ACCUMULATING RESILIENCE

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE MIGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG SUDANESE PEOPLE IN THE WESTERN SYDNEY AREA

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The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Michael John Wilson, April 2012

Some of the research data discussed in Chapter 6 also formed the basis of an article published in the International Journal of Cultural Studies.

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<td>ABC</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>APM</td>
<td>American Psychiatric Association</td>
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<td>AUD</td>
<td>Australian Dollars</td>
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<td>CEO</td>
<td>Catholic Education Office</td>
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<td>CPA</td>
<td>Comprehensive Peace Agreement</td>
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<td>DEC</td>
<td>Department of Education and Communities, New South Wales</td>
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<td>DET</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training</td>
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<td>DIAC</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Citizenship</td>
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<td>DIMA</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs</td>
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<td>DIY</td>
<td>Do-it-yourself</td>
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<td>EAL</td>
<td>English as an additional language</td>
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<td>EFG</td>
<td>Education Field Guidelines</td>
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<td>EIE</td>
<td>Education in Emergencies</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as second language</td>
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<td>GED</td>
<td>General educational development</td>
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<td>HRRP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Refugee Resettlement Program</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technologies</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally displaced persons</td>
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<td>IEC</td>
<td>Intensive English Centre</td>
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<td>IEHS</td>
<td>Intensive English High School</td>
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<td>IHHS</td>
<td>Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organisation for Migration</td>
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<td>MRC</td>
<td>Migrant Resource Centre</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Post-traumatic stress disorder</td>
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<td>SHP</td>
<td>Special Humanitarian Program</td>
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<td>SMH</td>
<td>The Sydney Morning Herald</td>
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SPLA  Sudanese People’s Liberation Army
SPLM  Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement
STARTTS  Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors
TAFE  Technical and Further Education
UN  United Nations
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR  United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF  United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
Abstract

This thesis examines the development of resilience among young Sudanese refugees in Western Sydney and how the accumulative nature of resilience contributes to their ability to settle effectively in Australia. For young Sudanese people, resilience is best explored as a set of common and accumulative capacities for recovery, adaptability and growth in relation to experiences of trauma, adversity and hardship in Sudan, en route to Australia, and during settlement in Australia. A defining feature of resilience among Sudanese young people relates to their ability to reinterpret and draw upon “negative” experiences as productive cultural resources, which assists in the acquisition of new educational and vocational skills, knowledges and competencies. Resilience is not a clearly defined category or destination, and as such, the assumption that there are universal or predetermined pathways to some irreversible, absolute state of resilience is problematic. In drawing on Bourdieu’s emphasis on the cumulative nature of human capacities, this thesis argues that resilience accumulation is multi-directional and multi-sourced in terms of being highly contingent on pre- and post-arrival migration trajectories. Critiquing the early psychological discourse on resilience that defines the phenomenon largely as an individual trait or set of behaviours, this thesis highlights the interaction between the individual and the sociocultural aspects of resilience.

In conceptualising resilience as a broad ‘meta-capacity’, each chapter explores various sub-components and supporting practices that feed into processes of resilience accumulation. These sub-components attend to key debates around the present- and future-orientation of hopefulness, as discussed by Parse (1999), Hage (2002b) and Zournazi (2002), universalising Western modes and models for classifying and treating trauma, Ahmed (2004) and Probyn’s (1996) emphasis on the affective nature of societal belonging, Bottrell’s (2007, 2009b) conceptualisation of resistance as a form of resilience, Agier’s (2002) ethnographic investigation of symbolic and material resourcefulness among refugee camp inhabitants, as well as the work of Baldassar (2008) and Velayutham and Wise (2005) on transnational obligations, return migration and home visits. Drawing largely on qualitative, face-to-face interviews with young Sudanese people and other relevant community
stakeholders, I argue that these sub-components and the broader capacity for resilience are realised through the symbolic ideal and pragmatic acquisition of educational capabilities. “Successful” educational transition and participation is predicated on the acquisition of relevant and valued skills, knowledge and capacities, which can help young people achieve their educational and vocational aspirations as well as participate in caregiving relationships within and across a number of social fields.

KEYWORDS

resilience, Sudanese, accumulation, capacity, youth, hope, trauma, affect, education, migration, resettlement, transnationalism, resourcefulness, resistance, caregiving, social fields, Western Sydney.
Introduction

The increasing prevalence of populations affected by war and other disasters makes the understanding of human resilience, now more than ever, a vital area of public and academic significance. This thesis explores the development of capacities for resilience among young Sudanese people in Australia, a central issue in their daily lives because of their refugee background and their location in the transitional stages of adolescence and young adulthood. In recent times the concept of resilience has received renewed interest from within the psychological, community services and popular “self-help” literatures. The dominant approach has, however, been shaped largely by psychological discourse, characterising resilience as a discrete category or innate trait of “resilient” individuals. As this thesis argues, this approach is inadequate both generally and in terms of the group under investigation in this study.

