1996:5). Fraser's dual focus on recognition and redistribution emphasises the need for 'recognition of status' as opposed to 'recognition of identity'. A focus on status, Fraser (2000:113) argued, requires a "politics aimed at overcoming subordination by establishing the misrecognised party as full member of society, capable of participating on par with the rest". Only through this process can we "speak of reciprocal recognition and status equality" (Fraser, 2000:113). In this way, Fraser position herself as an advocate of a two-way process of integration.

Fraser's normative and dual model of recognition (including both status and redistribution of resources) was helpful in my analysis because it focused on the structural conditions that underpin many of the barriers that the participants meet in the

process of integration. These barriers are also captured through Ager and Strang's domains of integration. However, while 'recognition of status' focuses on the need for equal participation among all members of society, and the numerous ways this participation is impeded, it is equally important to bring in the subjective experiences of these barriers to participation and how these influence self and identity. In line with Hamaz and Vasta's definition of belonging employed in my thesis, this interplay between self, agency and structural positioning needs to be appreciated in order to understand the process of integration and the development of a feeling of belonging.

To reinforce the importance of a two-way process of integration I also use Fraser's concept of 'misrecognition' (2000). Misrecognition is "perpetrated ... through the workings of social institutions that regulate interaction according to parity-impeding cultural norms" (Fraser, 2000:114). Overcoming this subordination, according to Fraser (2000:115), can only happen through "changing social institutions – or, more specifically, changing the interaction-regulating values that impede parity of participation at all relevant institutional sites". Fraser (2000:116) noted how "equal participation is ... impeded when some actors lack the necessary resources to interact with others as peers":

...status subordination cannot be understood in isolation from economic arrangements, nor recognition abstracted from distribution. On the contrary, only by considering both dimensions together can one determine what is impeding participatory parity in any particular instance; only by teasing out the complex imbrications of status with economic class can one determine how best to redress the injustice. (Fraser, 2000:119)

I explore how misrecognition influences people's experiences of integration and their development of a sense of belonging by looking at the public and political contexts in Australia at the time of the arrival of the participants in this study.

However, in order to understand what motivates participation and how recognition, or misrecognition, influences self and self-esteem, it is necessary to note the difference between 'recognition of status' and 'recognition of identity' theory (Honneth, 2001). As a proponent of the 'recognition of identity' theory, Honneth (2001:48) argued that, "the relationship of recognition is tied to the bodily existence of concrete Others who

reciprocate their feelings of special esteem. The positive attitude to oneself that arises from such affective recognition is that of trust in oneself". From this perspective, according to McNay (2008b:273), the manifestation of self through recognition by others is "so fundamental to individual self-realization that it is the motivating force behind social development". Recognition of identity focuses on self-esteem and subjective experiences of issues of respect and acknowledgement. I will explore how approaching both status and identity enables a fuller understanding of the experiences of integration and the affective state of belonging.

First however, I demonstrate how 'recognition of status', as explored by Fraser, illuminates essential aspects of belonging through its focus on parity of participation.

### **Belonging through recognition and redistribution**

Fraser's theory of recognition and redistribution highlights the crucial structural conditions that impact on equal participation and access to resources. Her politics of redistribution focuses on "injustices it defines as socioeconomic and presumes to be rooted in the economic structure of society". The politics of recognition "targets injustices it understands as cultural, [and] which it presumes to be rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication" (Fraser, 1996:6-7). Furthermore, both a politics of redistribution and a politics of recognition are linked to mutual recognition, or the parity of participation. Fraser (1996:24) proposed that:

...it is unjust that some individuals and groups are denied the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalised patterns of interpretation and evaluation in whose construction they have not equally participated and that disparage their distinctive characteristics or the distinctive characteristics assigned to them.

In Chapters Four and Five, we witnessed this unequal access to participation and how it was engendered. According to Fraser, a redistribution of resources and goods needs to go hand in hand with the 'politics of recognition' in order to reach a just and fair society. Accordingly, a theory of recognition should be about "politics aimed at overcoming subordination by establishing the misrecognised party as a full member of



the society, capable of participating on par with the rest” (Fraser, 2000:113). Examples of recognition injustices include:

...cultural domination (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one’s own); nonrecognition (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one’s culture); and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions). (Fraser, 1996:7)

The politics of redistribution also includes socioeconomic injustices such as exploitation (having the fruits of one’s labour appropriated for the benefit of others), economic marginalization (being confined to undesirable or poorly paid work or being denied access to income-generating labour altogether) and deprivation (being denied an adequate material standard of living) (Fraser, 1996). In looking at both recognition and redistribution, Fraser “proposes a “perspectival dualism” of recognition and redistribution where oppression is understood as both institutional subordination and maldistribution or denial of economic resources” (McNay, 2008b:283). This dualism reflects how both recognition and redistribution are equally important structural forces for understanding and achieving a more just society.

However, the focus of my thesis is not on justice as such but rather on the development of a sense of belonging. While a sense of belonging is influenced by people’s ability to participate in society it is possible to move further towards an understanding of this development of belonging with the help of Fraser’s dual model of recognition and redistribution. Fraser’s focus on recognition of status (on participation as full partners in social interaction) and her equal emphasis on redistribution as “socio-economic inequalities” (Marlowe, 2010b:176) draws attention to the possible structural barriers to participation as a result of the maldistribution of resources.

As Chapter Five illustrated, for the participants in this research to feel recognised and respected was an expression of connectedness and belonging. Both men and women talked about need to participate and contribute to society, and felt excluded and frustrated when this participation was impeded. Participation was analysed either as social contribution (through employment among the men), or as a sense of isolation

(through lack of understanding of the norms and regulations necessary for wider engagement with Australian society among the women). In this chapter, the concept of recognition is a way of exploring the impact which these different forms of participation have on the two-way process of integration. The following subsections examine recognition and redistribution through two domains from Ager and Strang's model (2008), the domains of employment and housing.

### ***Redistribution through employment***

Economic deprivation is directly linked to employment status – “being confined to undesirable or poorly paid work or being denied access to income generating labour” (Fraser, 1996:7). Employment allows people to meet other workers and to create important bridges to society (Colic-Peisker, 2009; Robinson, 2013). Robinson (2013:18) also observed how African refugees arriving in Australia “often bring considerable professional and vocational skills, qualifications and experience, and are keen to work”. As Chapter Five showed, this eagerness to work was evident among the participants in this study. For both the men and women in this study, employment offered hope for a greater sense of inclusion in Australian society. While only five of the 21 participants were in full-time paid work, the young men completing their education (together with the men already working) stressed this importance of employment for a successful settlement process. The women without employment also recognized that lack of paid work contributed to isolation and marginalization from vital aspects of a resettled life.

Looking at the workforce participation based on census data from 2011, Robinson (2013:18) reinforced my findings of the experiences of residents born in African refugee-source countries. They tend to:

...face significant barriers to employment including lack of information about relevant vocational education and training programs, employment support services that are perceived to be confusing and difficult to access, difficulties having their overseas training, qualifications and experience recognized, discrimination, and lack of knowledge or experience relevant to Australian workplaces and employment conditions.

Robinson (2013:18) found that the “level of workforce participation by the Sudan- and South Sudan-born population is much lower than that for the total Australian population”. Statistics illustrated that “the percentages of the population who were not in the workforce and who were unemployed but seeking work were more than twice and more than four times, respectively, that for the total Australian population” (Robinson, 2013:18).

**Table 6.1: Workforce participation for the Australian population aged 20-65 born in Sudan or South Sudan**

Country of birth	Employed			Unemployed, seeking work			
	Full-time	Part-time	Away from work	Full-time	Part-time	Not in labour force	Not stated
Sudan and South Sudan	22.5	13.9	4.2	8.6	4.6	41.7	4.6
Total Australian population	47.0	19.6	4.3	2.4	1.3	20.3	5.2

Source: adapted from Robinson (2013).

Drawing on Fraser’s (2000:113) redistribution theory, these statistics suggest that the South Sudanese are not participating “on par with the rest” in the area of employment. Recognition of status can help explain the structural barriers that the South Sudanese confront in the field of employment. However, while these statistics objectively identify the number of people employed, they cannot reveal the subjective experiences of the South Sudanese population, and the impact on the process of integration.

As Robinson (2013:18) noted “[R]elatively high levels of un- and under-employment have resulted in loss of self-worth”. In her research on visibility and settlement success Colic-Peisker (2009:193-194) also drew attention away from “the solely economically focused idea of objectively measurable settlement success, which dominates government thinking and is a significant part of social science research of immigrant settlement”. She observed how employment plays an important role with regard to refugee life satisfaction:

Refugee employment and downward mobility ... have the potential to adversely affect other aspects of settlement: family life, the creation of social networks, the *feeling of belonging*

and, consequently, people's overall emotional well-being and life satisfaction. (my emphasis) (Colic-Peisker, 2009:178)

Here, Colic-Peisker's dual focus on redistribution and recognition draws together the structural and subjective components of employment. Ajang, one of the employed women who could speak English, reflected on these barriers to employment, and the non-recognition associated with racism:

I feel that I don't belong to this place, I always feel like...especially with the job, like when you try to get a job you know, you try to get an interview or, if you apply for a job and then...I assume, I don't know, but I assume if I say Ajang then they will...'oh this is not a person from this country'...but if my name is Mary James then ah...yes, yes...

Her intuition that she would not be accepted for an interview because of her name (this perception of misrecognition) not only made Ajang feel unjustly treated but also unable to participate in Australian society on a par with others. Research by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007a) supports this feeling of being treated unjustly based on name and background in their work on employment and visible different refugee groups. In this research Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007a:77) found that there was "a clear perception among a considerable number of respondents that there is discrimination in the job market, that they have experienced it and that their visible difference disadvantages them in the course of their Australian settlement". They found evidence of "institutional racism" which they defined as "structural relations of subordination and oppression between social groups with unequal access to power" (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007a:78). Colic-Peisker and Tilbury further noted how the presence of interpersonal racism, "individual prejudices of those who are making the decisions in the workplace" (2007a:78), could be the cause of the "significant difference in outcomes between Middle Eastern and African refugees on the one hand, and the less visible different ex-Yugoslavs on the other" (2007a:78). For Ajang, this racism acted as a barrier to her sense of belonging. There was an assumption that she was 'not Australian' and this influenced her sense of self-esteem and limited her agency by impeding her capacity to work.

Among employed men, Maduk had experienced downward mobility after arriving in Australia. He attributed this to the non-recognition of migrant skills. He was working as

a cleaner at the time of the interview despite extensive experience in Africa working in politics. Maduk completed high school before attending military college in Sudan, and also worked with international organizations. He experienced difficulties finding a job in Australia suited to his background and experiences:

If you arrive today to Australia and you have...if you don't have any problems with the language it is still hard to find a job, you have to have experience and you cannot get that experience here in Australia with the laws here...they won't appreciate or consider your experience from overseas no, you have to get the experience here in Australia, it is very hard.

Maduk spoke of both own and other people's experiences of the non-recognition of skills as a problem for new arrivals in Australia. In research by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006:203) they identified non-recognition of qualifications as one of many interrelated reasons why "the recent Australian refugee intake has been relegated to undesirable jobs: non-recognition of qualifications as a systemic barrier, discrimination on the basis of race and cultural difference by employers, 'ethnic-path integration' and the lack of mainstream social networks that could assist in the job search". This non-recognition of skills acquired both abroad and since arrival further illustrates how Fraser's concept of redistribution relates to employment. Maduk's narrative highlights how emotional outcomes, self-esteem and structural conditions interact. It reinforces the utility of Hamaz and Vasta's (2009) exploration of belonging, involving the interplay between self, agency and structural positioning.

This emotional response to the barriers towards parity of participation was also reflected in narratives from other men and women. For example, Ater was still a student but looked forward to employment. To be recognized as having a chance to be a full partner in social life was essential in Ater's sense of self and self-esteem. Yet, when comparing refugees with migrants, he noted the difference it makes for people when they are recognized for the skills they bring to Australia:

There is this difference between skilled migrant and a refugee migrant because a skilled migrant actually came under the skill...you know, they have knowledge and this people would come straight to the jobs, if you are a doctor you can come and work as a doctor, but a refugee is a refugee and when someone portray you like it kind of...it is trying to kill us...yeah...it is

fine to say that...it has no help to the Australian society to try to destroy us as a society because if this people become a part of the society they need also to involve a certain thing but they can also help the Australian as a country.

This experience of the difference between skilled migrant and refugees, as experienced by Ater, was confirmed in research by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006:221):

The most vulnerable migrants – refugees and asylum seekers – are especially likely to end up locked in a disadvantaged low-status and low-paying jobs.

Structural constraints – the lack of qualification recognition and barriers erected by trade and professional associations – are mechanisms of institutional discrimination which have an important role in the preservation of the segmented labour market. Such barriers keep the racially and culturally different in underprivileged labour market segments and socially relegate them to a disadvantaged and disempowered minority status.

Ater expressed a strong wish to be a part of society on par with others and emphasized the demoralizing impact on people's sense of life when they are not treated as part of society through the lack of employment. For him, to be able to contribute, and at the same time be understood by others, was integral to participating on an equal basis with others. His experience with both part- and full-time work boosted his positivity about his opportunities for obtaining future rewarding employment, and was an indication that he *would* participate on equal footing with everyone else. His earlier comments where he made references to a tree and its branches (see Chapter Five) emphasized the importance of mutuality and also the importance of recognition. Ater noted how a feeling of mutual dependence had allowed him to make personal steps towards belonging.

Masquefa's (2003) research on the social mobility of skilled Sudanese former refugees and their efforts in finding professional employment in Australia also reinforces my findings. She found that out of 18 people interviewed, only one had been able to re-establish himself as a professional practitioner. She noted how this was a result of the non-recognition of overseas qualifications by Australian professional associations (Masquefa, 2003). Yet, understanding migrant experiences of employment involves acknowledging both the structural constraints and the emotional responses to rejections based on background and non-recognized skills. In my research, men's *hopes* for

employment after their education and women's *frustration* with lack of access to employment, explained different gendered outcomes with respect to integration and belonging. In other words, the way the participants experienced limited access to employment – mostly the women – and non-recognition of skills, shows the significant subjective impact that recognition has on identity and sense of belonging. At the same time, in order to understand the structural barriers people encounter and their ability to participate on same levels as others in society one must look at how misrecognition impacts on people's capacity to integrate into society.

### ***Redistribution through housing***

Fraser's structural concepts of recognition and redistribution are also useful in analysing access to housing (as part of Ager and Strang's domains of integration). Housing can be associated with the structural condition of "being denied an adequate material standard of living" (Fraser, 1996:7). Flatau, Colic-Peisker, Bauskis, Maginn and Buergelt (2014:97) noted how "successful resettlement and integration of refugees into a host nation is dependent upon accessibility of appropriate, affordable and secure housing, and establishing a place to call 'home'". Ager and Strang (2008) placed the domain of housing under the indicators of means and markers. They noted the "effect that housing has on refugees' overall physical and emotional wellbeing, as well as on their ability to feel 'at home'" (Ager and Strang, 2008:171). Many of the South Sudanese participants expressed concern over their current housing situation and wanted to improve their accommodation. While the men reflected less on housing, the women linked this topic to day-to-day insecurities about the future and to safety in their neighbourhood (see Chapter Four).

This problem of finding appropriate housing affects the majority of newly-arrived refugees (Atem and Wilson, 2008). Lack of employment, low-income, large family sizes, a lack of renting history and employment history all contribute to housing stress:

Most recent migrants to Australia from Sudan and Afghanistan have come through Australia's Humanitarian Program rather than migrating for work or to join family already in Australia. As a result, these migrants are likely to have very few economic resources at their disposal in Australia. (ABS, 2009)

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' (2009) examination of housing overutilization also mentioned larger families and the misfit between the families and smaller houses when discussing refugees. The participants in my study settling in Canberra had similar demographic characteristics to those settling elsewhere, although the structure of each housing market varies. Shelter ACT reported on the expense of buying and renting houses in Canberra:

Housing costs in the ACT have increased significantly in the ACT in the past decade, reflecting a national trend. The median house price in the ACT almost doubled between 2000 and 2003 alone and purchasing a house in Canberra is more expensive than any other capital city excepting Sydney. Median weekly rents in the ACT are consistently amongst the most expensive of all Australian capital cities, and rental vacancy rates in the ACT are the lowest of all jurisdictions. In the ACT as in all states and territories, lack of affordable housing options produces housing stress, housing insecurity, marginal tenures and homelessness among people with low incomes. With this comes associated negative flow on effects on individuals, families and the community. (Spiller, 2011:3)

According to Foley and Beer (2003), lack of appropriate housing can lead to experiences of exclusion among the refugees settling in Australia. They found the concept of social exclusion useful in the context of housing due to its emphasis on “both the limited market resources of settler arrivals—wealth, employment et cetera—and their potentially limited rights with respect to government provided services and limited ability to pay for market services” (Foley and Beer, 2003:13). When a sense of inclusion is weakened, through lack of appropriate or satisfactory housing, people’s experience of exclusion adversely influences their sense of social connectedness with society. Fraser’s politics of recognition and redistribution help us acknowledge these structural limitations on migrants housing status.

Maduk was one of the few *men* who spoke about housing stress. This was associated with his concern for safety and feelings of contentment in his neighbourhood. He initially lived in government housing in an area where he felt insecure:

I had not very good neighbours, they used to make a lot of noise when it was dark, they were alcoholics and they used drugs, all



the time the police were there and all the time they came to our door, they wanted money, sugar, milk...and if you didn't give them any, oh they were annoying you so much that you have to give them.

Maduk subsequently moved to another government house, but this time with Sudanese neighbours and also friends from other refugee communities: "it got better when I got a house in this suburb and I had two other friends in that area. We used to get together and have our meals together". Maduk then moved to another government house where he felt reasonably safe and happy, in spite of only vaguely knowing his neighbours: "I don't know my neighbours here, until now nobody has said hello or anything". He had been there for about two years and had been target of some unfortunate events:

...one day they trashed my daughter's car, one person smashed my daughter's car and made a lot of damage inside the car [...] they meant it and we reported it to the police.