Although Sudanese refugees and humanitarian entrants represent one of the fastest growing demographics, and youngest mean age of new humanitarian arrivals to Australia over the past decade (DIAC, 2011b), few sociocultural studies deal directly with the qualitative experiences of Sudanese youth in the Australian context (Brough et al. 2003; Cassity & Gow, 2006; Khawaja et al. 2008; Westoby, 2009). Qualitative research into the lived experience of migration and resettlement must inevitably take into account a complex set of social, political and historical factors. In the lives of young Sudanese, these include, but are not limited to, an awareness of traditional support networks and leadership hierarchies, the traumatic effects of protracted civil war and displacement, non-existent or interrupted prior schooling, and the implications of specific migration routes for resilience formation. Given the strong communal orientation generally recognised to be a defining feature of Sudanese social networks, the formation of resilience is best conceived of as a socially interactive and relational phenomenon. While the social dimensions of resilience have been explored by a number of critical and social psychologists, the early psychological discourse continues to hold sway. Although the resettlement experiences of African young people are receiving increasing attention from
researchers in sociology, human geography and cultural anthropology, these studies address the issues facing these young people from a largely needs assessment and settlement service perspective, without nuanced exploration of the social, spatial or temporal dimensions of resilience.

In moving beyond the early psychological framing of resilience as an innate trait or set of behaviours (Garmezy, 1971, 1983; Rutter, 1979, 1984; Werner, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1992), I adopt a critical interdisciplinary perspective which draws on key debates and concepts from within cultural studies, sociology, cultural anthropology and philosophy. I employ an interdisciplinary perspective to critique and develop ideas concerning the cumulative nature of resilience, universalising classifications of trauma and Western interventionist approaches, the affective basis of social belonging and its importance to experiences of resettlement, as well as the present and future dimensions of hope. A primary aim of this thesis is to rebalance the individual and sociocultural dimensions of resilience formation among these young people, highlighting the unique ways in which resilience is accumulated, preserved and transferable within and across local, translocal, national and transnational social fields.

A critical interdisciplinary approach to resilience offers a number of conceptual lenses and sophisticated critical language through which we can analyse the complex issue of resilience. In doing this, I define resilience as an *accumulated* and *accumulating* set of individual and sociocultural capacities for coping, recovery, adaptability and ongoing growth in response to adverse experiences in Sudan, other countries of residence and Australia. Resilience exists, of course, to varying degrees in all peoples and communities, but is an especially critical issue for those of migrant and refugee backgrounds. The ability of Sudanese young people to accumulate and develop capacities of resilience is shaped by a host of pre-arrival and post-arrival factors such as migration routes, exposure to trauma, racism and discrimination, available schooling and limiting social stereotypes. It is important, therefore, to acknowledge the multi-scaled, multi-sourced and multi-directional nature of
resilience and the situated capacities that young people employ to overcome traumatic circumstances.

The experience of trauma is complex and highly emotional. Although trauma is commonly associated with despair, grief and powerlessness, refugees and other trauma survivors display an observed capacity to respond to these experiences in unique, unexpected and productive ways. Traumatic experiences can constrain individual potential, yet these same experiences can also evoke productive responses in the form of hope and resilience. Although an important aspect of hope is the capacity to imagine and aspire to a better future, hoping practices can also help refugees to find meaning in the present. Hope is therefore an essential element of resilience as it preserves the hopeful subject while also building resilience through the imaginative construction of a better future to come. Although there are distinctly personal benefits to the phenomenological experience of hope in terms of the feeling of hopefulness, the realisation of hoped-for outcomes such as educational skills, knowledges and competencies extends beyond the individual to the promotion of positive change with refugee social networks. In short, this amounts to the accumulation of positive affects, which act as a protective shield against trauma and other adversities. This form of emotional defence facilitates the realisation of hoped-for outcomes, and capacitates individuals and communities to “bounce back” from challenges encountered along the way. One such challenge faced by newly arrived Sudanese refugees to Australia relates to the deleterious effects of their representation and treatment by certain politicians, the news media and segments of “mainstream” Australian society.

Social context and media representations

In the Australian context, the formation of resilience and a developing sense of belonging among Sudanese refugees has been constrained by the mainstream news media’s disproportionate focus and biased reporting of “spectacular” events of public misbehaviour involving newly arrived migrants and asylum seekers. In August 2007,
the then Immigration Minister, Kevin Andrews, announced a dramatic reduction in the African component of Australia’s total humanitarian intake, down from 70 percent of the aggregate in 2004-05 to 30 percent in 2007-2008 (Farouque et al., 2007). At the time of the announcement, the Minister justified the curtailment citing a general improvement in conditions in some African countries (Farouque et al., 2007). Despite the claim of a general improvement of conditions in Africa, Sudanese refugees in Australia were suffering the adverse effects of significant discrimination and violence from elements of the Australian community. In September 2007, for example, Sudanese born Liep Gony, 19, was bashed to death in Noble Park, Melbourne. The incident sparked a heated “race debate” between sections of the Sudanese community, multicultural groups, Victorian police and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (Harrison, 2007). In a series of public statements following the death of Liep Gony, the Immigration Minister suggested that some African groups do not integrate as successfully as their migrant predecessors, with evidence loosely founded on reports of “gang-based violence” among Sudanese youth (Maiden & Davis, 2007; Hobday, 2007). In these circumstances, the development of capacities of resilience and a positive sense of belonging were constrained by public intolerance and a long-standing undercurrent of racism within Australian society towards newly arrived migrants.