However, despite this event, one reason why Maduk felt safer now in his new house, was that he knew he could contact the police: "I feel safe because I have contacts, I can talk to the police...". For Maduk, the lack of neighbourhood *bridges* was compensated by his *links* to the police. As noted by Amlani (2010:8), "linking capital is particularly important for marginalized groups as it puts the onus on authorities and those in power to allow them to access resources in the same way as the rest of the population". Maduk's language abilities, together with a strong sense of agency through employment, meant that in his daily life he had the capacity to use these links with institutions for assistance. Furthermore, his sense of fair access to these institutions, as "full partner in social interaction" of being able to participate "as peer in social interaction" (Fraser, 2000), made him aware of own ability to change his situation.

Nyakiir, a woman who spoke fluent English and had worked in several jobs in Australia, also discussed her neighbourhood:

...in this neighbourhood they can't deal with you because when I came here I did walk to every house but they didn't return back to me. I have visited them and no one will come to me and say hello back to me...in Sudan when you come to a new area, the neighbours can just come to me to say hello to me and to introduce themselves... and all of us who are in the same area

we can come together and everyone will bring food and food and we can sit for breakfast and eat together for lunch and for dinner.

Her prior experience of housing led her to expect more than just a roof over her head. Her experience of housing involved the access to housing itself together with the kind of housing environment offered to newly arrived refugees. Looking at housing, security and neighbourhood in their research on housing and recently arrived refugees in Australia, Beer and Foley (2003:26) found that:

The lack of security was one of the issues mentioned by respondents in describing why they were dissatisfied with their dwelling. When asked, 60 respondents (14 per cent) said they had security concerns about their current accommodation, and these security concerns fell into three main domains. First, there was concern about the nature of the neighbourhood. Respondents variously described their locality as a place of harassment by neighbours, a high crime area, an unfriendly neighbourhood, and a place of gangs. Second, a smaller number of respondents were concerned about the security of their building. Finally, the characteristics of the individual respondents—such as being a lone parent—appeared to contribute to security concerns about personal security.

One single mother, Nyakor, expressed a stronger concern with her neighbourhood. She lived in government housing with her two young daughters, and she explained how she worried about her children playing in their area. Occasionally, she was too scared to let them play outside as she felt their safety was compromised by her neighbours and their dogs:

...my little girl, the 20 months old, she loves to walk down there [in the neighbourhood] and this is difficult when I am scared myself, I can't protect them. One day a dog came, the car door was open and I was behind putting the pram in the boot and when I saw it I jumped on the roof of the car and the kids were screaming and when I told the girl to come and take your dog she was like...'she can't bite you'...when I talked to her she was just swearing at me.

Nyakor had already called the Domestic Animals Services about the dog problem, and had called the housing authorities to ask for a transfer. However, she felt that neither of the agencies listened to her. While she could speak English and was able to make the

necessary phone calls, Nyakor experienced what Fraser labels a lack of recognition. Her status in society as someone different influenced her sense of self and her sense of control of her own situation. This example contrasts markedly with Maduk, whose bonds with the wider community and links with authorities had enhanced his sense of connectedness.

However, not all participants emphasized neighbourhood problems. Adhieu, in the women's group, expressed more contentment with her housing conditions and reflected on positive contacts with their neighbours:

There are good Australians but there are also some that are not so good... so I live with the good people, there are good neighbours and some of them like...if they are doing their garden like mowing the lawn that can easily go to my backyard and do mine as well.

Such unsolicited friendliness helped sustain a more positive feeling of integration among some participants. Adau, who lived alone in a government house, also spoke warmly about her first meeting with her neighbour, who came over and helped out with electricity:

When we moved here I remember the guy across, Bruce, did come because we were trying to put on the electricity and something were wrong and we didn't know how to fix it and somehow he was across there and he came and say 'oh you are the new neighbours' and so on and, he came across and he looked at it and he went in and got some tools and then came and fixed it, yeah...

The positive impact that such social connections make were also noted by Ager and Strang (2008:180):

Being recognised and greeted by others in the neighbourhood was greatly valued. Small acts of friendship appeared to have disproportionately positive impact on perceptions.

These positive experiences with the neighbours strengthened some women's sense of belonging, and encouraged positive enhancement of self. Those of the participants who felt happy and safe in their neighbourhood often linked these emotions back to good

relations with their neighbours. These relations emphasise the mutual aspect of recognition. This connectedness and feelings of safety in the community have also been noted by Miller (2006:257-258)

Being at home is a mode of being according to which we are at ease with the world and those around us. In corollary we are never fully at home where and when our being that kind of self is compromised (such as in places where we are unwanted, unsafe or restricted). In this context, the antithesis of being at home is not being without a place to belong, but being without a self that belongs.

For the women, immediate needs such as housing was a major priority, while the men prioritized language and employment and could focus on a future with hopes and aspirations of further belonging in Australia.

The participants' experiences of both positive and negative contact with their neighbours highlight the importance of recognition. Using Fraser's concept of redistribution helps reach a more rounded understanding of the way this recognition of status affects a sense of belonging. In this way, participation becomes an important part of everyday life in a new society. Fraser's politics of recognition helps pinpoint the need for policies of redistribution within a context of social policy, government responses, and public discourses. By understanding this mutuality associated with the receiving society's responsibilities and the structural positioning of the people being received, it is possible to make meaningful the integration process and the development of a sense of belonging.

### **Social structures, misrecognition and belonging**

The narratives from participants help emphasize the importance of recognition of status and of identity (as part of self and self-esteem), in the integration process and in developing a sense of belonging. However, another external force that influences this development is public discourse. The political context in Australia at the time of the interviews and wider public discourses placed the South Sudanese community firmly among 'the other' that were different from the 'mainstream' and unfit for Australian society. All participants experienced this discourse. They expressed these experiences as

episodes of either racism, of being different or being invisible. To appreciate the important of this external influence, it is valuable to focus on Fraser's concept of misrecognition.

Fraser (2000:113) refers to misrecognition as "status subordination". This involves being prevented from participating equally in social life and illustrates the value of a two-way integration process.

According to Fraser, focus on justice through redistribution and recognition not only assists equal participation, but also addresses misrecognition. To be misrecognized, Fraser argued (1996:26):

...is not simply to be thought ill off, looked down on, or devaluated in other's conscious attitudes or mental beliefs. It is rather to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and prevented from participating as a peer in social life as a consequence of institutionalised patterns of interpretation and evaluation that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem.

This focus on misrecognition arises when a parity of participation is impeded:

When, ...institutionalized patterns of cultural value constitute some actors as inferior, excluded, wholly other or simply invisible, hence as less than full partners in social interaction, then we should speak of misrecognition and status subordination. (Fraser, 2001:24)

Appreciating the emotional impact of misrecognition is a means to understanding how belonging develops. In other words, analysing personal experiences allows us to understand how this misrecognition is internalized. According to Tully (2000:470), misrecognition can:

...undermine the basic self-respect and self-esteem that are necessary to empower a person to develop the degree of autonomy and sense of self-worth that is required to participate equally in the public and private life of her society.

In the previous section, I argued that a sense of recognition can enhance a development of belonging. This section shows that a sense of misrecognition (feeling invisible, excluded and unable to participate in specific sectors of society) impairs the feeling of connectedness to society. Misrecognition can amplify the sense that refugees are 'others', or different, and can lead to a perception that they lack agency and the capacity to participate and contribute to society.

Marlowe's (2010a:186) study of Sudanese men living in Adelaide describes how "resettling refugees can find themselves in a contested landscape whereby political, economic, social, cultural and media-driven forces influence the wider public's perception of them". This contested landscape impacts on refugees' own perceptions of themselves. The feedback and recognition or misrecognition they receive in society influences how refugees settle and how they develop a sense of belonging. Anthias (2006:20) also described the importance of "a sense of belonging in terms of preconditions for quality of life", including "a focus on the range of experiences of enablement in society, as well as experiences of hurdles". This suggests that in order to reach a comprehensive understanding of belonging it is necessary to analyse people's experiences throughout all domains of social integration. Part of these experiences includes recognition and misrecognition of both identity and status.

Here I examine Fraser's (1996:19) claim that racism through "police assault; discrimination in housing, employment, and health care; media stereotyping; devaluation of ... cultural production; and exclusion or marginalisation in public spheres" are all "quintessential harms of misrecognition":

...straight is normal, gay is perverse; 'male-headed households' are proper, 'female-headed households' are not; 'whites' are law-abiding, 'blacks' are dangerous. In each case, the result is to deny some members of society the status of full partners in interaction, capable of participating on a par with the rest. (Fraser, 2001:25)

Through examining both social structure and the subjective experience, it is possible to explain how a constant reminder of being different impacts on one's sense of exclusion from society and inhibits a sense of belonging.

One of the most significant examples of misrecognition in Australia with regard to Southern Sudanese former refugees was the 2007 comments by then Minister for Immigration, Kevin Andrews, on how South Sudanese refugees had failed to integrate into the Australian society. As discussed in Chapter One, media coverage both before and after these comments reported South Sudanese gang-related crime and fighting. Subsequent debates revolved around their ability to 'fit in'. The article by Andrew Fraser (2005) with regard to Africans generally and their different "gene pool" and the damage this would have on "Australia's genetic interest" was another example of portraying the African community as 'the other' and as 'dangerous'.

The mass media is capable of generating a climate of fear among a country's citizens as well as in political discourse (Gale, 2004; McDermott, 2011). Media debates, political statements, and the resulting 'fear' among the population in the receiving country, can have an impact on newcomers and their sense of belonging, which was expressed in many of the comments from participants in this research. The emotional impact that this discourse had on the South Sudanese influenced strongly their sense of belonging. For example, Mamer reflected directly on this negative sense of being different when he described how he felt Australians perceived the South Sudanese community: "The Australian community view the Sudanese community as some sort of a burden, that is how they [the Australians] see them [the South Sudanese community]...it is a burden". For Mamer, this experience of misrecognition was a reflection on how the South Sudanese community was perceived as different. All participants noted the negative impact that Andrews' comments and the media coverage had on the Southern Sudanese community. Again, Mamer noted how Andrews' statement, along with the article by Andrew Fraser (2005), had distressed the South Sudanese community:

When I heard this and he is a public figure I knew that we were going to get it rough, I mean I knew that we were going to get some difficult times in that year or in the following year because of those comments and in fact it was true, many death happened because of that, oh I mean many abuses, we were abused you know...because we are people who have a low IQ, people who have lived in a war-torn country for a long time, people who have lived in refugee camps for a long time, so who we are...not...actually we are not people. ... the Minister made my time difficult by saying, "Oh, I am responsible for the people to talk about what is affecting the community." Yes, it is true to

defend himself that way, but what about us, *are we not part of the community?*

Mamer's explicit feeling of being outside the community exemplifies how strongly participants felt about the comments from the then Minister, together with other media reports. What made matters worse was the fact that a high-profile politician such as Kevin Andrews made the derogatory statement that the South Sudanese community lacked the ability to integrate. Participants felt their sense of misrecognition was heightened as a result of such an authoritative remark. For instance, Akoul observed that Andrews's high profile position posed the danger that:

...once you put it out there...because people assume that the government knows everything so they are like "oh, there must be something going on that they are not telling us, that is why these people can't come".

Akoul noted that negative media coverage and official statements can have a negative impact on people's self-perceptions and harm their relations with the wider society:

A comment today can impact on generations to come due to the power of media. I don't know, sometimes I think Australians forget that things like that, when they are blown out of proportions, affect how the next generations of Sudanese will be treated because once you put that perception into people's mind...it can be the crime of maybe 20 but that is such a small number of the greater Sudanese community and now, we know people are apprehensive of us and it is a result of that, like...and sometimes it is good to look at people's cultural background like 5 Sudanese walking together and they are young men, it is normal to us, here it is a gang you know...so...and it kind of sucks, you know...

Negative media comments could widen the space between the Sudanese community and mainstream society: "They [the Sudanese in Australia] felt they were being marginalised from the society and that they were going to be treated differently and to some extent that is still in the back of their minds, when things happen" (Akoul). This fear was also expressed by Mamer, who pointed out that although Kevin Andrews had stated that he was trying to protect the community, he was effectively excluding part of the community, the South Sudanese.



These expressions of how negative statements by politicians and media comments impact on people's sense of isolation are concrete examples of the value of Fraser's concept of exclusion from parity of participation, caused through misrecognition based on stereotypes and misunderstandings.

### *The refugee label*

These stereotyping and misunderstandings highlight the importance of 'labelling'. Refugee specialist Zetter (1991; 2007) contested the label 'refugee' for over two decades outlining the "conceptual tools of bureaucratic labelling – stereotyping conformity, designation, identity disaggregation and political/power relationships" (Zetter, 1991:39). Labelling reflects a person's structural position based on actual or perceived identities related to their background, appearance, language and cultural behaviour. Misrecognition based on these labels in society can further lead to situations where a sense of belonging is impaired (Marlowe, 2010a; Pupavac, 2006). Labelling emphasises the need to look at the structures, self and own experiences of agency (Hamaz and Vasta, 2009) when analysing belonging.

As Zetter implied, the term 'refugee' today involves a myriad of stereotypes based on what is expressed in the media, how refugees are treated by established institutions, and what is claimed about refugees' backgrounds. Pupavac (2006:1) observed how refugees had been represented as people who were "[T]raumatised, scarred, in shock" and as a result, as traumatised victims. Zetter's (1991:39) work on labelling explored the stereotyping in detail:

Within the repertoire of humanitarian concern, refugee now constitutes one of the most powerful labels. From the first procedures of status determination -who is a refugee? - to the structural determinants of life chances which this identity then engenders, labels infuse the world of refugees.

This label, Zetter (1991) argued, emphasizes the non-participatory and powerless status of refugees, undermining their agency. To see refugees as 'victims' and as different from 'us'; to hear how refugees have been through war and trauma and therefore have difficulties settling in Australia; to read in the media how Southern Sudanese have

difficulties integrating and becoming like 'us'; all these images impact on how 'we' see 'them'. While the term 'refugee' itself is used in this thesis, it is important to recognize the potential denial of agency that follows this labelling of refugees as powerless and different victims (see also Ager, 1999; Harrell-Bond, 1999; Rajaram, 2002; Ward et al., 2001 for further discussions on the pathologising of refugees). Hamaz and Vasta's exploration of 'belonging', where the emphasis is on the interplay between self, agency and structural positioning, has been employed to help counteract the way the South Sudanese participants have experienced labelling and its impact on self and sense of their own agency.

Other studies have also discussed how the South Sudanese former refugees have been portrayed as unable to integrate, and in some instances of having 'criminal tendencies'. For Instance, Melanie Baak (2011:422) related labelling to aspects of belonging (especially 'white belonging') and observed how the "Sudanese were positioned as outside national belonging". She examined the portrayal by the media of a South Sudanese man in which the focus was on his "race, ethnicity, colour and gender" (Baak, 2011:423). In this context, the South Sudanese had already been positioned by the media as something "other, as foreign, as failing to integrate". The South Sudanese community had also been described as "increasingly violent, members of gangs, from backgrounds of war, trauma and violence and [of] having low levels of education" (Baak, 2011:423). This labelling of media subject as different based on his background as well as physical appearance, positioned him and other South Sudanese "outside belonging", because he was "black in a normative white nation" (Baak, 2011:423). This notion of "white belonging" has been further explored by Due (2008), who analysed newspaper articles that indicated how whiteness was "the normative mode of belonging in Australia" (2008:1). Henry-Waring (2008:8) also pointed to visible migrants and asked how people could develop a sense of belonging in a context where difference "is embedded in a context of Otherness". This issue of blackness has already been noted by the participants in this research in their day-to-day social interaction and their search for housing and employment.

These discussions of 'otherness' and belonging in a 'white society' emphasize the need to look at misrecognition both in Nancy Fraser's sense of 'status subordination' and also the emotional response and subjective experiences of this context. The participants in

my study reflected both on how *status subordination* impacted on the South Sudanese community in general and also how it hindered their sense of social participation (subjective experience).

Labels are a means of reinforcing the misrecognition of refugees as outsiders. In the South Sudanese case, they had been describes as violent and unfit for Australian society:

Ethnic minorities suffer disproportionately high rates of unemployment and poverty and these problems can only be remedied by a politics of redistribution. But as Fraser shows (with examples from the US), Eurocentric patterns of cultural value privileges associated with 'whiteness' tend to stigmatize everything coded as 'black,' 'brown,' or 'yellow'. As a result, ethnic minorities are constructed as deficient and inferior others who cannot be full members of society. The remedy for this is a politics of recognition. (Ghosh and Juul, 2008)

For the participants in my research, the emotions that flow from the label 'refugee' in the public context of the time of the interviews emphasized the misconception that all refugees do not belong. Adit, a female employed student with fluent English, referred to the role of the media and Internet when asked how she thought South Sudanese former refugees were viewed by other Australians:

They [Australians] know Sudanese are all refugees here and they are affected by the war and are traumatised because many times there are seminars and workshops and they say that refugees that come from there and there are traumatised and...traumatised and sometimes they do like...sometimes when I open...I was on internet one time and I found that Sudanese are criminals, they do crimes...[laughing]...in Brisbane...and it depends...not all Australians will think that Sudanese are really different people that they are bad people but maybe it was....those who posted this thing on the internet and it depends on the ones who read that article on the internet and what they know. It is very hard to know a person when you have no contact and you are not even close to him or to them, if you are close to that people then you will know who are they but if you are not close to them and you just read and hear that these...people are different, they just take that and they say oh these people are really bad people or they say no let me ask, maybe something is behind this...

Adit also related the label 'refugee' directly to misperceptions of her South Sudanese community as being traumatized victims and as criminals. She felt that people made assumptions based on reports by the media and on the Internet. The shift from the label refugee to the label 'South Sudanese' meant that the participants experiences of being the target of media report and comments were negatively related to their heritage, cultural background and identity. Adit's response to these problems was that everyone should seek knowledge about each other's background and relations so that that many misunderstandings could be avoided. Her application of mutual recognition was also suggested by Vasta (2009:26) as a positive move "which requires changes in receiving society structures and institutions". Misrecognition, as Fraser argued (2000; 2001), involves being unable to participate as a peer in social life due to exclusion or marginalisation. Labelling and experiences of being different (or needing different treatment) clearly impact on people's self through both a lack of control over one's own life and through misrecognition of their capabilities to participate.

Ater also noted the potential negative impact Andrews' statement could have on the ability for South Sudanese participating in employment. Andrews' statement labelled the whole of the South Sudanese community as unable and unwilling to integrate and reinforced the misrecognition of the community. For Ater, this labelling could prevent them from "participating as a peer in social life" (Fraser, 2000:113):

Yes, it did have an impact, just for...it could have an impact on the employment side, because employment needs people with integration, [people] that can integrate and work together in groups. And when they said that Sudanese cannot integrate, this means a lot, ah...yeah...it means a lot in daily life.

Ater suggested that labelling negatively influenced the South Sudanese search for employment and reinforce Fraser's (2000) argument for the need for recognition as well as redistribution.

This social subordination (based on political and public labelling of the South Sudanese as refugees) was felt strongly among many of the participants. For instance, Majier talked about how Sudanese youth were now labelled as difficult and as violent. The police responded by dealing with gatherings of young Sudanese as a problem. Majier

reflected on the detrimental impact these debates had on the South Sudanese community:

...the impact is completely negative and that is the stage where, you know, where you start to have a snowball effect, you know,...oh...all Sudanese are criminal, they are gangsters, they are this, you know, the next thing is you have white police officers going to speak to a group of youth gathered in a park with bottles of coke and you think they are drinking alcohol and this is the same guys who made comments about how Sudanese are gangsters and they are coming here because there are four or five of us gathered in the street, and the reaction from this is, you know, you have two people boiling over, you know, one approaching the other with negative perception of that person and then, you know, there is the other thing...having the image of the authority person, you know, somebody who is abusing this power. So you know there are instances in which,...you know, it builds up...in which you have fought police officers and this is bad, you know, but people don't look at the background of things.

He predicted that this exposure in the media would lead to misrecognition in the way the police approached young Africans in the street:

The media reports again and you know...oh...a couple of Sudanese youth hit a police officer and the reporting itself is correct but the background to it is not. If you look at it from a broader point of view...you will find out that those people have problems, both of them...and it keeps going on and on and on and on and one...you know it's the reporting and then, you know, police is stuffing up again and, you know, they profile a particular group and they increase police presence whenever these people are gathered and, you know, people become completely anxious about that and, you know, it keeps going on and on and on, you know...

These negative events based on the labelling of Sudanese refugees as violent and difficult were seen by Majier as racism. The perception that the police were specifically targeting the community undermined South Sudanese opportunities of integration. As Vasta stated, (2009:25) the “structures and processes of equality need to provide the basis and resources for integration, out of which a sense of belonging is likely to emerge”. Yet, in the environment where Majier felt that his ‘group of people’ were treated as different and violent, his sense of self-esteem and his sense of belonging were

undermined. This lack of respect and recognition negatively affected his feelings of inclusion and his sense of self.

The participants in this study expressed an overriding feeling of being different. The women experienced this feeling through the barriers related to employment and in the sense of identity misrecognition in their role as mothers (see Chapter Four). In contrast, the men were more concerned with the wider sense of institutional labelling and misrecognition of their identity as South Sudanese. These experiences of difference influenced many aspects of the men and women's lives. For example, Nyakor expressed this feeling of being different when she reflected that: "If we are treated different we feel different yeah...then you cannot feel at home, you can feel like 'oh, I am different'". Many times throughout the interview, she underlined her desire to be treated equally in order to feel part of the society. The media made this difficult, she argued:

It [the media reports and statements by Andrews] makes other Australians see us as nothing...like it is true, that is how we are...and seeing it has been said by the Governor who is like...who represented them they have to take that as true....

When asked how she thought Australians perceived South Sudanese people, she stated bluntly: "...mostly we are bad people, the enemy yeah...". Her sense of misrecognition was evident when talking about her feelings of connectedness with the Australian society: "one day I will be called Australian and I will be respected".

These *subjective* experiences of misrecognition and recognition were identified by participants as decisive factors limiting a sense of belonging. Fraser's theory of recognition and redistribution helps establish how people's structural positioning affects people's experiences of integration. To reach a clearer understanding of the emotions the participants attached to these experiences, however, it is useful to reconsider Honneth's recognition of identity.

### **Belonging as the recognition of status *and* identity**

Life is given texture by countless acts of recognition. From everyday interactions to the far-reaching deliberations of legislatures and courts, people are constantly asking the

interconnected questions: Who are you? Who am I? Who are we? In answering these questions, we locate ourselves and others in social space, simultaneously taking notice of and reproducing relations of identity and difference. And in this way, we orient ourselves practically: we regularly decide what to do, and how to treat others, at least partly on the basis of who we take ourselves, and them, to be. (Markell, 2003:1)

The importance of social participation resonated strongly for both men and women in my study. However, the ability to participate ‘on a par with the rest’ was not equal for all within the South Sudanese community. While this chapter has focused on recognition of status, there is also a need for an understanding of emotions people attached to the experiences of recognition, redistribution and misrecognition. This also forms part of the complexities behind a development of a sense of belonging. While recognition of status helps reveal the *barriers* people encounter in their search for participation and redistribution, an understanding of how this unequal ability to participate impacts on their subjective self plays an important part in people’s sense of belonging. For the participants in my study, recognition of their identity strongly influenced their sense of self and also their agency. In other words, both “recognition of identity” and “recognition of status” were found in participants’ narratives (Fraser and Honneth, 2003).

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, within theories on recognition, there is an ongoing debate between looking at ‘recognition of identity’ versus ‘recognition of status’ (for an elaborate debate on the two different positions see Honneth and Fraser (2003) in *Redistribution or Recognition?*). Fraser’s theory on recognition was valuable in my study for locating areas where feelings of community engagement were palpable. Exploring redistribution and recognition in the areas of employment and housing demonstrated how people’s sense of belonging was negatively influenced through experiences of misrecognition. There is, however, a need to take Fraser’s theory further and explore the impact that these experiences of misrecognition and redistribution had on people’s identity and the subjective experience of recognition. Proponents of the ‘recognition of identity’ approach such as Charles Taylor (1994) argue that recognition is a “neglected human good” (Markell, 2003:2):

...our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group

of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (Taylor, 1994:25)

Despite the usefulness of Fraser's theory of recognition and redistribution, I acknowledge the criticism her theory has attracted. Drawing on the participants' narratives, my research reveals the importance of taking into account people's subjective experiences of recognition (recognition of identity). The 'objective' focus in Fraser's theory has been criticized by McNay (2008b) and Honneth (2001) for failing to take into account identity and agency: "identity injustices are conceived in a rather one-dimensional manner as externally imposed injuries rather than also as lived identities" (McNay, 2008b:285). By failing to take into account the "subjective dimensions of identity" (McNay, 2008a:293) Fraser is:

...in serious risk of foreclosing from theoretical view precisely what theories of recognition were designed to bring into view in the first place: the way in which, even [...] where relevant rules and norms have been structured to overcome unjust subordination, there are still harms felt by individuals and carried by denigrating cultural-symbolic patterns of evaluation. (Zurn, 2003:534)

McNay (2008b:287) added that by not considering agency, Fraser is unable to "explain how an individual's understanding of his or her own identity and place in the world can motivate the individual to action". As noted in Chapters Four and Five, identity and agency play an essential part of an integration process and in the development of a sense of belonging. Yet, in order to understand how people experience this integration and sense of belonging, it is useful to acknowledge the theory of recognition of identity, which emphasizes the importance of self-esteem and mutual recognition. In other words, recognition of identity and status are both part of emotional experiences of belonging.

Honneth (2001) listed three patterns of recognition that underpin social interaction and identity: love, legal rights, and solidarity:



These ... appear to provide the formal conditions for interaction, within which human beings can be sure of their 'dignity' and integrity. 'Integrity' is here only meant to indicate that subjects are able to rest secure in the knowledge that the whole range of their practical self-orientation finds support within their society. Whenever they participate in a social lifeworld in which they encounter those three patterns of recognition, in whatever form, they can then relate to themselves in the positive modes of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. (Honneth, 2001:50)

However, within the theoretical debates on the concept of recognition, Fraser (2000) has challenged Honneth by stating that the principal struggle in contemporary society involves redistribution rather than identity. She warned of the possibility that identity politics could encourage "both the reification of group identities and the displacement of redistribution" (Fraser, 2000:110). To overcome this problem, Fraser (2000:113; 2001) suggested that the analysis of recognition should focus on *status* as opposed to identity focusing on "overcoming subordination" and parity of participation.

Based on the narratives in my research, I have demonstrated how a focus on 'recognition of status' is vital in order to understand the societal institutions impeding parity of participation. However, an understanding of the development of belonging also emphasizes the need to analyse people's subjective experiences in daily life and the way their structural positioning influences their sense of self and capabilities. In this way, 'recognition of identity' is also necessary in order to understand what misrecognition and maldistribution actually mean for people, emotionally and how this impacts on sense of self and the agency. The mutually constitutive relationship between the two different viewpoints (status and identity) is also captured in the work by Ghosh and Juul (2008) who studied recognition and misrecognition through looking at social benefits for refugees in Denmark. In order to understand the complexities behind a process of integration and the development of a sense of belonging, it is essential to explore this co-constitutive relationship between recognition of identity and recognition of status.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I focused on structural elements of belonging by employing Fraser's (1996; 2000) conditions for a just society based on equal participation. I took into consideration the findings of the development of self and agency from Chapters Four

and Five, and introduced important aspects of the 'recognition process', including misrecognition and redistribution. Fraser's focus on 'recognition of status' is employed as a means to explore the migrants' structural position within society and the impact this had on experiences of belonging in the new society. Her dual focus on recognition and redistribution emphasised barriers to participation, especially in the areas of employment and housing. While I focused on these two domains of integration, the participants in my research also identified the emotional aspect of this process. These subjective experiences relate more to Honneth's recognition of identity. Within the process of integration, participation in everyday life on equal basis was important for the participants in this study.

Furthermore, equal access to resources such as employment, education and housing, enhanced and improved the subjective experience of integration and the development of belonging. Some of the women experienced a sense of recognition through friendly neighbours while others expressed frustration about the lack of feedback from both neighbours and institutions. These experiences of sympathy, acquaintance and confidence were vital for the development of status, social relations and the development of a positive sense of self. Reflecting on the importance of relations with neighbours, Miller (2006:100) has also noted how acquaintanceship is:

...characterised by a mutual recognition. Acquaintanceship exists where both parties recognise the other as someone they 'know'. ...this recognition is enough to predispose the parties to mutual approval, and therefore personal interaction. While acquaintanceship is a prerequisite to social bonding and therefore provides the ground on which possible social interaction is built, the nature and persistence of the interaction is determined by the feelings and thoughts that accompany acquaintanceship.

The participants' experiences of integration through employment and housing influenced the men's and women's sense of social connectedness. The men spoke about rights and obligations and sought redistribution through employment and the substantive rights associated with citizenship. This sense of redistribution gave the men an opportunity to experience recognition and generated hopes for the future. The women, on the other hand, did not experience this feeling of redistribution to the same extent. They expressed frustration about housing and about their inability to work, a

lack of a sense of redistribution from Australian society, and this promoted a weaker sense of belonging.

For the participants in my research, misrecognition was experienced in both employment and housing markets. There were gendered differences, however, that could be explained through structural forces such as different level of education, English knowledge and lack of the necessary bridges and links to the wider social institutions. For many of the participants, misrecognition was also linked to labelling. Being labelled by both media and important political figures as unsuitable for integration, the participants felt this misrecognition negatively influenced their access to work and to bridging relations.

Experiences of social exclusion and a non-recognition from the wider community, bridges, also impact on people's experiences of belonging. In their research on belonging among refugees in Western Australia, Fozdar and Hartley noted how "emotional connection and social and cultural inclusion remain something that is longed for, and that is denied, at least in part, by the larger population" (2013:15). In the next chapter, I explore these notions of bridges and links within a framework of mutuality and longing.

Throughout the interviews, the participants yearned for a two-way process of integration based on mutual recognition and respect. Chapter Seven, pulls the three previous chapters together by discussing the 'everydayness' of longing and belonging as experienced by the participants. Important aspects brought in to explore a genuine two-way integration process are mutuality and social capital. The participants' experiences of mutual quotidian belonging are highlighted.

### Longing, Common Belonging and Forms of Mutuality

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**H**aving listened to the voices and stories of the participants, heard their experiences, hopes and fears of their lives in Australia, and having analysed the process of integration with regard to self (Chapter Four), agency (Chapter Five) and structural position (Chapter Six), this chapter draws the previous chapters together using the concept of mutuality. The quotidian settings I examine concern employment, education, citizenship rights and obligations, language and safety. While analysing these experiences through focusing on self, agency and social structure, I also found that a search for mutuality emerged in the participants' longing for belonging.

Throughout the previous chapters, I referred to the integration framework developed by Ager and Strang (2008) which deals with ten domains of integration: means and markers (employment, housing, education, health); foundations (rights and citizenship); social connection (social bridges, bonds and links) and facilitators (language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability). This framework provided “a coherent conceptual structure for considering, from a normative perspective, what constitutes the key components of integration” (Ager and Strang, 2008:167). Belonging, defined as emotional attachment, feeling of home and feeling safe and explored as the interplay between subjective self, agency and structural positioning (Hamaz and Vasta, 2009), was analysed within these domains by looking at the subjective experiences of the research participants in everyday contexts.

I have demonstrated how gendered distinctions were ever-present in the narratives. Here I explore how these gendered differences are related to experiences of mutuality in quotidian events. While emotional reflections on the domains emerged in previous chapters, this chapter takes them further by focusing on these experiences within this framework of mutuality. We have seen that a sense of belonging is essential in the process of settling in a new country, especially with regard to feelings of safety and security, work and quality of life. This sense of belonging is negotiated through

everyday life, and this chapter reinforces this argument from subjective perspectives. I also explored the concept of longing as another aspect in the process of developing a sense of belonging and how nostalgic emotions towards home country can hinder or encourage this sense of belonging.

This chapter also employs Putnam's (1993) theory of social capital in order to explain the different ways in which belonging can develop. Analysing social capital within the framework of integration (Ager and Strang, 2008) and belonging (Hamaz and Vasta, 2009) helps elaborate our understanding of mutuality in quotidian activities by emphasizing the bonds, bridges and links that support this mutuality. This allows me to bring together different elements of integration and belonging used throughout this thesis.

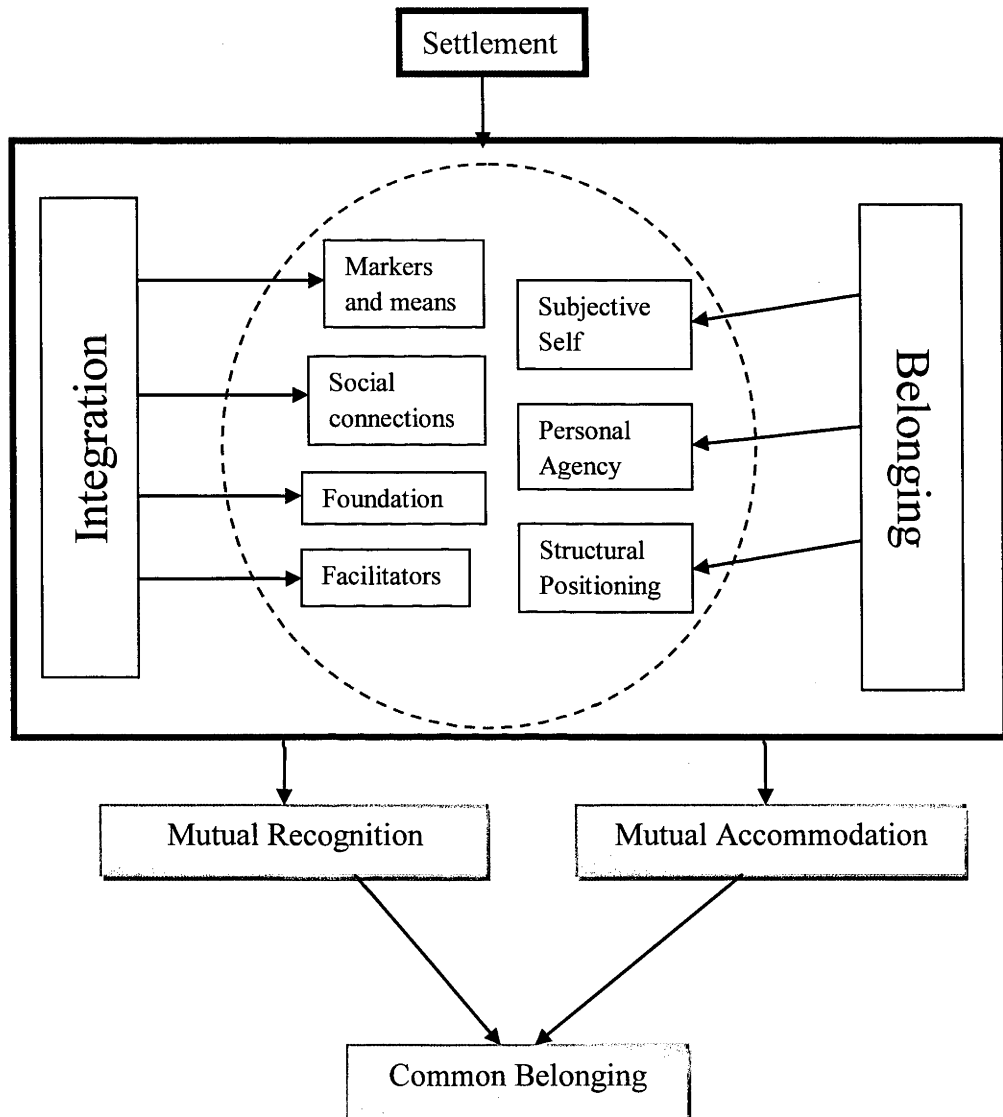
In doing this, I explore the meaning that participants attached to the bonds, bridges and links they experienced in Australia; their emotional experiences of social capital (Putnam, 1993; Putnam, 2000). Vasta's concept of mutual accommodation (cultural recognition and structural changes) is used as a means to emphasise the importance of recognizing people's bonds and bridges to the past, while at the same time encourage belonging to present (see Figure 7.1). After analysing the subjective experiences of social capital, I analyse experiences of mutual recognition in community relations. I ask in what degree mutuality can help explore the development of a sense of common belonging, defined by Parekh (2008:87) as:

...broadly shared *feeling* among the citizens that they form part of the same community, belong together, share common interests, are bound to each other by a common system of rights and obligations, depend on each other for their well-being, and wish to live together in peace for the foreseeable future. It gives *emotional* depth to their citizenship, fosters bonds of *mutual* identification, and enables them to cope with the inevitable tensions of sharing a common life. (my emphasis)

Hage (2003:149) also explores common belonging through an "inter-subjective moment of mutual exchange and mutual recognition", where two people meeting each other "acknowledge their common belonging to a society committed to honour its members". According to Hage, this common belonging and mutual acknowledgment can only happen when the society to which they belong has laid the "structural foundations for

such a moment to occur". This chapter analyses these relations of mutuality on both subjective and structural levels.