Another incident occurred in December 2006, when the Tamworth City Council rejected the idea of becoming a resettlement area for Sudanese refugees under Australia’s Humanitarian Refugee Resettlement Program (HRRP). In tune with community sentiment, the Council justified its decision by arguing that “the existing government HRRP was ill equipped to deliver full services to newly arrived refugee families, threatening the longer-term success of the pilot scheme” (Fraser, 2006, p. 1). The decision coincided with media reports that a number of African refugees were arriving in Australia carrying transmittable diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis C and AIDS (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008). Although Tamworth Council reversed its decision, the incident remains a cause of tension within the community. In May 2007, The Area News of Griffith, NSW, quoted former Council member, Peter Day, as saying, “It is statistically proven that the Sudanese, Torres Strait islanders and some of the Asian countries have a high level of violence built into
their culture. You have to remember where these people come from, it’s not civilised” (Flynn, 2007). The emerging moral panic around Sudanese migrants escalated when on 3 October 2007, Channel 7 News, Melbourne, led its nightly coverage with security camera footage of a suspected gang of Sudanese youth harassing and stealing from a suburban shopkeeper. The video footage supported the Federal Government’s decision to “rebalance” the humanitarian intake by curtailing the number of African entrants to Australia (Rood & Topsfield, 2007). In subsequent news cycles, it surfaced that only one of the supposed ethnic gang was of Sudanese origin, with the other group members being of diverse Pacific Islander heritage (Media Watch, 2007). The racialised conflation of African and Pacific Islanders in this news report was indicative of a broader media trend towards sensationalism and racial reductionism. Despite the Media Watch\(^1\) investigation, a case could be made that the damage had already been done to the public’s perception of Sudanese young people.

By highlighting isolated examples of misbehaviour, the Immigration Minister and segments of the mainstream news media were attempting to draw attention to an inevitable cultural mismatch between Sudanese migrants and Australian society. Malkki (1995a) referred to these practices as the “making strange” of the country of asylum, arguing that they correspond “to the assumption that the homeland is not only the normal but the ideal habitat for any person, the place where one fits in, lives in peace, and has an unproblematic culture and identity” (p. 509). Along similar lines, Morley (2010) observed, “just as, physically, migrant populations…tend to be confined to…poor, outlying suburbs of the city so, on the whole, they are confined to representation within particular media genres – principally appearing as ‘problems’ of one sort or another in the genre of news and current affairs” (p. 435). Rather than representing migrant populations as part of the everyday life of a nation, politicians and populist media genres “reinforce popular perceptions whereby these groups are seen as fundamentally alien rather than as ordinary people” (Hargreaves & Perotti, 1993, p. 260). The representation of Sudanese refugees as “strange”, “alien” or

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\(^1\) Media Watch is a weekly media “watchdog” television program of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), which seeks to identify misinformation and other contextual factors in mainstream news media’s reporting of news and current affairs in Australia.
“other” reinforces an enduring colonialist legacy that African populations are innately less civilised than their Western counterparts. By representing newly arrived refugees as “problems” in need of “solving”, receiving societies generate a new set of challenges for these groups to cope with and overcome. The resources of resilience required to deal with these challenges might be better employed in the ongoing process of resettlement, cultural adjustment and economic integration. It is worth noting that while racial discrimination towards newly arrived migrants is not a new phenomenon within Australian society, it is exacerbated for Asians and now Africans by their non-European origins, foreign cultural practices and distinctive appearance.

Definitions and the background to Sudanese migration to Australia

In contrast to the homogenising definitions of Sudanese refugees perpetuated by Australian politicians and elements of the news media, a more nuanced representation of the Sudanese in Australia must account for a rich internal diversity within these communities in terms of ethnicity, tribal affiliations, cultural practices, visa subcategories and migration routes. Although comparisons can be made between post-WWII mass migration and the more recent arrival of African refugees and humanitarian entrants to Australia, there are also significant differences between these groups in terms of pre-arrival exposure to torture or trauma, their migration trajectories, and their motivations for leaving their respective homelands. Although many post-WWII migrants experienced intense social, economic and political upheaval in the aftermath of the war, their migration is conventionally defined as “voluntary” and underpinned by the pursuit of better lifestyle conditions. In contrast, the term refugee continues to be a volatile political category within Australian domestic and international political vocabularies. To be legally recognised as a refugee, an individual should experience a lack of basic protection and opportunities, leading to a forced escape from the respective country. The United

2 A case could also be made that post-WWII European migrants were in fact refugees and represented the first mass wave of refugees in the twentieth century.
The term “refugee” shall apply to any person who […] owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality or membership of a particular social group or political social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (cited by Malkki, 1995a, p. 501).

Although the standard classification of a refugee assists international organisations like the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and receiving countries to establish the legitimacy of refugee status, the above definition misses the complexity and lived experience of what it means to be a refugee. Accordingly, this thesis draws attention to the ways in which essentialising labels like “refugee” and “youth” influence the formation of resilience among young Sudanese refugee participants in Western Sydney.