**Figure 7.1: Diagram showing aspects of integration and belonging as discussed in Chapter Seven**



### **A gendered mutuality**

Throughout this thesis differences emerged in the narratives between the men and the women. In general, men had more English knowledge, education and/or employment experience while the women were more marginally employed and lacked sufficient

knowledge of English. In many of the narratives gender as a structural position appeared to be the determinant factor in whether people felt a sense of connectedness with Australian society. However, this division between men and women is more nuanced. I have stressed that each personal story is different and an acknowledgment of these differences helps highlight the barriers to integration as well as the facilitators. Gender was associated with other variables such as education, language, employment and relations. In this chapter I analyse these different experiences of integration and the different emotions expressed by men and women through looking at social capital and mutuality. Men and women had different experiences of this social capital influencing greatly on the development of a sense of belonging.

**Table 7.1: Main concerns for men and women within Ager and Strang’s domains of integration**

<b>Domains</b>	<b>Men Hope and Participation</b>	<b>Women Worries and Isolation</b>
<b>Means and markers</b>	Employment and education	Employment and housing
<b>Foundations</b>	Citizenship and rights	Citizenship
<b>Facilitators</b>	Safety and stability	Language, cultural knowledge, safety and stability
<b>Social relations</b>	Bridges	Bonds and links

While Table 7.1 includes employment and citizenship as a special concern for *both* men and women, the *different* experiences associated with these settlement needs set the men and women apart. The men expressed more hopeful aspirations for the future, while also relying on the rights and obligations of citizenship to participate in their new society. Among the women there was more of a focus on the lack of employment and the difficulties this involved. Both men and women viewed safety and stability as a major concern. The access to, and knowledge of, *bridges* and *links* to community and social institutions was part of the explanation behind the different experiences of safety and stability as well as employment.

The lack of language and cultural knowledge was also discussed among the women. The men expressed higher ambitions to create bridges with Australian society, and this could point to positive signs that these relations were emerging through workplaces and at the university. The women, on the other hand, experienced fewer bridges and links with Australian society and reflected on how they missed their immediate family (bonds). While there was strong bonding social capital which allowed them to support

each other, there was an overarching sense of loss of immediate family, which was lamented as an important conduit for discussing personal affairs. The importance of bonds, bridges and links was discussed briefly in Chapter Six, but I will here analyse this gendered dimension and how this influenced attitudes towards mutuality. Stone (2003:13) has described the difference between these three kinds social capital:

Bonding social capital involves trust and reciprocity in closed networks (in which members of networks know other members), and helps the process of 'getting by' in life on a daily basis. 'Getting ahead' in contrast, is facilitated through 'cross-cutting ties' that take the form of either bridging or linking social capital. Bridging social capital involves overlapping networks (in which a member of one group can gain access to the resources of another group because of overlapping membership). Linking social capital involves social relations with those in authority, which might be used to garner resources or power.

This following section explores these forms of social capital through exploring the meaning attached to them by participants.

## **Longing and belonging**

Mutual accommodation involves both a change in societal institutions as well as cross-cultural recognition (Vasta, 2009). Buonfino's (2007:7) work in the UK explored how belonging is "innate to human need" and pointed out how "belonging and recognition can help individuals addressing negative personal effects and assist society in achieving integration, mutual support and cohesion". However, even if belonging is innate, it remains something people must *work at*: "feeling part of society, the local area, politics or the economy is a challenge for many – not always because of a lack of will but sometimes due to a lack of occasion for contact or ability to participate" (Buonfino, 2007:22).

The linkages between self-esteem, belonging, recognition, and social structures played a major role in my research analysis. The literature I adopted in Chapter Two emphasized that integration should not be a question of integrating into existing culture but rather a question of two-way connectedness through participating, recognition, contribution and



redistribution (Korac, 2003; McPherson, 2010; Vasta, 2009). As previously mentioned, Hamaz and Vasta (2009:7) claimed that “people construct their own definitions of citizenship, identity and belonging”. This word ‘construct’ acknowledges the interplay between subjective self, structural positioning and agency.

Hamaz and Vasta noted that belonging involves “common interests and shared feelings of belonging to a common system of rights and obligations” (2009:7). They draw on Parekh (2008) who spoke of ‘common belonging’ where focus is on common interests and shared feelings of interdependence. These common interests and shared feelings necessary involve recognising the ‘other’ as one of ‘us’ and as equal, rather than something extraordinary that needs to be tolerated. Common belonging also involves the presence of bridging and linking social capital. Parekh (2008:87) described this process as a “moral contract” moving beyond the question of how people can integrate towards asking “how they can become equal citizens and be bound to the rest by the ties of common belonging”. These ties to the new country require a “moral and emotional commitment” (Parekh, 2008:88). However, as emphasized by Parekh (2008:88), this “does not mean that immigrants should sever their ties with their country of origin, or may not enjoy dual nationality or even dual citizenship”. If these ties are not secured, an important question emerges: what role do these ties with the country of origin perform? What role does ‘longing’ play in belonging?

Two different kinds of longing were identified in my research – longing for their home country (here expressed as nostalgia) and the longing to belong in the new country. Hedetof and Hjort (2002:vii) explored belonging and longing as “two constituent parts: “being” in one place and “longing” for another”. Fozdar and Harley (2013) noted how their participants expressed a longing for belonging in near future and not necessarily a belonging to their country of origin. While my research demonstrated similar expressions, this was mostly among men who had already established bridges and to a certain degree links with Australia and therefore expressed a *hope* in the future. Women in my research expressed a much stronger longing for South Sudan, back to what was known and familiar and to a place where they experienced a certain degree of control over their own lives. I here demonstrate how these expressions of longing and belonging were linked to the experiences of mutuality and recognition within and from social structures and the wider community.

### *Longing and nostalgia*

This positive response noted in earlier chapters regarding safety could not hide an overall sense of lack of belonging to the Australian society. When asked directly whether they considered Canberra as home and whether they felt a sense of belonging in Australia, the agreement within the women's group was: "Yes, it is our country because we don't have anywhere else to go to" (Salma). This statement would seem to articulate a lack of choice in coming to Australia, but ultimately it is an acceptance that migration was a reality they had to accept. This, however, did not stop the women from longing to be back in South Sudan, to be in more familiar surroundings. While this nostalgia is not necessarily negative, it could lead to difficulties in developing the necessary relations to establish a solid social base and belonging in the new country.

Feelings of nostalgic and longing have been observed in other studies. In their research on Somali women in Melbourne, McMichael and Manderson (2004:91), noted how women's memories of Somalia "involved nostalgic recollections of their homelands configured as a place where dominant norms and values provided an environment of trust and social support that suffused everyday life and social relations". Yet, these memories of trust and social support in the homeland can enhance present feelings of immobilisation, fear, isolation and a sense of powerlessness (McMichael and Manderson, 2004; Miller, 2006). In my research, one member of the women's' group expressed this nostalgia in the following terms:

I think this country is very stressful, like in Africa I never had the stress ... I don't feel stressed, I don't feel pressured ... life was easy, 'peasy' and you can just do whatever you can and if you don't have enough it doesn't matter you can just...your brain is free. (Ajang)

Despite the traumas they had experienced in South Sudan, the women missed what had previously been familiar and compared this with their life in Australia. Sudan was remembered as *socially* safe, in spite of war, and a time where life was based on familiar social relations in proximity to their immediate family. In South Sudan they knew their role in society and accepted the tasks associated with these roles. This nostalgic recollection of life in Africa was reinforced by, and reinforced, the lack of participation in Australian social life where they only vaguely understood local laws

and norms. These nostalgic recollections of home could help participants come to terms with the present, fostering a positive sense of self-identity, while simultaneously leading to a feeling of being 'locked in the past'.

Miller (2006:150) also explored how nostalgia can "chain us to the past in such a way that we are immobilised there, unable to transport ourselves back into the present". Under such circumstances, people feel that they 'belong there' rather than in the here and now. In this situation, people can become passive members of society, and their agency and connectedness with the new society are obstructed.

This nostalgia and longing for home was expressed by Akoul, who stated that she would prefer to live back in Sudan:

Once you become a refugee you never really get attached to anything and that kind of sucks, it is like a free-fall...like I remember when we went to Kenya, it was out of necessity, when we went to America it was out of necessity, *it wasn't like a choice*. I don't feel so attached to any place that leaving there would traumatise me or anything like that. I often get the question, how do you feel living in Australia and I don't...I just go with the flow...so I often wonder what it would be like to be in my own country, to see people of your own kind...(my emphasis)

This loss of emotional attachment to place and a fatalistic 'go with the flow' mentality undermined Akoul's agency. This view was also echoed by Ajang, who spoke fluent English, translated the focus group interviews, had a full-time job and many contacts within the South Sudanese community. Yet, she did not feel close to anyone: "I never had a friend and I never will have one, I never trust anyone". This absence of trust reflected a lack of hope in the future and a lack of emotional attachment to a place she mostly considered temporary. As Putnam (1993) noted, this trust is necessary to form the bonding social capital.

However, nostalgia for life in South Sudan was, for most of the women, accompanied by a yearning to belong in Australia, a yearning fuelled by the safety and security they now experienced. Adau, who had been in Australia for many years and who worked as a

cleaner, appreciated the safety of Australia and the fact that there was a bureaucracy that seemed to work:

If someone wants something from you, they send you a piece of paper saying look we need you to do this and that, so it is the law that works here while where there is war, nothing works.

In this case, Adau is aware that linking social capital existed, even though her path to these links was fraught with difficulties. While appreciating her sense of safety, and institutions that appear to look after her, she still shared many of the women's group memories and longing for home. For instance, Adau worried about what would happen in the future when she was older if she was unable to look after herself. Lacking the necessary bridges and links that could inform her about Australian ageing institutions, together with few bonding relations within her immediate family, her weak social capital made her long for a time and a place where she knew how the relations between generations worked and where she could trust that someone would look after her:

Back home children respect their parents, respect the elders and listen. Here children don't listen because they come here and the government gives them whatever, so they don't really care, they just go off and live like that so...that thing is very different...then the other thing is, you know, what is going to happen to me because I am getting older so what is going to happen when the kids move away?

In South Sudan, she would have had her extended family and her community to provide a strong bonding social capital for support. With memories of this strong bonding social capital back in South Sudan, Adau longed for these days when she experienced mutual respect in her relations:

Back in Africa what happens is, when the kids grow up and start their own family, what happens is the last boy always remains home to look after the mother, and that is how it works, but these things doesn't happen now.

Adau also related her fear of the future to the lack of support in housing issues, in particular her government housing circumstances. Like many Australians (Greig, 1995), she dreamt of owning her own home:

The fact that you know you don't own a property and you know there is this uncertainty that now if I get to a state where I cannot work, I have no money, I don't have a property and you know, haven't got to that age where you go to St. Vincent [de Paul], you don't know what is going to happen when everybody has moved out, the kids have moved on. You know there is this uncertainty about what is going to happen. So, in Africa there is a guarantee that the last son will remain with me.

This fear of future isolation and lack of trust in the present was linked to a wider sense of lack of contacts in Australia in terms of social bonds within the South Sudanese community, social bridges with the Australian community as well as links with social institutions. This absence of social contacts is a result of conflict and flight, together with difficulties understanding new institutions and bureaucracy in their new country. It demonstrates unfamiliarity with the bridges and links in the new society while still holding onto the memory of familiar old bonds.

The mutual interaction between lack of family relations and unfamiliar lifestyles can be reinforced by difficulties in applying for family reunion visas. In this way, immigration policies can impair people's sense of belonging and can strengthen an emotional longing for their past. As noted above, experiences of trust and reciprocity in close relationships (bonding capital) is essential for getting by in everyday life (Stone, 2003). Likewise, bonding capital cultivates strong self-identity, giving people a sense of community. Among the participants in my study, the longing for these bonding relations were articulated by both men and women. Garang expressed a wish to bring his siblings, with whom he had formed very close bonds, to Australia:

I sometimes feel maybe I should bring my siblings here, that way I would have people to talk to you know, we are a very close family so we can talk about some of my problems you know, people can talk to me, we can interact as a family... I talked to you earlier about what makes Africa different from Australia in terms of the society...you know, we like living together in big families, we have homesteads, you know, and kids in the homesteads refer to each other as brothers and sisters though they are not brothers, by definition they are cousins so they are...we refer to each other as brothers and sisters...but here I have cousins and I refer to them as my brothers and sisters but it does not feel the same way, so it would be good to have my siblings here so that I could talk to them as my brother and my sister and it would feel very different...

This longing for close relations and someone to talk to heightened the experience of longing for the past. For Garang, this was a strong desire, but at the same time it was counteracted by the bridges and links he had developed within Australian society. At least he could see a future in Australia rather than back in Africa:

I used to think you know maybe when I die I should be buried back home, but I have sort of moved away from that now, now I would like to raise all my children here, I would like to teach them the new way and I would like to teach them the skills to question some of the traditions that I came from and they cannot do that inside...they can only do that when they are outside that establishment, so you know...I have sort of arrived to the conclusion that this is where I would like to start a new life, you know, for me and for my family, I am not breaking away from who I am or where I came from, you know...I am still me and I still belong there but unless those ways can be reformed I just don't want to go back there...there are certain traditions that I don't want to pass on to my children you know because they don't make sense.

The links and bridges Garang had formed in Australia allowed him to see his past life in a more reflective and critical manner. Reflecting a hope for a better future in Australia, his view on life here was different from many of the women, who remembered Sudan as a place where the bonding relations helped them in everyday life and where the norms and institutions were familiar. Quotidian mutuality in social relations was for many of the women something they missed. Men on the other hand, had begun to experience this mutuality in a new setting through employment and at university and could talk about mutual and reciprocal relations both within the wider community as well as with social institutions.

### *Isolation and frustration*

Feelings of frustration associated with this longing, lack of contacts and unfamiliar lifestyles ran parallel with a sense of isolation among the women's group. When asked what they did for emotional support in stressful situations, one woman in the women's group replied:

You sit inside your room if you have any emotional problem, inside your room and just cry, do whatever it is, and if you have

a child that knows that you are emotional, stressed, they will go and say that things are alright, that you can stop and you can do things better and things will change and then you will be strong for a little bit...but I don't think there is support outside that one could talk to...not in this community (Ajok)

This powerful statement describing the lack of close contacts and the absence of immediate family highlights the intense isolation some of these women were experiencing. They longed for someone from whom they could seek help in difficult situations. This absence of bonding social capital was only heightened by the negligible presence of social bridges connecting them with the Australian community and social links with institutions that could assist in difficult situations. The unfamiliarity with Australian institutions, compounded with their lack of English proficiency, meant that they were unable to reach these bridges and links.

Under these circumstances, some women devised creative, alternative, ways of dealing with emotional needs:

What I do, I would jump onto the bus and just go wherever the bus is going and then go and catch another bus and go around and around Canberra and then later I will come back and realise I am somewhere and then have to take a bus and come back and the stress will go away. (Ladie)

This strategy is almost a metaphor for the search for communication. The lack of a sympathetic soundboard is amplified when migrant comes from a 'culture' of keeping problems within the family. With no one to talk to, this 'going on the bus and drive around' symbolizes a fruitless search for help and lack of social connectedness. The absence of social connections – a key indicator in Ager and Strang's model of integration – diminished the women's experience of migration in the most fundamental way. Through lack of mutual recognition, their sense of self was not acknowledged.

Nyakor, the student single mum with part-time work and who spoke English fluently, also found ways to cope with the lack of a close confidante to talk to in stressful situations:

I read books, I read books or I watch television, mostly I am with my little daughters and hug them and we try to smile, joking around...or I will call my mum or sister in Adelaide.

In this case, her knowledge of English merely allowed her an outlet in books and TV rather than a friend she could communicate with. They became a substitute bridge connecting her with her new environment. Nyakor's social relationships also were limited because she was a busy mother with two small children. Her fluent English gave her the ability to take necessary steps to improve her surroundings. As discussed in Chapter, Six Nyakor had called the government housing agency as well as Animal Services to complain about her living conditions. Yet, the lack of response to her requests symbolized the inadequate linking social capital she possessed.