Recent events involving Sudanese and other migrant youth have brought to the fore an urgent need for qualitative and ethnographic research which uncovers the everyday, lived experiences of African refugee youth in Australia. In considering the issues faced by Sudanese refugee young people, it is important to remember that the Sudanese community in Western Sydney is not homogeneous. Following Malkki’s critique of the “refugee” category, terms such as “youth” and “Sudanese” do not constitute “a naturally self-delimitating domain of anthropological knowledge” (1995a, p. 496). Although these terms are endowed with shorthand “analytical usefulness”, it is important to remember that they are not enclosed labels of a particular “kind” or “type” (Malkki, 1995b). Accordingly, this thesis explores the “qualitative thickness” (Wise, 2006, p. 92) behind such labels, moving beyond
traditional humanitarian indicators of refugee status and settlement to the lived experience of what it means to be a Sudanese refugee young person in Australia.

Throughout this thesis, I attempt to unpack homogeneous signifiers such as “youth”, “community” and “Sudanese”, highlighting the internal diversity within the participant sample in terms of migration route, tribal affiliations, gender, age, and visa subcategories. In the thesis, I often refer to politically and socially loaded descriptive labels such as the “diasporic Sudanese community” or “Sudanese youth” in “Western Sydney” and the negotiation of their transnational relationships to “Sudan”, prior to the foundation of Southern Sudan. Where pertinent to the analysis, I attempt to unpack this complex internal diversity, while avoiding the “categorisation” or symbolic reproduction of potentially stigmatising and/or unhelpful stereotypes and labels. As Malkki (1995a) observed, “an obvious problem with the intellectual project of defining ‘the refugee experience’ is that it posits a single, essential, transhistorical refugee condition” (p. 511). The challenge of representing young people’s experiences was an ever-present personal concern in this research: in particular, I was concerned about balancing participant confidentiality and biographical detail and employing a system of representation that was efficient and analytically meaningful, all while avoiding a tendency to reduce functional categories to common conditions (see Malkki, 1995a, p. 511). Therefore, definitional clarification of certain key terms such as “youth”, “community”, “Sudan”, and “Sudanese” is essential. Although adding to the complexity of the data analysis stage, the sample’s diversity brings a qualitative richness and enhanced validity to the project. In an effort to avoid the reproduction of unproductive connotations concerning the “youth” category, a concerted effort is made throughout to refer to “Sudanese youth” as “Sudanese young people” or alternatively “young Sudanese people”.

Besides the definitional problematic of “youth”, the identifier “Sudanese” reveals similar ambiguities. As the majority of participants self-identified as belonging to particular tribal groups such as Dinka or Neur as well as subgroups within these broader tribal/ethnic groupings (i.e. Dinka-Boar), the shorthand descriptor
“Sudanese” is ultimately insufficient. A history of religious, political, economic and ethnic division within Sudan adds another layer of complexity to the issue. Although a comprehensive historiography of contemporary Sudan is beyond the scope of this thesis, a brief historical overview of significant internal divisions within Sudan is given to provide a deeper appreciation of participants’ backgrounds. Since I commenced this thesis, the Republic of Sudan has undergone a series of major geopolitical transformations. In January 2011, the Southern Sudanese independence referendum proposed a secession of the south from the northern regions of Sudan. In February 2011, the referendum commission published the results of the referendum, showing that 98.83 percent of voters agreed with the plan for Southern independence. Accordingly, the official date for the creation of an independent state, Africa’s newest state, was 9 July 2011. This division is topographically represented in Figure 1 below. Although the referendum was conducted after the completion of my formal period of data collection, my informal discussions with young participants revealed that many of them were actively tracking the political developments in Sudan and attempting to bring attention to these issues within their respective peer-groups and communities. The evolving geo-political situation in Sudan and its implications for themselves, their friends, and their relatives was directly linked to their preservation of hope in Australia and attitudes towards returning to Sudan.

Prior to the signing and ratification of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), Sudan and its people endured the longest civil war in modern history. In common usage, the “Sudanese Civil War” refers to both the First Sudanese Civil War, 1955-1972, and the Second Sudanese Civil War, 1983-2005. While both civil conflicts had devastating effects on both sides of the North/South divide, the Second Sudanese Civil War led to the deaths of an estimated 2 million people (IOM, 2011, p. 25). In addition to the unimaginably large number of casualties, the second civil war caused widespread famine and disease, and led to an estimated 5 to 6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).
Figure 1: A map of North Sudan and South Sudan (Worldatlas, 2012).

The Second Sudanese Civil War has often been characterised as a conflict between the predominantly Muslim northern regions, headed by the Arab-elite government in Khartoum, and the predominantly Christian and traditional/animist southern peripheries. The causes of the conflict are commonly demarcated along racial (African versus Arab), religious (Muslim versus Christian) and economic (natural resource acquisition) lines. However, the actual causes and drivers of the conflict are far more complex and changing, and most probably involve a combination of the above factors as well as the longer-term effects of Egyptian and British colonial rule (Johnson, 2003). As previously noted, the 22-year war symbolically ended with the signing of the CPA in 2005. There is widespread consensus, however – shared by the United Nations – that the Khartoum government has continued its expansionist...
campaign by proxy, recruiting and supplying local militia groups and armed *Janjaweed* gunmen from the western Darfur region and neighbouring Chad (Collins, 2008). As of 1 January 2010, an estimated total of 615,340 refugees remained in Sudan, residing in and around the Khartoum state, Eastern Darfur and Equatoria states (IOM, 2011, p. 42).

As a consequence of the second civil conflict, countless individuals and families experienced forced and violent removal from their villages, towns and cities. The phenomenon of forced displacement often results in large-scale internal and external migration. Together with the 5 to 6 million IDPs in Sudan, there are a further 1.5 million seeking asylum and resettlement in refugee camps in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Egypt and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as Western countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia. Individuals living in refugee camps and neighbouring countries often experience a lack of basic human and citizenship rights. Duration of stay in these countries is often temporary and marked by exposure to discrimination, marginalisation and non-recognition by local populations.

**Sudanese refugees in Australia**

Largely as a result of the Second Sudanese Civil War, an estimated 30,000 Sudanese people have migrated to Australia (Gott, 2008, p. 10). In 2004-05, over 70 percent of Australia’s refugee and humanitarian intake came from African countries, 43 percent (5220) coming from Sudan (ABS, 2008). The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that between 1996 and 2006, of the 50 most common countries of birth, persons born in Sudan recorded the largest average increase (27 percent per year). As of 30 June 2006, the median age of persons from Sudan was 23.6 years, the youngest median age of any new arrivals (ABS, 2008). According to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA)\(^3\) (2006, p. 7),

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\(^3\) On 30 January 2007, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) changed its name to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). The departmental name change
The African caseload generally has greater settlement needs than people from previous source regions, reflecting their experiences and circumstances prior to arriving in Australia. Some of these pre-migration experiences include higher levels of poverty, larger families, lower levels of education and English proficiency, lower levels of literacy and in their own languages, higher incidence of health issues, longer periods spent in refugee camp, little experience in urban environments, and high rates of torture and trauma.

The majority of Sudanese arrivals to Australia fall within the “Refugee” category of Australia’s Humanitarian Program. Of the four Refugee visa subclasses, the majority of Sudanese entrants are classified as Refugees (subclass 200) or as part of the “In country Special Humanitarian Program” (SHP) (subclass 201). Eligible applicants for the Refugee visa subclass reside “outside their home country in a country of first asylum”, “are subjected to persecution in their home country” and are in strong need of resettlement (DIAC, 2011a). To be eligible for the “In-country SHP” visa subclass, the applicant must reside in their home country and be evaluated as being subject to persecution (DIAC, 2011a).

In the Western Sydney region, the Sudanese community is comprised of a variety of ethnic groups and regional affiliations, most notably Dinka and Nuer. Although the majority of Sudanese participants in this study migrated to Australia from Sudan or neighbouring countries under the various visa subclasses, a number of participants were born in Australia. This complex internal diversity within the Sudanese “community” extends along ethnic, tribal, religious, generational and gendered lines. In the empirical chapters of the thesis, I attempt to balance the shorthand analytical usefulness of homogenising notions of a “Sudanese community” with a more nuanced exploration of the diverse ways in which these groups accumulate capacities of resilience.

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coincided with the ceremonial swearing in of the new Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, the Hon. Kevin Andrews. All contact details for the department remained the same, as do the prior processing timelines and DIAC requirements (Migration Expert, 2012).
The structure of the thesis

It is surprising that, to date, no comprehensive perspective on resilience exists in the sociocultural literature. Accordingly, this thesis examines the development of resilience among young Sudanese refugees in Western Sydney and how the accumulative nature of resilience contributes to their ability to settle effectively in Australia. In Chapter 1, I critique the dominant approach to resilience deriving from the psychological literature, which tends to conceptualise it as an individual trait or set of behaviours of “resilient” children. The critique of early psychological approaches to resilience and classifications of trauma provides a foundation for a thicker, sociocultural description of the complex phenomena and supporting practices as not necessarily “within” resilient individuals but as a relational and cumulative phenomenon. I argue that resilience is better conceived of as an accumulated and accumulating set of individual and social capacities, a key component of which in refugees is the ability to draw upon “negative” experiences as productive cultural resources. This observed capacity to build positive affects like hope, happiness and belonging, as well as the counter-intuitive ability to transform and draw upon “negative” affective experiences as productive resources, assists in the realisation of hoped-for educational and vocational outcomes. This expanded and expanding conceptualisation of resilience attends to key debates and issues such as the universal classifications of trauma and Western intervention strategies, the affective nature of social belonging, a conceptualisation of resistance as a form of resilience, and the present and future orientation of hope and hoping practices.

In Chapter 2, the qualitative foundations of the empirical study are explored in relation to key methodological considerations concerning researcher position, access, trust, confidentiality and consent, reciprocity, narrativity and witnessing. A qualitative methodology with semi-structured interviews and an ethnographic component was undertaken for the purpose of drawing out the subtle complexities of young Sudanese participants’ lived experiences of migration and resettlement. In this chapter, I argue that the design and implementation of empirical methodologies can,
where appropriate, move beyond a harm minimisation model to include a reciprocal, benefit-oriented perspective for researchers and participants.