The absence of social contacts and the tendency to deal with stressful situations on their own was ubiquitous among the women. Their situation illustrates the importance of a supportive social environment for personal well-being and a positive sense of self. Social relations (both bonding and bridging social capital) provide people with a sense of connectedness with society and a sense of honouring between members in society through "a structure of 'mutual obligation'" (Hage, 2003:148):

There is no mutual obligation where there is no honouring and recognition of the moral worth of all those others – Indigenous people, migrants, accepted refugees, pensioners, single mothers, etc – whom the government is expecting to 'give back'. (Hage, 2003:150)

Mutual recognition together with mutual accommodation, where the society's responsibilities are practiced through redistribution, facilitates people's experiences of common belonging. The absence of mutual recognition and feedback from societal institutions negatively impacted on the women's sense of self, increased their sense of isolation and inhibited a sense of belonging. May (2011:374) has also suggested that:

...a focus on belonging provides an alternative to top-down structural theorizing that is characterized by a focus on how changes in society require people to adapt. In contrast, because of both its location in the everyday realities of people and its dynamic nature, belonging is a concept that allows us to examine the mutual interaction between social change and the self. The social is thus here defined not in terms of abstract



social structures or a reified 'culture', but as something made up of the concrete, imagined or virtual relationships we have with people, collectives, the symbolic or abstract realm of 'cultures', objects, as well as our built and natural environments.

My findings emphasise the difficulties the women had with adjusting to life in this new build environment. Their absence of immediate family and lack of mutuality conform with Mitchell et al.'s (2006) findings that the experiences of war, flight and life in camp can negatively influence the Sudanese refugees' adjustment process. One major concern they identified among the refugees was the role of parenting. Three areas of parenting were identified as special concerns: education; Australian culture; and impact of trauma on the family. As noted in Chapter Four, women discussed the 'culture shock' they experienced after arrival in Australia, which challenged their traditional ways of bringing up their children. This was exacerbated by a lack of language together with a lack of knowledge about Australian institutional structures. Below, these challenges are analysed in terms of the weak bonds, bridges and links the women confronted in the new environment, which minimized the women's capacity to build their own new life.

Ayen's story as a single mother, living in Canberra with her three children, illustrates how isolation and lack of immediate relations undermine the bonds the migrants have with the Australian community. She arrived in Australia in 2004 as the first member of her immediate family and is now divorced from her husband. Before arriving in Australia she spent time in Egypt where she had a cleaning job. In Sudan, she completed Year 4 at school but did not have the opportunity to continue her studies. While acknowledging the safety and security of Canberra, she still felt the isolation and loneliness of living away from home, friends and family. A sense of community was absent, with only sporadic contact with other South Sudanese women, let alone with other Australians. Her sense of isolation was highlighted when it came to fulfilling her role as the sole parent and support for her three children: "...everybody is busy with their own kids and the other things that they do, so they are busy with helping themselves and that is what makes everything harder". After spending half a day in Ayen's house for the second group interview, I noticed her grateful attitude for having spent most of the day with other women. Being part of the interview made her feel connected to something. This feeling of solidarity contrasted with her everyday isolation. This sense of daily isolation was reinforced with feelings of nostalgia for how

life was in South Sudan. The fact that Ayen had no driver's licence and was living beyond walking distance to others in the South Sudanese community amplified her sense of isolation.

These narratives, reflecting the women's lack of social relations and their isolation, were in stark contrast to many of the men's reflections on how to deal with emotional and stressful situations. Garang for instance, would use his friendship bonds in difficult situations:

Ah...yeah, I would actually try to talk to Sudanese people in particular, some friends, and it depends on what sort of emotional issues, of course there are things you cannot always share with some friends, it depends on how you select...yeah...but I have some few I can talk to...

Yong also leant on his community bonds as well as his elders whenever he needed help or advice: "if we have any problems the community will help...they are appointed to that job". Yong also knew bridges outside the community: "I can go to other places, like Migrant Resource Centre, to speak to a person regarding what I need help with". This important bridging social capital, reflected the differences between men and women, not only in their resources for emotional support but also how they could act in their surroundings and seek the support needed from the wider community. This appreciation of bridge relations was also expressed by Pajok:

...if I needed emotional support I need to go to a counsellor...I don't know what the rest but that is what I would do...because if I had an emotional problem I would just go to the counsellors and tell them...

Ater described a similar network of bonding and bridging social capital:

I would go to a friend, I prefer to go to friends unless there is stuff that I need others for...if there is something that I would need to get more advice, medical advice or something, from maybe an organisation...I would prefer to go to a friend.

Social bonds, bridges and links influence the development of a sense of belonging (Putnam, 1993). Depending on a person's structural position, the role of bonding,

linking and bridging relations can hold different values. In my research, while women's narratives expressed an absence of social capital, men could identify bonding, bridging and linking capital through their relations both inside and outside the South Sudanese community. They recognized that social capital as essential to their sense of well-being and their aspirations and hope for a future. This had been part of their feeling of belonging in Australia.

The presence of significant relations in men's daily life did not necessarily stop some of them from longing for South Sudan. Yet, this nostalgia was expressed differently from that of the women. Men's feelings of longing was directed more towards physical attributes, as opposed to the existential aspects of 'what once was'. This longing for physical features tended to refer to what Miller (2006:6) called "geographical or environmental connections, to a sense of connection to a particular locality or dwelling place". Garang expressed a sense of belonging in Australia by talking about 'home' as a place "where you work, where you study". Yet, when talking about places he missed, Garang quickly referred to South Sudan: "I just love the climate, the vegetation, the lifestyle". He also expressed an existential sense of nostalgia:

Sometimes you become home-sick because I was brought up in Africa, in Uganda you know...the definition of home is different, it is more intimate than life here in Canberra is yes, but here in Australia I think I feel more at home here in Canberra because this is where I think I can get the things that I want...

In spite of missing Africa, his longing for the vegetation, the climate, Garang expressed his hope for a future in Australia and an appreciation for the opportunities here:

I like Canberra to work and to study and because I do these things here and I also live here so I like it and I feel more at home here because it gives me the opportunity to access the things that I like to do.

Garang's social capital, his capacity to see opportunities and his visions for a future in Australia influenced his capacity to act. His earlier statements regarding the mutual need and responsibility to reach out implied a capacity to use his bridges and links to create a future in Australia.

Ater, another young Sudanese man, also reflected on his longing for South Sudan but at the same time his feeling of belonging in Australia:

I feel at home [in Australia] but sometimes I have homesick because sometimes I think back to my parents, my mum and other relatives. Not because I am not settled but because sometimes I need to see them.

This longing for home, as in *someone at home*, relates to the importance of proximity to immediate family. For Ater, this longing expressed “mild and fleeting feelings of missing the places and people that we have left behind” (Miller, 2006:153). Even though he missed home, at the same time he also felt settled in Australia. In previous chapters, Ater talked about his employment hopes in Australia which would allow him to contribute to Australian society. For Ater, this aspiration was a positive trait that made him feel less longing for South Sudan. Illustrating the difference emerging between men and women, Ater’s notion of homesickness did not place him in a state of passive behaviour, characterizing many of the women’s loss of interest in participating in the here and now. His views corresponded to what Miller (2006:150) defined as future-oriented, which energized his agency:

There are two ways to live the present. Either we are ready to *act*, turned toward the future, and we live events in the present. Or we become less attentive to life, we dream our life instead of living it, and we experience contemporary events as if they were already past. (my emphasis)

Ater talked about other aspects of his new country that made him feel at home: “I think it is the kind of people that I met, friends, Australians and family...and the neighbours at the same time”. Ater’s sense of belonging was therefore augmented by bonds and bridging social capital (with contact, social resources and a trust in the future), a sense of control over own life and a capability to improve his own life.

Mamer, a young student, also expressed a similar nostalgia with regard to missing home. While he spoke favourably about settlement in Australia as a place to live, to go to school and leaving behind the refugee camp, there remained features missing in his life: “Feeling at home is a different thing. I don’t feel at home here on the grounds that I

was born outside Australia. I still feel like I want to go home.” For Mamer, his birthplace remained important and he did not experience this same feeling about Australia. Mamer exemplified what Miller (2006:257-258) referred to as a person who “resides in the self”:

Being at home refers to a condition of person rather than a condition of place. Rather than the self residing in a home, home resides in the self.

Despite this, Mamer’s experience of the domains of integration (through participation, opportunities and hope) was a strong indication of his sense of belonging in Australia. His self-awareness of his status through the opportunities he saw in Australian society reflected a belonging based on mutual feedback from institutions and social networks. Yet, his sense of self was still influenced by a longing towards a home where he felt a stronger connection. As suggested by Miller (2006:258), this “being without a self that belongs” was linked to his sense of ‘otherness’ within a ‘white belonging’. Despite hopes for future employment, family and a stable life in Australia, he had yet to realize this and, as a result, connections to his birthplace remained paramount. His sense of belonging was still ‘partial and ambiguous.

For a wider sense of belonging to develop, one has to look at a myriad of factors influencing on self and on belonging. A self that belongs is a self that is at ease with its surroundings. For many of the participants in this study, it remained too early to establish complete transforms of self, as their residency in Australia had been relatively short. Furthermore, one major influence on self-efficacy is employment (Ager and Strang, 2008), and this was yet to be experienced for many of the men, let alone the women.

Because family life is central in South Sudanese culture, Mamer believed he would feel different when he got married and had children in Australia. This would help him gain a sense of home in Australia. Mamer did, however, feel welcome in Australia and the fact that he had made friends (bonding and bridging social capital) constituted the emergence of a sense of belonging. Forming relations with other South Sudanese as well as Australians had been an important step in his settlement process. He also experienced social solidarity with other students as well as through his part-time

employment. These friendships enhanced Mamer's sense of belonging in Australia and were reflected in mutual recognition. Future employment and stable life in Australia could amplify his experience of mutual recognition and an honouring of his self and his agency.

This hope for a future and a capacity to act was expressed as something that was missing among many of the women due to lack of mutuality in social relations. Abuk, in the women's group, would prefer to live back in Africa: "in Africa, you would be proud of yourself, you would be happy of yourself". This strong expression of a confident and contented self reflected a longing for recognition in Australia. Bonding relations with other South Sudanese women were of especially importance for these women, something demonstrated in other research on ethnic communities:

Bonding relationships with one's own ethnic community are important for a sense of belonging, for learning from others "like them" about getting a feel for the game in the new country, and for the material resources shared among extended family and ethnic networks. (Correa-Velez et al., 2010:20)

Expressing the longing for close bonds and familiar surroundings, the women's group reflected on their life in Africa as a time where they spent more time together. When asked what they would like to bring to Australia to feel more at home here, Salma identified the longing for familiar traditions: "the singing and dancing in our own language, and then being together". Akoul, one of the women with fluent English and employment also acknowledged this longing for something familiar, but at the same time she emphasised the importance for the women to learn English in order to develop the necessary bridges and links here in Australia. She also noted how lack of English knowledge heightened the feelings of isolation:

When they [the women] come here, they think everything is just supposed to be available and all that stuff and then they get really frustrated and...they want to go back home and...but I think...because we come from a society where there is no paperwork to fill in, I don't remember ever having to state my birthday to anybody at school or hospital, but here everything is paper and if you don't speak the language it is like...it can also help you to approach people and extend outside of your home but if you have the language barrier then you are just inside...

In this statement, it is possible to link isolation and frustration with weak bridging and linking social capital. These weaknesses strengthened the longing for bonding relations and heightening a frustration with many aspects of everyday life. Akoul's relations through her work and her ability to speak English gave her a great sense of self-esteem and the strength to avoid this frustration: "I do meet people through work, I will say it got much better when I got the job than what it was when I was at home, I mean...it is good just so I can have somewhere to go". For Akoul, her social capital made her capable of reflecting on both her future in Australia as well as the difficulties others met.

Social capital, especially in the forms of bridging and linking relations is essential in the search for belonging. This was clearly articulated by all participants in my research. What were sought in these relations were experiences of mutual recognition. This sense of recognition was highly influential on people's belonging here and now, without necessarily dropping the longing for what once was.

### **Mutuality and social capital**

Both men and women participants voiced a willingness to engage in social participation but, as the analysis of their statements so far has revealed, there were differences in their *capabilities* to do so. Other research has demonstrated the importance of participation and contribution for the development of a sense of belonging and the positive impact social participation had on life satisfaction (Fozdar and Hartley, 2013). Similar expressions were found among the participants in my research. However, the *capacity* to act was dependent on levels of social capital, both with regard to the wider community, neighbours and friends across ethnic networks and with social institutions such as social services and the police. A mutuality in bridging relations has also been identified in other research as important for the development of a sense of belonging:

...the host community is key for developing and making use of social capital – particularly in the building of bridging relationships. However, bridging relationships with the broader host community are essential for youth in their belonging – being at home – in their new country. (Correa-Velez et al., 2010:20)

Correa-Velez, Gifford and Barnett in their research on refugee youth also emphasised the mutuality involved in linking social capital as essential for a sense of belonging:

Especially important are bridging relationships that link youth into to the social and economic resources available to the broader community such as greater opportunities for education, training and employment. These linking relationships are critical for refugee youth to actively participate in the social and civic life of the wider community and in doing so, to become contributing citizens of their new country. (Correa-Velez et al., 2010:20)

For the participants in my reseach, these bridging and linking relationships were dependent on mutual recognition let alone the ability to create these relations initially. Factors influencing this ability have already been been identified: lack of language; lack of employment; as well as a longing to home in Sudan.

Majier commented on his desire to fulfil the 'mutual obligation' to participate in Australia socially. He was the only participant in the research not from the Dinka tribal group, and came from the Ma'di tribe in the southern part of South Sudan. Majier fled the war in Sudan and remained in Uganda for nine years until he moved to Australia in 2001. One of the more important personal principles for Majier with respect to integration was the issue of openness and connectedness, which he linked to the two-way responsibility of different cultures to get to know each other. Majier believed that this was especially important for the South Sudanese community in order to develop effective relations with the receiving society. When speaking about mutuality, Majier noted:

Openness cannot be just from one end, it has to be from both ends so you know it is to do with someone's preparedness to go out there and engage with the community and community's willingness to accept the person yeah...so it is a two-way process.

Majier was concerned that some members of the South Sudanese community were restricted in their contact with the Australian community due to poor English communication, as well as their generalized fear of the unfamiliar:



Sometimes you just need to reach out...I think it is to do with whether you are really prepared to try something new, you know, to get out there and maybe sometimes go to a pub which is frequented by Australians...only, you know, just go and sit there and start talking to people and drink instead of going to, you know, the all-African pub all the time.

The experience of migration (the unsettling lifestyle and uprooting of family and community structures) was one reason Majier gave for people not always being willing to reach out and embrace their new community:

People move from suburb to suburb or from city to city because they find it difficult to settle, and they find it difficult to settle because they are not willing to reach out and embrace the mainstream community and integrate. So, you know, I think if you are prepared to integrate you can find it easy to settle and you can find it easy to settle only if you reach out, you know...if you can't make friends from immediate community but if you are prepared to make friends from the mainstream society and your neighbourhood is willing to accept you then I think that facilitates to process of settlement.

Other reasons why developing the bridges and links between communities and between communities and institutions can be challenging are the inability to speak the host language and misunderstandings between different communities. According to Putnam (2007:137), it is the networks and “the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness” that are essential for an integration process. These norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness were also identified by the participants in my research as central features in the development of belonging. For these norms and trust to develop, however, basic conditions of cultural recognition and structural accommodation must be present, echoing Fraser’s theory of status recognition. Fraser (2000; 2001) emphasized the need for equal participation and the removal of structural barriers that hindered this participation. Vasta’s (2007) principle of mutual accommodation also highlighted both cultural recognition and structural changes as essential for a two-way integration process. Parekh (2008:95) noted how this mutuality and a common sense of belonging is more likely to occur when people feel:

...at ease with themselves and with each other. If the minorities feel threatened, besieged, fearful of losing their culture, they turn inward, become defensive, and tend to avoid all but the

minimum of contact with the rest of the society. This is equally true of the majority. It feels that it is no longer in charge of its future, and that its way of life is subjected to relentless erosion, it becomes defensive and intolerant, and either closes its doors to immigration – which is generally not possible – or falls prey to the unrealistic and self-defeating project of assimilation.

Bringing the discussion back to experiences of mutuality, self and agency, Parekh noted how “personally and socially secure individuals are more likely to have the confidence to reach out to the wider society and experiment with its ways of life and thoughts” (Parekh, 2008:91). In other words, the ability to connect with and be part of the new society is dependent on people’s self-esteem and their capacity and confidence to act out such contact. As Parekh (2008:219) explains:

Human beings depend on each other for their sense of self-worth and all-around development. When they are treated as inferior or of no worth, they tend to internalize these images, take a poor view on themselves, aim low, fail to develop their talents, and build up resentment against those subjecting them to such treatment. By contrast, equality builds up their self-respect and gives them the confidence and energy to realize their potential. It also increases their respect for others, both because the latter treat them with respect, and because they appreciate that just as they value their own self-respect, so do others. ...equality releases their energy, unshackles their talents and enables them to make their unique contribution to society.

Again, Fraser’s theory of recognition of status and redistribution emphasizes how this equality must be entrenched in social structures:

To view recognition as a matter of status means examining institutionalized patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative standing of social actors. If and when such patterns constitute actors as peers, capable of participating on a par with one another in social life, then we can speak of reciprocal recognition and status equality. (Fraser, 2000:113)

For the men in my research, this reciprocal recognition and status equality was experienced to a greater degree than women in everyday interactions through access to bridges and links. Women experienced the barriers more often than the opportunities, and this resulted in a lower self-esteem.