As the first of four empirical chapters in this thesis, Chapter 3 explores the ways young Sudanese participants display a future-oriented capacity to hope in the midst of adverse or unsupportive migration contexts. In the lives of these young people and their communities, resilience is mobilised around the hopeful promise of educational and vocational opportunities, with the actualisation of these hoped-for outcomes influenced by pre- and post-arrival factors. I argue that hope is best understood as an ongoing interaction between hope in the present or ‘everyday hope’ (Zournazi, 2002) and a future-oriented deferral of good things to come. Chief among these influences are young people’s migration route through Africa and/or the Middle East, the trauma associated with civil war and displacement, protracted stays in refugee camps, experiences of racism and discrimination, interrupted schooling, and a lack of quality learning and teaching. Although an aspiration to the symbolic or imaginative dimensions of education is an important source of hope in the lives of young Sudanese and their communities, it is through the acquisition of new skills and educational effort that hope comes into the world.

A number of studies have shown that school environments can be important sites for academic capacity building, supporting the formation of resilience and mobilisation of hope (Barcan, 2002; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Stewart-Harawira, 2005). In Chapter 4, I argue that although the acquisition of educational skills, knowledge and competencies is a significant aspect of hope and resilience, the realisation of young refugees’ hopes is shaped by the ability of schools to equip them with the relevant educational and social tools to participate effectively in Australian society. In this chapter I argue that educational and vocational aspirations remain ideals unless they are operationalised through the acquisition of specific educational skills and capabilities. While Intensive English Centres (IECs) can represent important sites for the facilitation of resilience among newly arrived refugee students and other migrant groups, these outcomes are predicated on the ability of IECs to manage the delicate balance between an orientation towards pastoral care and rehabilitation services and
their primary role of equipping young people with relevant educational competencies necessary for the transition into mainstream classes and beyond.

The success of Australian schools in equipping young people with the relevant academic capabilities and career guidance is linked to their ability to attend to transnational obligations and responsibilities. Chapter 5 explores the heterogeneous ways young Sudanese people manage the everyday demands of resettlement as well as communal obligations to friends and family in Australia and overseas. The focus in this chapter shifts to young people’s capacity to participate in transnational caregiving practices, which is facilitated by the realisation of their educational and vocational ambitions. Transnational participation is influenced by the capacity to participate and the different intensities of young people’s connections to multiple places of belonging. Young people’s experiences and attempts to reconcile the effects of shame, guilt and ambivalence are indications of changing attitudes towards the fulfillment of transnational obligations and responsibilities. The notion of ambivalence is introduced in order to better explore young Sudanese people’s mixed feelings towards diasporic participation. Young people’s negotiation of these dissonant feelings is theorised as their attempts to develop a sense of belonging and connection to multiple localities. Although the conflicting feelings produced by the affective experiences of shame and guilt could be classed as “negative” and “unwanted” sensations, it is argued that shame and guilt display resilience-related potential, as they are indications of interest and investment in the plight and well-being of others.

Chapter 6 ‘brings home’, so to speak, the ideas developed in the previous empirical chapters through an exploration of the resourceful and creative use of domestic space by a group of four young Sudanese men in Western Sydney. It becomes evident that as a result of accumulated capacities for symbolic, spatial and material resourcefulness acquired in refugee camps and temporary countries of residence, the reproduction of these habituated practices assists the group members’ realisation of musical ambitions, financial success and desire to effect social chance among Sudanese and other migrant young people. The wardrobe recording studio functions
as a material headquarters from which they disseminate a positive and life-affirming message to Sudanese and other migrant youth in Australia and overseas. Whereas the previous empirical chapters highlight the relevance of formal skills training inside educational contexts like IECs, the example of the wardrobe studio underscores the productive value of skills and competencies acquired outside formal schooling contexts, as it were. Building on Pink’s (1994) discussion of the “extradomestic implications” of the domestic world, the chapter extends upon the spatial analysis of the bedroom studio to an exploration of the group members’ creative fashioning of their hip-hop identities, cultural membership and return pilgrimage to Africa. By highlighting the extradomestic implications of the bedroom studio, the multi-directional and multi-scaled nature of resilience formation is foregrounded. The empirical chapters demonstrate that resilience is not unidirectional in the sense of heading towards some final destination of invulnerability to adversity. Rather, resilience involves a complex and ongoing interaction between individuals and their social worlds.
Chapter 1

Conceptualising Resilience

Introduction

Resilience is an *accumulated* and *accumulating* set of capacities, capabilities and resources\(^4\), which allows individuals and communities to endure and make sense of adverse events and circumstances encountered during migration and contexts of resettlement, and which provides the foundations for making one’s self at home in new circumstances. It involves the cumulative build-up of both particular kinds of knowledge and skills and positive affects such as hope, happiness and belonging, which sediment over time as transpersonal capacities for self-preservation and ongoing growth. Although the accumulation of *positive* affect is crucial to the formation of resilience, the ability to re-imagine and utilise *negative* affects and environmental limitations as productive cultural resources is a reciprocal or better yet, sympathetic, feature of resilience among young Sudanese refugees. Closely tied to the formation of resilience is the lived experience of hope and hoping practices. The positive affective experience of hopefulness provides individuals and communities a means of enduring the present, while the future-oriented dimensions of hoping offer them an instrument for imagining a better future to come. In short, resilience is the protective shield that facilitates the realisation of hoped-for objects and outcomes, and capacitates individuals and communities to “bounce back” from potential challenges.