Like other parts of the integration process for South Sudanese in Canberra, gender played a role in the process of developing trust and relations. Majier, as a man, a student and an employee, had experienced a broad range of social relations through his multiple identities. These relations strengthened his self-esteem and made reaching out to Australians easier. By being active in the community, Majier experienced mutual feedback from others in society, reaffirming his ability to create affirming social relations.

The women among the participants were often *aware* of the benefit of a two-way process where both newcomers and established society participate in the settlement process. Members of the women's group, however, felt the experiences of such a process less. The fact that the women had left South Sudan for refugee camps (another stop in-between), and then moved to Australia also often made them less secure regarding their future. This instability, together with their longing for home, made the thought of remaining in Australia for a long time more difficult to accept. While men had been through the same flight and settlement process, the lack of social capital held by the women heightened their settlement difficulties and nostalgic feelings towards South Sudan.

Many of the participants talked about integration as an *ideal* process in which both they and the receiving community interacted in mutual respect. Settlement on the other hand, was for many identified as being the *first stage* in a new country. This perspective was held by many young educated men. Yong, for instance, pointed to the differences between settlement and integration, noting how integration involved a process of developing relations with the receiving society; settlement, on the other hand was a matter of finding one's own feet through employment, housing and security. Yong, who had been in Australia for six years, emphasized this difference as follows:

It is different in that regard - that settle[ment] is when you feel that your basic things are there, you have access to a hospital, access to school and access to job. But if you talk about integration it is where...where people have trust, you will get friends that are Australians and they will learn to know you better, like other people, you seem not to be so strange to them and the same things to your neighbours, they will know you and you will have contact with them. So that is in that regard integration...the longer time you spend in Australia you become

to know every system, the more time you will say that I am really part of Australia.

For Yong, this process of integration was time-consuming, but one where the end-result would be the accumulation of mutual trust and knowledge. For the men, this aspiration of integration was easier to relate to because they possessed more social capital, a high sense of recognition and a greater sense of belonging. The women were more focused on securing their initial settlement needs such as housing, language skills and employment, and were less future oriented. Because of these fundamental concerns, and because of their social capital was relatively low, their ability to look forward and to plan for the future was more limited.

Furthermore, the men tended to consider integration as an active process where their agency played a vital role in making it work. Settlement on the other hand, was considered a passive process where newcomers received the necessary assistance from the government for a restricted period. The men realized that this earlier phase did not constitute a stage of belonging. Garang believed that:

...integration is a two-way process, sometimes you might want so much to be integrated but you know, the other communities are not receptive of you, you know, that cannot be integration completely, so it has to be both ways, you know. We are different in ways because ah...to other people you might look a little bit strange, or sometimes maybe they have not seen a tall, skinny young African, you know, sometimes you might be scary or sometimes you might...so, if people are as receptive as others, you know, it is easy to try, so it is a two-way process from the Australians and from the refugees themselves.

...it is a two-way process. One, a person has to be a committed person, you have to believe that this is where you belong, your heart has to believe that this is where your heart is. And the second is the process that will help you understand the place better.

Here, Garang strongly underlines the need for integration as a mutual process where both the newcomers and the receiving society adjust, accept and respect each other. If integration was a process where people are receptive to difference and there is a commitment from both sides, Garang felt that he could develop a better understanding of Australian society and move towards a stronger emotional sense of belonging.

Yong also reflected on how both the immigrant and the host society needed to be active in the process of getting to know each other, and stressed the importance of approaching people in order to demonstrate that the newcomers could 'fit in' and not be 'troublesome':

It is very important to have good relations with your neighbours; it improves the living standard when they get to know you better; that you are a likeable person, you are not troublesome, that is what I always put forward, because when you move to a certain area, I actually put myself out there so that they know that I am not that kind of person that is problem, because it is obvious strange for Australia.

This willingness to play 'his part' in this mutual process required a strong sense of self and self-esteem, as well as confidence in his own agency. Cultural awareness was also important. Yong felt that the high concentration of the South Sudanese in particular areas could project a misleading impression of the community, which could be pounced on by the media. The media event discussed in Chapter Six reinforced Yong's perception:

Because there are many people who look at them (the Sudanese) as if they are very strange and they don't have the contact ... if you have a neighbour that is Sudanese, the other neighbour will move out because he says maybe this will cause problems.

Yet, Yong also understood that it was important for the Sudanese community to maintain their language, and cultural continuity. While this required close relations and supported their sense of cultural identity, it could generate cultural tensions:

So if one Sudanese come to one area and then the others come to the same area then we might have some sort of talk in the community [the established community] that maybe something bad will happen.

Yong believed that misrecognition of South Sudanese identity would undermine mutual accommodation (Vasta, 2007). While he wanted to learn about Australian society and let people know that he was prepared to fit in, he also expected that Australians should learn about and accept other cultures.

The importance of negotiating mutuality has also been raised by Wise (2005) in her work among refugees in an Australian multicultural suburb. Wise (2005:172) rejected multiculturalism in the sense of abstract policy and focused instead on multiculturalism as “real, lived environments”. This is similar to Hage’s (1998) multicultural Real. Wise documented feelings of frustrations and isolation among the multicultural suburb’s long-term elderly population because they lacked knowledge of the newcomers. They did not know “the right thing to do when interacting with someone from a culturally different background” (Wise, 2005:177). However, Wise (2005:182) described how “forms of interethnic belonging, security and trust” developed through everyday interactions. These interactions were shaped by affirmative relations such as recognition, gratitude and hospitality. She also noted the importance of a “social space” – a physical space for social relations to emerge – where refugees developed “a sense of connection to the local area and its inhabitants” (Wise, 2005:174). This facilitated new forms of belonging. Wise’s account corresponds with the negotiations and experiences of the participants in my research. My research reinforces how this everyday interaction impacts on self-esteem, self-efficacy and awareness of own capacities, all of which build up a sense of belonging.

Ater supported Garang and Yong in interpreting integration as “working together with different people”. His eloquent description of society (introduced in Chapter 5) as “a tree that needs all its parts to be a tree, branches, leaves and trunk”, emphasized mutuality, where different cultures are dependent on each other, as opposed to a process where the newcomers adapt to existing norms and values. This also accords with Parekh’s (2008:87-88) definition of common belonging where both newcomers and the established society are dependent on each other and responsible for their common future:

Common belonging is a two-way process. Immigrants cannot belong to a society unless it is prepared to welcome them, and conversely it cannot make them its own unless they wish to belong to it, with all that this entails. Common belonging requires a broad consensus on what is expected of each party, and can only be achieved if each discharges its part of the moral covenant.

The participants in my research recognized that accommodating diversity involves mutual adaptation and changes societal institutions. As Vasta (2007:26) stated: “accommodation involves an internalization of difference”. These experiences of mutuality in all areas of life helps foster the development of a *common belonging* where all members of society feel a connection with social change, where rights and responsibilities are recognized and where there is a sense of *hope* of living together (Parekh, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

In this thesis it has been shown that belonging involves the interplay between subjective self, agency and structural positioning. These components emphasize the links between the individual and society. Social positioning can strengthen or weaken self-esteem and increase or reduce self-efficacy. Participants’ narratives on employment, family, the neighbours, and the capacity to speak the host language, all illustrate how migrants negotiate self-identity within social structures.

This chapter has discussed the emotions expressed by the participants relating to mutuality in bonding, bridging and linking relations. The concept of mutual accommodation (Vasta, 2009) was used to emphasize the structural changes and cultural recognition necessary for a sense of belonging to develop. Parekh’s (2008) concept of common belonging was employed to emphasize the importance of these mutual relations and experiences of a two-way integration process in the development of a society where all actors are dependent on each other and envisage a common future. My analysis demonstrated how these feelings were reflected in a sense of mutuality in bonds, bridges and links.

For the women participants, there was an ongoing longing to be ‘ordinary’. This meant being able to identify with their neighbours, to be able to work alongside them, and to be involved in their children’s lives outside the home. However, their *capacity* to do this was thwarted by their lack of English skills, which inhibited the development of broader social contacts. Their limited social relations in everyday activities, and the subsequent nostalgia for their life in South Sudan, meant that resettlement in Australia was more

challenging and often marked by frustration. It is in these everyday activities that a sense of belonging develops.

Among the men, the focus of their narratives involved these 'everydayness' of belonging but they possessed a more positive outlook on these practices. This positive outlook was based on their ability to participate in wider society and their hope for a future in Australia. For men, a broader sense of social inclusion, greater social capital (in particular bridging and linking capital) augmented this sense of hope that a stronger sense of belonging would be developed in the future. Parekh's notion of common belonging helped explicate this discussion due to his focus on mutuality and the 'moral contract'. While the receiving society needs to change and adapt to newcomers, it is equally important that newcomers recognize their host's norms and rules and demonstrate a willingness to reach out and be part of this society. Many of the men in my research reflected on this mutuality and 'moral contract' in their narratives, and acknowledged these as essential parts of an integration process.

A focus on everyday practices enhances an understanding of the meaningful role that a 'sense of being like others' has on people's sense of settling and belonging in a new country. Marlowe (2010a) also argued that personal stories and everyday practices should remain at the forefront of an understanding of the settlement of refugees. He argued that there was a need to look beyond stories focusing on 'extra-ordinary stories of flight' including 'refugees' and 'trauma'. Rather, we should emphasize the ordinary stories, where refugees are 'like us' (Marlowe, 2010a). This promotes a mutual process of integration through introducing empathy into the analysis: "when society views refugees more as ordinary people beyond the category of passive victim, there is greater potential to see 'them' as more like 'us' and consequently as members of the community" (Marlowe, 2010a:188 citing Turton 2004). In this chapter, recognition of agency and the quotidian experiences of mutuality were important points of reference for approaching the emergence of a sense of belonging. An analysis of people's quotidian experiences demonstrated how mutuality plays a pivotal part of the development of a sense of belonging. Quotidian experiences of mutuality help build bridges and links in the new society and enhance the development of this sense of belonging. As narrated by my participants, without mutual recognition and structural



changes there is a danger that longing (to country of origin) becomes stronger than belonging.

### Conclusion and Way Forward

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In today's global world with unprecedented movements across and within borders, new questions associated with immigration, integration and what it means to live in increasingly diverse societies emerge. The development of a sense of belonging among newly arrived refugees in Australia was the main focus of this research. This research was conducted at a time when there was growing pressure to highlight Australian values and social cohesion.

At the time I was completing this thesis two separate incidents caught the attention of media and the public. Both were highly relevant for my thesis and reinforced the issues discussed in my work – issues of integration and belonging, of recognition and misrecognition, and the development of bridges across cultural differences. Both incidents also demonstrated the government's and media's role in contributing to an atmosphere where refugees and, in particular, asylum seekers are considered outsiders.

The first incident involved a group of asylum seekers attempting to arrive in Australia by boat. The boat, carrying men and women from countries such as Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan and Afghanistan, was stopped by the Australian navy and attempts were made to turn the boat back to Indonesia. In this process, claims emerged that some of the personnel within the Australian navy had misused their position of power and a witness asserted that “three people's hands [had been] deliberately held to a hot exhaust pipe by Australian naval personnel to punish them for protesting, and to deter others from doing one simple thing: going to the toilet too often” (Bachelard, 2014). Stating these claims were untrue, the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Scott Morrison, vociferously defended the navy: “The Government does not give credibility to malicious and unfounded slurs being made against our Navy personnel and rejects outright any allegations of unprofessional conduct by our people serving in Operation Sovereign Borders” (Morrison cited in *Canberra Times*, 2014). Prime Minister Tony

Abbott also questioned the veracity of the asylum seekers' claims: "Who do you believe?" asked Prime Minister Tony Abbott last month. "Do you believe Australian naval personnel or do you believe people who were attempting to break Australian law? I trust Australia's naval personnel" (Abbott cited in Bachelard, 2014).

The second incident happened in Blacktown, NSW. A young girl, aged 14, was walking home through a park when she was attacked and assaulted by six men. Subsequently, the case was covered throughout the country's newspapers. The girl described the assaulters: "as being of African appearance" (Samander, 2014) and "...aged in their late teens or early 20s" (Olding, 2014). This incident caused a stir in the local community where it happened. A Sudanese lawyer and respected community figure "met with Blacktown police to express concern over the vague description released of the six offenders" (Olding, 2014) while also trying to calm down possible tensions between different ethnic groups in the community. A Sudanese-born boy was arrested a few days later, increasing the tensions in the community. As my thesis has shown, this group had already experienced labelling in previous media reports (see my Chapter One and Six).

Echoing my discussion in Chapter Six concerning misrecognition and labelling, these incidents exemplify the negative influence of the media on a specific cultural group (Windle, 2008). For the African community in Australia, concerns over the far-reaching impact of the assault was expressed by one woman in Blacktown: "Maybe someone do something but it is just the one – not all my country" (Snow and Olding, 2014). The Sudanese-born lawyer further expressed how one incident adversely affects the wider South Sudanese community: "It incites other communities to look at us as lesser beings in this country. No community owns a criminal – this crime was not committed by a community" (Snow and Olding, 2014). Father Chris Riley, who runs a community program called 'Youth Off The Streets', also linked the incident to other settlement issues discussed in my research. Emphasising the lack of opportunities for employment and mutual accommodation, he noted how: "Right across western Sydney, we have a locked-out underclass of young people who don't have the job opportunities, don't have access to education. Each community has its own issues. With African refugees, we're

often dealing with people from war-torn countries ... who come with incredible post-traumatic stress that we don't fix" (Snow and Olding, 2014).

These two incidents highlight important concepts discussed in my research. The second incident in particular, points to essential aspects of the development of a sense of belonging among refugees. Recognition and misrecognition, together with labelling and feelings of exclusion, were experiences faced by my research participants. I examined their emotional and personal journeys through a process of settlement towards integration and the development of a sense of belonging. I argued that a sense of belonging is essential when (re)settling in a new country. It provides a sense of connectedness and security. The section below summarizes the development of my argument before I look at my contribution to the field of settlement research.

### **The co-constitutive aspects of integration and belonging**

This research began as a result of my interest in how people with diverse backgrounds and experiences live together under circumstances where there is a growing call for social cohesion and shared national values. Looking at a relatively new group in Australia, the South Sudanese, I wanted to explore their experience of their settlement process in an atmosphere where media report and government denigrated their ability to integrate and become part of the Australian society. I wanted to explore how this process of integration was influenced by the receiving society's norms, values and actions as well as by the newcomers own resources and backgrounds.

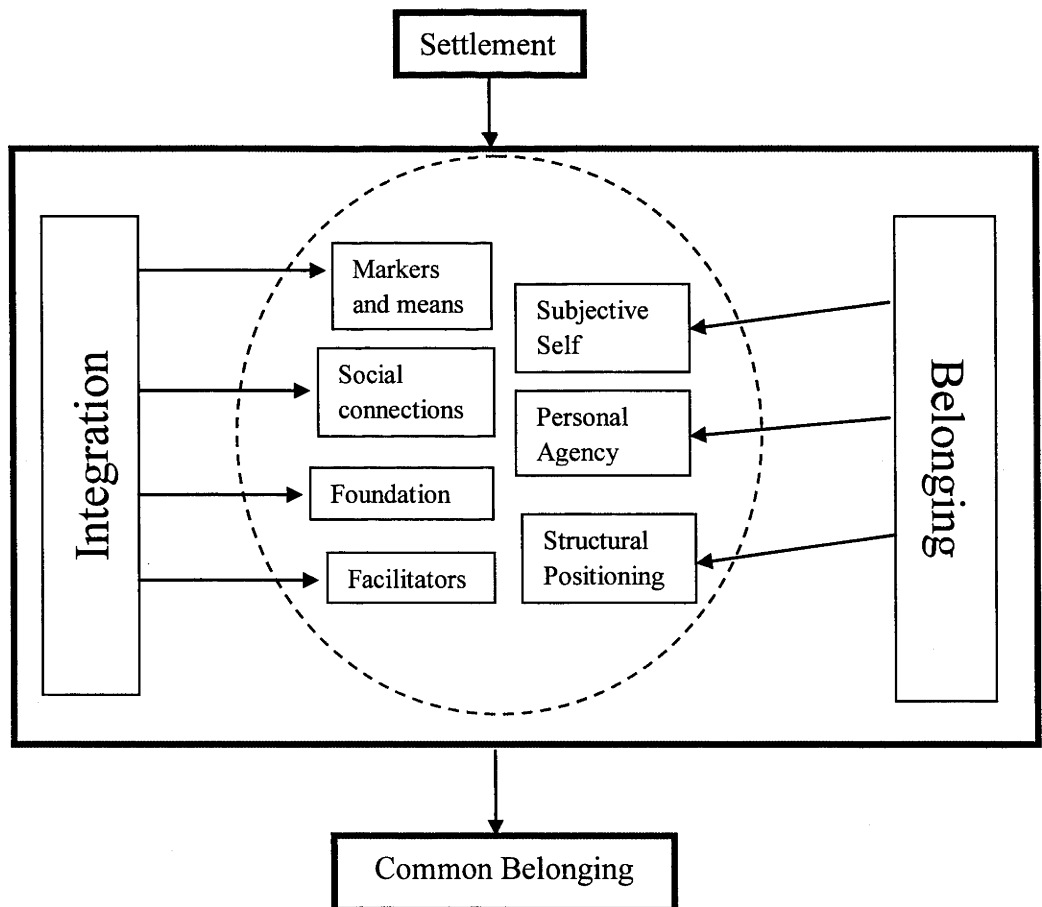
#### ***Unfolding the argument***

Chapter Two of this thesis explored these concepts of integration and belonging. The ten domains of integration identified by Ager and Strang (2008) include employment, housing, education and health under the indicators of markers and means; social bridges, social bonds and social links under social connections; language and cultural understanding as well as safety and stability as facilitators; and rights and citizenship under the foundation indicator of integration. These ten domains are often measurable

and can be observed in an integration process. In addition, I wanted to understand how access to these various domains influenced people's experience of the process of integration. This led me to the concept of belonging.

Hamaz and Vasta's (2009) definition of belonging concerned emotional attachment, feeling of home and feeling safe, and their approach to belonging focused on interplay between self, agency and structural positioning. This captures the relation between subjective experiences and the tangible reality of integration. In order to understand how 'successful' integration and a sense of belonging can develop, there is a need to analyse these two concepts as mutually dependent. In this section I explain how this mutual dependency between integration and belonging unfolded.

**Figure 8.1 Diagram showing aspects of belonging and domains of integration explored in this research**



I looked at the importance of social relations and nostalgia in influencing a sense of self. I also used the concepts of efficacy-based and worth-based self-esteem where efficacy-based self-esteem involves seeing oneself as capable while worth-based self-esteem involves a feeling of being accepted (Stets and Burke, 2003). Efficacy based self-esteem can be linked to Sen's (2006) theory on capabilities. Capabilities enhance people's self-worth and their experiences of control over their own life. This is also linked to Hamaz and Vasta's concept of agency and people's understanding of their capability to act within their environment (O'Byrne, 2012).

Finally, Hamaz and Vasta's structural positioning was described in terms of the possible hindrances settlers meet establishing new lives. This is where belonging relates to newcomers' everyday experiences of recognition and acceptance in the new society. Chapter Two therefore provided the analytical tools exploring differences in everyday experiences based on participants' status.

Chapter Three explained the reasons for leaning towards phenomenology in my methodological approach. Phenomenology captures people's experiences through understanding phenomenon based on the perspective of people involved, an all-important aspect in the search for an understanding of the development of a sense of belonging. I partly followed Schweitzer and Steels' (2008) approach to their research on refugees and trauma using phenomenological principles.

I explained how I developed the all-important aspect of trust between myself as a researcher and the participants. One means of dealing with the issue of trust in an unfamiliar community was to employ a research assistant from within the South Sudanese community to facilitate access to the potential participants. I then introduced the 21 participants and their demographic characteristics. Finally, Chapter Three described the themes that emerged in the interviews and the concepts used to relate these themes to the theories on integration and belonging. The overall themes and concepts I aimed to explore were all related to emotional and subjective experiences of a settlement process: hopes and worries, frustrations, social relations, participation and contribution, recognition, misrecognition and redistribution, and finally mutuality and

common belonging. The following four chapters explained how these concepts are related to the success of an integration process.

The discussion of integration and belonging started in Chapter Four with an analysis of the relationship between integration, belonging and *self*. Through employing Ager and Strang's indicators of social connections and facilitators, this chapter focused on the importance of language and cultural knowledge together, along with safety and stability. The interviews revealed how a sense of self and self-esteem (in particular the efficacy-based self-esteem) was positively influenced through participants' experiences of control over their own life and the ability to plan for their future. Men expressed a more positive sense of self due to their ability to speak English and their stronger social relations both within and outside the South Sudanese community. Their experiences of feedback from the wider community and social institutions therefore increased their sense of belonging to Australian society. Many of the women, on the other hand, expressed a weaker sense of belonging due to their lack of English language and their overwhelming sense of isolation and frustration. They possessed fewer links and bridges to the wider community. Many of the women therefore expressed lower self-esteem. Chapter Four identified how this process of integration and belonging was facilitated through experiences of control in their own environment and hopes for a future in Australia.

Chapter Five looked at *agency* within Ager and Strang's integration domains and related to belonging. The chapter analysed agency through Ager and Strang's domains of employment, education, citizenship and rights – all implying an aspect of participation. Agency was defined as people's knowledge of their own capabilities and the ability to act upon these capabilities. The analysis distinguished between those with citizenship and those without citizenship. In both cases it was the aspirations and ability to participate and contribute that framed the narratives on citizenship. For those without citizenship, hope was expressed as enhanced participation when they did become citizens. For some participants though, lack of citizenship exaggerated their feelings of isolation due to perceived barriers to participate. Some of these difficulties were blamed on the introduction of the 2007 citizenship test. A greater sense of participation was

evident among those who had found employment. Men expressed a stronger sense of belonging through their access to employment while women articulated more disappointment, again through their experiences of barriers to employment.

Active participation in society, and receiving feedback from other members of society positively influenced participants' sense of self and self-esteem. This then influenced the participants' capacity and willingness to participate and form new relationships. Exclusion from these domains of integration impacted negatively on people's self-esteem and hindered the ability to experience their agency. The domains of language and social relations again emerged as essential to a positive experience of citizenship and employment. This further emphasized the intertwined nature of Ager and Strang's domains of integration.

Recognition from receiving society appeared as particularly important in all interviews. Chapter Six employed Fraser's (1996; 2000; 2001) theory of recognition, redistribution and misrecognition to explore structural positioning. Her analysis of recognition of *status* as opposed to *identity* focuses on parity of participation. This was useful in my exploration of the barriers participants encountered in their daily lives because of the way it helps highlight inclusion and exclusion. The structural position of participants in relation to inclusion and exclusion influenced their sense of belonging through their experiences of participation in the wider society.

For my research participants, experiences of recognition from the wider society helped facilitate the development of a sense of belonging. While men experienced a sense of recognition and redistribution through their participation in work and studies, women felt a weaker sense of recognition due to their inability to access employment. An important finding in Chapter Six was how experiences of recognition and redistribution in quotidian events help generate a sense of hope and aspirations for the future.

Chapter Six also explored recognition and redistribution through housing issues, mainly related to frustrations with not owning a house. Experiences of misrecognition within housing and employment were mostly expressed by women. However, misrecognition



was also linked to labelling in media and by political figures. This aspect of misrecognition negatively influenced how both men and women experienced a connectedness with society. All reflected on how this labelling could impact their access to employment, safety in the housing environment and the development of social relations in the wider community.

In order to understand how structural barriers affected a sense of belonging I employed a more emotional and subjective understanding of recognition. This led to theories on the recognition of identity (Honneth, 2001). A focus on recognition and misrecognition in the domains of housing and employment helped highlight structural conditions and the emotional meaning people attached to these experiences.

In Chapter Seven, the concepts of mutual accommodation and common belonging were introduced in order to tie the previous analytic chapters together. Common belonging, defined as shared interests and feelings of belonging to a common system of rights and obligations (Parekh, 2008), was analysed by exploring the emotion of longing among participants. This longing involved both a longing for South Sudan and a longing for a better future in Australia. The concept of social capital was used throughout the chapter to explain this element of a sense of belonging. People's longing towards home country was essential for people's sense of self, recognition of their identity and part of their bonding social capital. However, a belonging in the present and a longing for a future in Australia could only be developed through establishing bridging and linking social capital.

Bridging and linking social capital require mutual accommodation. This mutual accommodation emphasizes the need for a two-way integration process through structural changes and through ensuring structural equity while also suggesting the importance of cultural recognition. The concept of common belonging highlights the importance of this mutuality in social relations and the necessary interdependence between people wanting a common future.

Through the analysis, I have been able to argue that the development of a sense of belonging is a never-ending process that people experience in different ways depending on their social status, their experiences of self and the ability to express their agency. My research, based on the participants' narratives, emphasized the importance of analysing belonging *within all domains* of integration. This co-constitutive relationship between integration and belonging was emphasised throughout the research.

## **Contributions to the field**

This study was conducted in Canberra, a city with relatively few refugees as well as few research projects looking into the conditions affecting refugee communities. The demographic characteristics of Canberra are also different to other metropolitan cities. With public housing spread over a wide area in Canberra, there are few places where South Sudanese households can live near each other. Many of the participants in this research mentioned the spatial barriers that inhibited them from seeing people from their community. The employment market is also different in Canberra. As mentioned in Chapter Two, most jobs are public-service oriented with less demand for unskilled labour. There is also a strong focus on education with two large universities in the city. Migrants arriving with disrupted education and little English could face added challenges settling in Canberra. My study add to the limited knowledge on refugees in this setting, providing essential data on settling in a smaller city with few job opportunities and spread refugee populations.

More important conceptual contribution from my research is my finding that it is important to analyse integration and belonging as mutually constitutive processes. Belonging should not be considered an end-result of an integration process, but rather an ongoing and constantly evolving element intertwined with the process of integration. I have brought together numerous concepts and theories used in the field of integration and belonging and linked them to a broader understanding of the relationship between self and society. The co-constitutive relationship between belonging and integration (and the interdependence between self, agency, structural positioning) emerged as the main finding of this research. While it is analytically necessary and theoretically helpful

distinguishing between self, agency and structural positioning, in a phenomenological sense the three are interconnected.

A final contribution this thesis makes is to demonstrate the importance of exploring the subjective and emotional experiences of settlement processes. While this is not necessarily a new perspective for understanding settlement (see for example Ager and Strang, 2008; Atfield et al., 2007; Buonfino, 2007; Fozdar and Hartley, 2013; Korac, 2001; Korac, 2003; Ager et al., 2005), my work has drawn together important contributions from other research and explicitly analysed integration and belonging as co-constitutive. Personal and emotional experiences of mutuality in all forms of social capital (bonds, bridges and links) and quotidian actions enhance feelings of a common belonging to a society. The quotidian is where people interact and learn to understand each other and my argument has emphasized the need for integration studies to examine these experiences of mutuality in these quotidian events.

### **Implications of this research**

Belonging, home, the meaning of such things is not to be settled through argument and the presentation of evidence, or even facts. Such things are enigmas and their truth is not rational but is poetic, their uncertainties not resolvable into facts and proofs. Indeed the less that is decided about such things in public life the better it will be for all of us. (Miller, 2007:42)

Several important implications can be drawn from my study. While the aim of this research was not to develop policy prescriptions, the necessary engagement with political and public debates surrounding immigration and integration influenced my research process from start. I began with an interest in learning about people's experiences of settlement in a context of negative public debate, and while finalizing this research the community I was studying was again involved in negative publicity. This research's focus on personal experiences of integration and belonging can help illuminate consequences of such labelling and misrecognition.

Even considering the limitations of this research (such as its focus on immigrants, rather than interviews with the established society, policy officers or non-governmental organizations (NGO) actors) its findings reveal the importance of relations in everyday life between immigrants and the established society. People's experiences of connectedness, opportunities and safety impact on their willingness to engage with the new society and ultimately on the development of their sense of belonging. These actions are dependent on experiences of mutuality in quotidian events.

My research also reveals that migrants can often feel socially bereft after the initial settlement procedures of obligations have been completed. More research is needed on what happens after this initial settlement when, as stated by one of the female participants, "life is supposed to go on". Research on what happens when newly settled migrants are engaged in 'everyday lives' remains scarce. This ongoing process of mutual accommodation with the new society requires a common belonging based on the capacity for participation, hope and aspirations.

This capacity of participation and hope can be nourished through community-based projects where community bridges across ethnic divides are built. Community relations thrive in an environment emphasising projects involving all members of immigrant families as well as the wider host-community. As noted by Buonfino (2007:22 and 24) in her work in the UK:

Some of the barriers to forming and strengthening the elements of belonging could be addressed simply by applying well known design lessons aimed at enabling contact between people and at reinforcing weak ties; others by social innovation to extend the range of available options.

Trying to encourage people of different ethnicities to share values based upon their common needs will not work unless their needs are indeed similar. This means constructing a local political agenda where quality of life is central to discussions; where issues like better public transport, housing, health and education or job security unite residents and give them a common purpose. We could aim to cultivate a local identity where shared needs and priorities imbue a sense of belonging to place which transcends ethnic boundaries.

As expressed by the participants in my research, their wish to 'be like others', to have the same rights and opportunities independent of their cultural background, supports Buenfino's work in the UK. In my research, the difference between men's and women's experiences of weak ties and how these influenced a positive experience of belonging demonstrate the need for mutual accommodation with necessary structural changes and equal access across ethnic boundaries.

Examples on projects involving development of relations of trust can be found in Australia. One example directly involving South Sudanese men and women and the wider community is the Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning program (SAIL) in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth where focus is on free English support and community services (see <http://www.sailprogram.org.au>). The program relies heavily on volunteers and involves tutoring programs for youth as well as adults, home help for families in crises and is focused on providing contacts and providing vital information about Australian society. The SAIL program involves all generations of a family and encourages development of relations through the tutoring. The women in my research particularly expressed a need for programs involving language training, cultural knowledge and a program that facilitated participation through involving whole families. All participants expressed a need for programs facilitating links based on more knowledge about Australian social system. Programs like SAIL are related to what Majier, one of the young educated men, emphasized throughout the interview: the need for openness and connectedness, only possible thorough a two-way integration focusing on people getting to know each other.

Another project focusing on relation building is the Save the Children Australia program called 'It Takes a Village' (see <http://www.savethechildren.org.au>). This program focuses on bringing together isolated mothers that are home with children as well as helping children in the transition to school. Giving mothers and children a chance to meet with the wider community and practice their English skills heighten their chances of developing the necessary bridges discussed in my research. Both men and women in my research longed for social relations outside their own community. In

particular, many of the women expressed difficulties with continuing English lessons due to lack of child care facilities. The ‘culture shock’, as expressed by Ajok, one of the women in the women’s group, could be felt less if there were more knowledge about Australia together with bridges and links facilitating the early settlement process and hindering isolation. The women in my research would benefit from a program where they could bring their children and where the development of bridges was encouraged through facilitating contact with other communities.

These are only two examples of projects that address findings from my research, in particular the need for language cultural knowledge and relationship building. (I had direct experience with these projects during my research period by attending seminars and learning about the Save the Children program and through conversations with Matthew Albert, one of the founding persons of SAIL). While there are many other community-based programs that can enhance the development of necessary community relations across cultural groups, many of these are experiencing problems due to funding cuts. In relation to the serious case of assault in Blacktown NSW, concerns were expressed by local organizations based on the cut in funding promised by previous government, as reported by the Sydney Morning Herald (Snow and Olding, 2014):

...many of western Sydney’s other agencies have been forced to shelve or trim social support services since the change of government. Funds promised by Labor have been withdrawn by Justice Minister Michael Keenan, who says he prefers channeling money into the Coalition’s “safer streets” program, which is focused on better CCTV and street lighting. Among programs to have suffered is the “Comm4Unity” program in Blacktown, which runs singing and dancing competitions for young people at the Westpoint shopping centre, allowing hundreds of youths from different ethnic backgrounds to mingle and make friends.

Similar stories on funding cuts were reported in Canberra, also involving ‘on the ground’ community projects focusing on relationship building (Leigh, 2014), as well as general funding cuts across the whole sector of social programs (Hutchens and Hannam, 2013). As demonstrated in my research, funding cuts to community-based programs would be damaging for migrants’ integration process and sense of belonging. The

experiences from participants in my research highlighted the need for community-based programs involving not only migrants, but also the established society. These programs could enhance people's knowledge about each other and develop bridges across communities. While many of the participants struggled with getting to know others due to difficulties with English, Majier's emphasis on making friends with 'mainstream community', get to know each other and accept each other can be facilitated through community-based programs.

Belonging does not develop through formal citizenship tests or through imposing unfamiliar laws and norms upon new arrivals, but rather in the quotidian bridges and links where mutuality can be fostered and a sense of recognition from both institutional structures and next-door neighbour is experienced. While access to citizenship plays a fundamental part of this development as a formal sense of belonging is established, the real belonging emerges when people experience mutuality in government relations, through participation, common understanding and recognition in everyday practices. Quotidian aspects of interaction are essential in people's experiences of integration processes.

This research has emphasised the need for structural changes to allow for this mutuality to happen. Mutual accommodation (Vasta, 2009) and mutual recognition in community relations are essential in the path towards common belonging (Parekh, 2008). I have argued that integration and belonging are co-constituted and I have emphasised the need to look at the intertwined relationship between self, agency and structural positioning.

## **Appendices**



# Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form

## Informed Consent Form for Interview Participation

### Sudanese Refugees in Australia – Inclusion and a Sense of Belonging

My name is Janecke Wille and I am a PhD student at the Australian National University (ANU). I am conducting a research on a project looking into the integration process among Sudanese refugees in Canberra. This is an independent research with no funding from any external agencies nor any dependency or relations with any Government or Non-Governmental bodies.

I would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project, and before we start I would like to emphasise that:

- your participation is entirely voluntary;
- all data gathered are completely confidential;
- your full anonymity will be secured before, after and during the interview;
- you are free to refuse to answer any questions
- you are free to withdraw at any time;
- you are free to ask for any audio recordings and/or interview transcripts to be deleted should you wish so

Please tick the box if you agree that a tape recorder  
can be used during the interview

Please sign the form to show that I have read the contents of this form to you as well as the contents of the information sheet explaining more about the project and your rights during the interview period and afterwards.

\_\_\_\_\_ (signed)

\_\_\_\_\_ (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_ (date)

\_\_\_\_\_ (participant number)

Should you have any questions or concerns about this research project, please feel free to contact either of the following:

The principal researcher,

Janecke Wille  
PhD Candidate,  
School of Social Sciences,  
Building 24, Copland Building,  
The Australian National University, ACT 0200  
Phone (02) 6125 0323 or Email [Janecke.Wille@anu.edu.au](mailto:Janecke.Wille@anu.edu.au)

The supervisor of the project,

Dr. Alastair Greig  
Head of School, School of Social Sciences,  
Building 22, Haydon-Allen Building,  
The Australian National University, ACT 0200  
Phone (02) 6125 4913 or Email [Alastair.Greig@anu.edu.au](mailto:Alastair.Greig@anu.edu.au)

The Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee,

Research Office  
Chancelry 10B  
Australian National University, ACT, 0200  
Phone (02) 6125 7945 or  
Email: [human.ethics.officer@anu.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics.officer@anu.edu.au)

## **Appendix 2: Research Information Sheet**

### **Sudanese Refugees in Australia – Inclusion and a Sense of Belonging**

My name is Janecke Wille and I am a PhD student at the Australian National University (ANU). I am conducting a research looking into the integration process among Sudanese refugees in Canberra. This is an independent research with no funding from any external agencies nor any dependency or relations with any Government or non-Governmental bodies.