An important feature of resilience is the future-oriented capacity of hope (Parse, 1999). Yet it is important to note that resilience accumulation is not headed towards

\(^4\) From the outset, it is important to clarify that the use of terms such as ‘capacities’, ‘capabilities’ and ‘competencies’ are interchangeably used throughout the thesis as low-level descriptive terms. While a comprehensive review of the ‘capabilities approach’ (Nussbaum 2006; Sen 1985) is beyond the scope of this thesis, their work represents a valuable contribution to the area of universal human rights as it explores theorised relationships between the capabilities approach, gender, democratic citizenship, quality education and social justice outcomes.
Early psychological discourse on resilience

Early psychological discourse on resilience defined the phenomenon largely as an individual trait or set of behaviours, common to especially “resilient” individuals (Garmezy, 1991; Rutter, 1999; Werner, 1993). This standard definition of resilience as an intrinsic trait or set of behaviours is inadequate to account for the distributed sociocultural dimensions of resilience and resilience-related phenomena discussed below. Lahire’s (2003) critique of sociology is of equal relevance to psychology in that there is a similar disciplinary tendency to “see the study of singular cases as opposed to the acquisition of knowledge of general tendencies and of recurrent patterns in the social world, which are statistically assessed” (p. 349). Importantly, he added,
“singular” does not mean “non-reproducible” or “unique”. Taking the singular for the inverse of the general brings old oppositions back to life, i.e. that between nomothetic and ideographic sciences, and that between generalizing and individualizing methods. These oppositions have lost much of their relevance. (2003, p. 349)

Rather than establishing an oppositional binary of “individual” and “social”, in this thesis I argue for a dialogical interaction between the individual and the social in terms of key concepts such as resilience, affect and hope. Although the conceptual emphasis of the psychological sciences has been geared towards resilience as an individual phenomenon, this work has provided academics and popular authors with a complex, elusive and provocative term in resilience. Lubchenco (2006) highlighted the simplicity and complexity of the resilience concept, commenting, “Resilience holds the key to our future. It is a deceptively simple idea, but its application has proven elusive” (cited in Walker & Salt, 2006). In a related discussion, Ungar asked, “Why keep the term resilience?”

Terms like resilience, even strengths, empowerment and health, are a counterpoint to notions of disease and disorder that have made us look at people as glasses half empty rather than half full. Resilience reminds us that children survive and thrive in a myriad of ways, and that understanding the etiology of health is as, or more, important than studying the etiology of disease. (Ungar, 2005, p. 91)

Ungar’s productive focus on health, creativity and meaning making is adopted as a guiding principle of this thesis. Although recognising the seriousness of past adversities and hardships and their consequences in the lives of young Sudanese people, I have attempted, where appropriate, to go beyond and productively reposition deficit-based, psychologised models and associated “vulnerable” and “at risk” vocabularies for discussing and dealing with young Sudanese refugees and other war-affected populations. A review of the resilience literature has uncovered an alarming absence of a sociocultural perspective on the concept of resilience.
Although the social dimensions of resilience are receiving increasing attention from within the critical and cultural wings of psychology, these studies do not take into account the “qualitative thickness” (Wise, 2006), non-uniformity and complexity of resilience-related components or their appropriation and enactment in the everyday, lived experience of refugees and other migrants.

Before outlining a sociocultural approach to resilience, it is necessary to provide a critique of the dominant psychological models of resilience. Definitions of resilience vary considerably across disciplines and time, and according to the theoretical context or group under investigation (Harvey & Delfabro, 2004). During the 1970s and early 1980s, the developmental literature on resilience focused primarily on the “personal qualities” of “resilient children” exposed to adverse life circumstances (Garmezy, 1991, Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1990, 1999; Werner, 1993). These personal qualities were based largely on the child’s autonomy and self-esteem (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 544). From this rather narrow, individualistic viewpoint, resilience was defined as an innate “self-righting mechanism” (Werner & Smith, 1992, p. 202). As Masten (2001) concedes, however, “the picture emerging from the systematic study of resilience suggests that some of the original assumptions about this class of phenomena were wrong, or at least misleading” (p. 227). Masten argued that the early research on resilience (Garmezy, 1971, 1983; Werner & Smith, 1992) implied that resilient children were special or remarkable by virtue of their invulnerability to adversity. As research into resilience progressed, researchers began to acknowledge the ordinariness of resilience-related phenomena, and that “resilience may often derive from factors external to the child” (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 544). These critical insights bring us back to the need to consider the sociocultural dimensions of trauma, affect and resilience.