I wish to conduct interviews with Sudanese refugees now living in Canberra to learn about their experiences and thoughts on the integration process and on living in Australia. By doing this I wish to reach a better understanding of what makes them feel a at home in Australia and what makes them feel that they are included or not included in the Australian society. The aim of the interviews is to learn about the participant's own experiences of the integration process as well as being able to discuss in more details every-day life experiences, social contacts and activities.

The research process will involve possible two stages: the first stage involves personal interviews with people who have an interest in taking part in the research, while a possible second stage involves a follow-up interview with the same participants in order to clarify information and answers given in previous interview.

The research is completely confidential and all possible measures will be taken to protect identities and secure the information all participants provide, to the extent that is permissible by law. As a participant in this research you should know that:

- your participation in this research is completely voluntary;
- the interviews are completely confidential and no names will be included in the research;
- you will be asked whether you agree to be recorded during the interview;

- you may choose to withdraw from the interview at any time without any question and can ask for the audio recording and interview transcriptions to be deleted, and;
- you have the right to ask questions at any time during the research.

All information is being gathered for the purpose of the researcher's PhD thesis. It may also be used for academic conferences and journal articles but in such a way that no information can identify any participants. To ensure that participants are not identified by their voices, the interview recordings will be destroyed immediately after transcription onto text files. Text files (with participant numbers only) will be stored securely in a lockable filing cabinet both during the study and for five years after completion of the project. Before any publication the participant will get access to all information provided by him/her in order to quality check the information provided.

The researcher anticipates that the study will have a positive impact and will contribute to establishing a better understanding of the integration process of refugees in general and eventually establish a better understanding of what makes refugees feel at home in their new country and a sense of inclusion in the communities. The participants in this research will have an opportunity to make their voice heard.

#### Questions or concerns

Should you feel that you would like to talk to someone after this interview, someone who can be of assistance with regard to issues or concerns caused by the questions in the interview or thoughts that some questions may have provoked, you should contact the Companion House for help.

Companion House: 41 Fairfax Street, Connor  
ACT 2602  
Phone: (02) 6247 7227

If you have any questions or concerns about any part of this research please contact Janecke Wille (contact details below) or her supervisor - Dr. Alastair Greig, Australian National University (contact details below). Should you have any problems or queries about the way in which the study was conducted and do not feel comfortable contacting the researcher or the supervisor of the project; you may contact the Australian National University Human Research Ethics Committee (contact details below).

Contact details:

Researcher: Janecke Wille  
PhD Candidate,  
School of Social Sciences,  
Building 24, Copland Building,  
The Australian National University, ACT 0200  
Phone: (02) 6125 0323 or Email [Janecke.Wille@anu.edu.au](mailto:Janecke.Wille@anu.edu.au)

Supervisor: Dr. Alastair Greig,  
Convenor and Reader in Sociology, School of Social Sciences,  
Building 22, Haydon-Allen Building,  
The Australian National University, ACT 0200  
Phone: (02) 6125 4913 or Email [Alastair.Greig@anu.edu.au](mailto:Alastair.Greig@anu.edu.au)

Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee:  
Research Services Office,  
Australian National University, ACT, 0200  
Phone: (02) 6125 7945 or Email

*(For participants to keep)*

## **Appendix 3: General Statement of Confidentiality for the Research Assistant**

Name of Research Assistant:

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(Please print)

Title(s) of Research Study:

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**An important part of conducting research is having respect for privacy and confidentiality.** In signing below, you are agreeing to respect the participant's right to privacy and that of the people and organizations that may be included in the information collected. Such information may include interviews, questionnaires, diaries, audiotapes, and videotapes. You are asked to respect people's right to confidentiality by not discussing the information collected in public, with friends or family members. The study and its participants are to be discussed only during research meetings with the Principal Investigator, Supervisor of the Project, and/or others identified by the Investigator. As a research assistant you are expected to conduct some translating during interview as well as some documents. It is expected that you will keep your own personal experiences, ideas and thoughts outside of the translation even if many of the topics discussed will be of significant familiarity to you.

In signing below, you are indicating that you understand the following:

I understand the importance of providing anonymity and confidentiality to research participants.

I understand that the research information may contain references to individuals or organizations in the community, other than the participant. I understand that this information is to be kept confidential.

I understand that the information collected is not to be discussed or communicated outside of research meetings with the Principal Investigators, Co-Investigators or others specifically identified by the Investigators.

When transcribing audio or videotapes (where applicable), I will be the only one to hear the tapes and I will store these tapes and transcripts in a secure location at all times.

I understand that the data files (electronic and hard copy) are to be secured at all times (e.g., not left unattended) and returned to the Principal Investigator when the transcription process is complete.

I understand that I will be expected to translate orally during face-to-face interview with the primary researcher as well as translate a few documents when necessary.

I understand that when translating both in written and spoken forms, I will be expected to be as precise as possible as well as not include any of my own thoughts or ideas on issues that may be very familiar to me.

In signing my name below, I agree to the above statements and promise to guarantee the anonymity (if relevant) and confidentiality of the research participants

Signature of Research Assistant: \_\_\_\_\_

Print:

\_\_\_\_\_

Place and Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4: Research Questionnaire<sup>5</sup>

### Sudanese Refugees in Australia – Inclusion and a Sense of Belonging

The primary aim of this study is to examine refugees' own experiences of the integration process. I am interested in your opinions and perceptions as well as your daily activities and relations with regard to your life in Australia, your dreams for the future and your relations to family and relatives back in Sudan or in transit areas. In order to gather this information I wish to ask you a series of questions focusing on your life in Canberra, Australia. The set of questions are divided into five sections: first there are some questions related to your demographics such as age group, education, employment etc; section two focuses on your daily life here in Canberra; section three looks at your relations with family and relatives back in Sudan and/or refugee camp; section four looks at the way you feel about living in Australia; and finally, section five focuses on the assistance you received when you arrived in Australia as well as some policy issues.

This information is being gathered for the purpose of the researcher's PhD thesis. It may also be used for academic conference presentations and journal articles but in such a way that no information identifying participants will be published. No individual names will appear in any of the research outputs. While your experiences inform your opinions, I would prefer it if you referred to general examples without using specific details like names or places.

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<sup>5</sup> Based on similar research by AL-SHARMANI, M. 2003. *Livelihood and Identity constructions of Somali refugees in Cairo*. Cairo: The Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program (FMRS), The American University in Cairo (AUC). EL-ABED, O. 2009. *Unprotected. Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, Beirut, Lebanon, Institute for Palestine Studies. KORAC, M. 2001. *Dilemmas of Integration: Two Policy Contexts and Refugee Strategies for Integration*. Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre, Queen Elisabeth House, University of Oxford. TAYLOR, J. & STANOVIC, D. 2005. *Refugees and Regional Settlement. Balancing priorities*. Fitzroy: Brotherhood of St Laurence.; POPPITT, G. & FREY, R. 2007. *Sudanese Adolescent Refugees: Acculturation and Acculturative Stress*. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 17 (2), 160-181.; GROOTAERT, C., NARAYAN, D., JONES, V. N. & WOOLCOCK, M. 2004. *Measuring Social Capital An Integrated Questionnaire*. *World Bank Working Paper*. Washington: The World Bank.



**SECTION ONE - DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Participant Number : \_\_\_\_\_

Interview conducted in: English \_\_\_\_\_  
Dinka \_\_\_\_\_  
Arabic \_\_\_\_\_

Time of the interview: From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_

Age Group 18-24  25-34  35-44  45-54

Sex Male  Female

Marital Status Never Married  Married  Divorced/Widow(er)

Number of Children None  1-3  4-5  5+

What is the age of your children? \_\_\_\_\_

Are your children still living in your household? Yes  No

How many people normally live in your household? Total \_\_\_\_\_

How many units/families? \_\_\_\_\_

When did the first member of your family arrive in Australia? \_\_\_\_\_

When did you arrive in Australia? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you spend time before arriving in Australia?  
1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
3 \_\_\_\_\_

What tribe do you belong to?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Education

	In Sudan	In transit	In Australia
None			
Primary			
Secondary			
Higher			

Employment

In Sudan	1	_____
	2	_____
In transit	1	_____
	2	_____
In Australia	1	_____
	2	_____
Current	1	_____
	2	_____

Own comment

Knowledge of English

Fluent	_____
Basic	_____
Beginner	_____
None	_____

**SECTION TWO - DAILY LIFE IN AUSTRALIA**

The following questions are concerned with your life here in Australia. I wish to get some information about how you organise your daily life, who you are spending time together with, who you depend on for help and how you got settled and continue to settle in here in Canberra. By answering questions regarding your social contacts and activities the research aims to establish your livelihood strategies and network of relations.

Do you feel settled in Canberra?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, what makes you feel settled in Canberra?

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If yes, what has been most helpful in making you feel settled in Canberra?

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If no, what makes you feel unsettled here in Canberra?

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If no, what could make you feel more settled in Canberra?

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Do you follow Australian television?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you read any Australian newspapers?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The next series of question will look at relations that you have here in Canberra and in Australia in general. I would like you to answer a few questions regarding who you spend time with, who you have close contact with or just occasional contact with and who you go to in order to get help with various needs.

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in your dealings with other people?

Most people can be trusted  
 You can't be too careful


In general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	1. Agree strongly 2. Agree somewhat 3. Neither agree or disagree 4. Disagree somewhat 5. Disagree strongly
Most people, Australians and Sudanese, who live in my neighborhood and community can be trusted	
In this society, one has to be alert or someone is likely to take advantage of you	
Most people in your surroundings are willing to help you if you need it	
In your every day life you find that people generally do not trust each other in matters of lending and borrowing money	

I would like to ask you how much you trust different types of people. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means a very small extent and 5 means a very great extent, how much do you trust the people in the following categories?

	1. To a very small extent 2. To a small extent 3. Neither small nor great extent 4. To a great extent 5. To a very great extent
People from your ethnic or linguistic group/tribe	
People from other ethnic or linguistic groups/tribes	
Shopkeepers	
Local government officials	
Central governmental officials	
Police	
Teachers	
Nurses and doctors	
Strangers	

Are there anyone here in Canberra you consider to be your closest friend? If so, where is she/he from?

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Are you still in contact with any relatives or neighbors who migrated together with you from Sudan?

Yes   
No

Do any of these relatives or neighbors live nearby?

Yes   
No

Are there any other Sudanese living in your neighborhood?

Yes   
No

If so, how often do you meet with them?  
If so, do you arrange activities together?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are there any specific Sudanese traditions that you will all come together to celebrate?

Yes   
No

If so, what are these traditions?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How many times in the past 12 months did you participate in a family/community festival or ceremony such as wedding, funeral, festivals etc?

Do you have contacts and regular interactions with Australians?

Yes   
No

Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In what context would you have contact and interactions with other Australians?

As neighbors  
As landlords  
At school

At work  
At sports activities  
As government officials  
As non-government officials  
In church  
Other


Comments:

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How would you describe **each** of these contacts and interactions?

Close and friendly  
Friendly, but superficial  
Distant  
Hostile  
Neutral  
Other


Comments:

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Do you have regular contacts and interactions with other refugee communities?

Yes

No

If so, which community?

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In what context do you have contacts and interactions with other refugee communities?

At Migrant Resource Centre  
At Companion House  
In church  
At school  
At sports activities  
In your neighborhood  
At English training sessions  
Other


Comments:

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How do you describe **each** of these contacts and interactions?

- Close and friendly
- Friendly, but superficial
- Distant
- Hostile
- Neutral
- Other


Comments:

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Who do you depend most on in meeting the following needs?

- Getting enough money for your needs
- Employment
- Schooling
- Access to child care
- Training
- Health
- Language
- Transport
- Personal or family problems
- Social contacts, friends

Other Sudanese	Australians	Other refugees

Comments:

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On whom do you count on for bureaucratic issues (renewal of residency, travel documents, papers for schooling or for health)?

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Do you find these bureaucratic issues difficult?

Yes                      No

What do you find most difficult with these bureaucratic issues?

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In the last three months, how many times have you gotten together with people to play games, sports or other recreational activities?

Are you or your membs in a club, sport activity, cultural or social forums, unions, or a political party?

Yes  
No


If so, what do you have a membership in?

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What are the benefits you get out of this membership?

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If you are not a member of any of these examples, why not?

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I am now going to ask you a few questions about your everyday social interactions

In the last month, how many times have you met with people in a public space either to talk or to have food or drinks?

In the last month, how many times have people visited you in your home?

In the last month, how many times have you visited people in their home?

Where the people you met and visited mostly...

From the same ethnic or linguistic group/tribe  
People you know though school or work  
People you know from your neighbourhood  
People from your own family

1. Yes
2. No



Please consider the following:

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I have more often contact with Sudanese than with Australians outside the Sudanese community					
I will seek help with family matters within the Sudanese community					
My best friends are from outside the sudanese community					

**SECTION THREE - RELATIONS TO BACK HOME**

This section focuses on relations you still have with friends and relatives back in Sudan and/or in refugee camp. We ask you to answer a few questions regarding what kind of contact you have with these friends and relatives now, how you keep this contact as well as the nature of the relationship. We do not need you to mention any names of any of the people you are talking about as we are just interested in the relationship itself.

Do you have any family members that are still in Sudan? 

Yes	No

Comment:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any family members that are still in refugee camp or in other places in Africa apart from Sudan? 

Yes	No

Comment:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have friends still in Sudan? 

Yes	No

Comment:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have Sudanese friends still in refugee camp or living in places in Africa apart from Sudan? 

Yes	No

Comment:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Are you in contact with family, friends or relatives still in Sudan or transit elsewhere in Africa?

Yes	No

If so, can you tell me about this contact? Is it family, friends, both, when did you last see them and where are most of the people you have contact with?

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Are you providing any financial support to either friends or family not here in Australia?

Yes	No

Comment:

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How do you keep in contact with friends/family in Sudan or refugee camp?

They call me	
I call them	

Comment:

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How often will you be in contact with friends/family in Sudan and/or refugee camp?

Less than once a month	
Once a month	
Every third week	
Every second week	
Once a week	
More often	

Comment:

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**SECTION FOUR - PERCEIVED CONTEXT IN AUSTRALIA**

This section will look at how you feel in Australia. Whether you feel at home here, whether you feel welcomed as part of the general society, and whether there are, in your opinion, anything that could change in order to make you feel more at home here.

Are you an Australian citizen?

Yes	No

What does citizenship mean for you?

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If you are not yet a citizen, are you planning on becoming one and what will this mean for your life in Australia and for you personally?

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What do you like most with living in Australia?

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What do you dislike the most with living in Australia?

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What would you say is the most significant difference between Sudanese and Australian culture?

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Who do you turn to when you need emotional support?

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Are there anyone outside your immediate family you can turn to for emotional support?

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Do you feel safe in your neighborhood?

Yes	No

If not, what do you think the reasons for this are?

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What would make you feel more safe in your neighborhood and in Canberra in general?

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If you had a free choice, where would you have preferred to live?

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Do you consider Canberra as home?

Yes	No

If not, why do you think this is?

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If yes, what makes this feel like home?

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What would help you most to make you feel more at home here, as a part of Canberra and Australia?

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Who could help most to make this happen and how?

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What would you bring into your life here, from the Sudanese culture, in order to feel more at home in Australia?

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In your opinion, what is a successful settlement process, when can you say that a person is settled in a new country? Can you list three factors that in your mind are most important in telling whether a person has settled/integrated into the Australian society?

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What does integration mean for you?

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In the future, do you think you will have more of a sense of belonging here in Australia?

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What would assist in this feeling of belonging?

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Do you think Australians perceive you as an Australian or do some make you feel different?

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If some make you feel different, why do you think this happen?

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How do you think Australians perceive Sudanese in general?

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Please consider the following:

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel welcome in Australia					
I have experienced some racist attitudes towards myself in Australia					
I have friends that have experienced racist attitudes towards them in Australia					
Australia is a country where I would like to start a family and my children to grow up					
This is a place where I feel that I belong					

**SECTION 5 - EMPOWERMENT, SETTLEMENT POLICY AND ASSISTANCE**

Can you tell me about the process of arriving in Australia, from where you arrived and how you got here?

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Who helped you get here?

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What kind of help did you receive during the first months?

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From who did you receive help during the first months?

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What was the biggest problem for you during your first period here in Australia?

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Was this problem resolved? If so, how?

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What was the most helpful assistance you received when you arrived in Australia and from whom did you receive this assistance?

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Why?

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What was the least helpful assistance you received when you arrived in Australia and from whom did you receive this assistance?

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Why?

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In the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?

	1. Yes 2. No	1. Australian 2. Sudanese
Attended a community council meeting, public hearing, or public discussion group? Australian or Sudanese?		
Participated in a protest or demonstration?		
Notified police about a local problem?		
Contacted a settlement agency for help/advice on a personal/family matter?		

What would be a typical personal/family problem you would bring to a local settlement agency for help/advice?

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When you contact a settlement agency for a personal/family matter, do you consider the advice you get to be helpful or would you get better advice from elsewhere?

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Many people find it difficult to get out and vote, did you vote in the last elections?

Yes	
No	

How much control do you feel that you have in making decisions that affect your everyday activities? Do you have

1. No control
2. Control over very few decisions
3. Control over some decisions
4. Control over all decisions


Do you feel that you have the power to make important decisions that change the course of your life? Rate yourself on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 means being totally unable to change your life, and five means having full control over your life

1. Totally unable to change life
2. Mostly unable to change life
3. Neither able nor unable
4. Mostly able to change life
5. Totally able to change life


Overall, how much impact do you think you have in making your neighbourhood a better place to live?

1. A big impact
2. A small impact
3. No impact


What do you think of the way Sudanese are portrayed in the media?

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In your daily life, do you notice any changes in refugee politics and if so, does these changes impact on your life and on people's attitudes around you? In what way?

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What are your hopes for the next five years? Where will you be living? What will you be doing? Where will your children be and what will they be doing?

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