Besides the personal attributes of children, researchers began to explore the effects of family dynamics and the wider social environment on the development of resilience. Rather than simply identifying which child, family or environmental factors were implicated in the formation of resilience, researchers turned their attention to how these underlying protective mechanisms facilitated positive resilience outcomes. Accordingly, Masten (2001) proposed that the commonly held definition of
resilience as “competence despite exposure to adversity” be referred to as “resilience” and not “resiliency”, as the latter carried the misleading connotation of a discrete personality trait (in Luthar et al., 2000, p. 546). As research evolved, resilience as an absolute or unchanging attribute made way for relational and dynamic conceptualisations. As Luthar et al. (2000) noted, “it became clear that positive adaptation despite exposure to adversity involves a developmental progression, such that new vulnerabilities and/or strengths often emerge with changing life circumstances” (pp. 543-44). According to them, resilience is a dynamic process which involves positive adaptation within contexts of adversity (2000, p. 543). While this is closer to the operational definition of resilience used throughout this thesis, there remain a number of definitional concerns and theoretical limitations of the psychological approach. Furthermore, the above definition limits positive adaptation to the context of significant adversity, and in doing so, fails to account for the effects of ongoing spatial and temporal factors involved in traumatic memory and identity construction which influence the broader, sociocultural formation of resilience.

According to Luthar et al. (2000), the major concerns of the theoretical framework, generally referred to as the “resilience construct”, fall into four broad categories. These are:

- ambiguities in definitions and terminology, variations in interdomain functioning and risk experiences among ostensibly resilient children,
- instability in the phenomenon of resilience, and theoretical concerns, including questions about the utility of resilience as a scientific construct. (p. 543)

Chief among these concerns is the issue of ambiguity and terminology, specifically, the nondescript, normative language used in defining resilience as “positive adaptation despite adversity”. Specifically, what is positive adaptation? Who has the authority to determine positive versus negative adaptation? Is positive adaptation uniformly experienced across cultures? Critiques of resilience theory argue that
positive outcomes should not be defined in terms of dominant social values; rather, they should take into account “structural inequalities” as well as individual understandings of resilience and psychosocial wellbeing (Ungar, 2004). Concordantly, the above use of “developmental progression” implies a linear, teleological conception of development, which reduces the subtle complexities of human growth and everyday life to directional lines on an axial chart. In other words, the idea of developmental progress contains within it an assumption that the human capacity of resilience is headed towards some absolute state of invulnerability to adversity, which is clearly not the case. Although resilience researchers acknowledge the relational or circumscribed aspects of resilience, they often fall back into the deterministic “well-established statistical predictors” (Masten, 2001, p. 228) or, in other words, predetermined indicators of psychological inquiry. Although risk factors such as an individual’s proximity to trauma, the frequency of events, low socio-economic status and lack of educational opportunities represent potentially unsupportive resilience-related variables, these factors are non-systematically linked to the formation of resilience. As Bottrell’s (2007, 2009a) discussion of resistance as a form of resilience will demonstrate, young people can creatively adapt to these adverse life events in positive and productive ways, reinterpreting them as assets rather than obstacles.

Other criticisms concern the range of varied and inconsistent uses of central terms within resilience models such as “protective” or “vulnerability” factors (Luthar et al., 2000). While psychological models of resilience tend to be limited by normative terminology, concepts such as “compensatory” or “protective” mechanisms do exhibit interdisciplinary and explanatory usefulness in relation to the migration and resettlement experiences of refugees and other migrants. It should be noted, however, that the usefulness of certain psychological concepts is partly due to a paucity of sociocultural research on resilience. Luthar et al. (2000) were mindful of the fact that all sciences, including the social sciences, “are built upon classifications that structure their domains of inquiry” (p. 6). Given the increasing attention to resilience and its slippery nature generally, it is important that resilience researchers are open to definitional, conceptual and theoretical developments from popular, social, and psychological discourses.
Another criticism of resilience theory relates to the creation of a false dichotomy between “resilient” and “non-resilient” individuals. This dichotomy is perpetuated by psychological approaches that view resilience as a distinct construct, specific to “resilient” individuals. In particular, the outdated definition of resilience as “positive adaptation despite adversity” assumes that a significant degree of proximal risk is a necessary condition of resilience (McMurray et al., 2008, p. 301). Ungar (2004) suggested that this false dichotomy could be replaced by an understanding of mental health “as residing in all individuals even when significant impairment is present” (p. 352). While psychological approaches to resilience are beginning to acknowledge the everyday expressions of resilience in most functionally adaptive human beings (Johnson & Wiechelt, 2004), a study by McMurray et al. (2008) found that optimistic perceptions and overly positive appraisals of resilience by social workers were related to low frequency of reporting of children’s and young people’s mental health difficulties, and low referral rates to secondary tier support services. As the McMurray et al. study demonstrated, the embedded understandings of resilience among social workers filter down to their interactions with young clients, helping or hindering a young person’s development of resilience. While there are a number of studies exploring the role of social workers in promoting resilience among ‘at risk’ groups from a ‘strengths-based perspective’ (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2001; Gilligan, 2004; Saleebey, 1997; Van Breda, 1999), these studies are limited by their use of predetermined indicators in terms of what constitutes ‘resilient’ and ‘non-resilient’ individuals and communities. Furthermore, these studies do not take into account the productive potential of ‘negative’ affects and adverse experiences in the formation of resilience.

Writing from within the critical psychological tradition, Ungar (2004) argued that, “those with the most power to control social discourse influence our definition of what is health and what is illness” (p. 342). He claimed that the ecological model of resilience – which has underpinned much of the resilience research to date – is based on positivist modes of inquiry that emphasise “predictable relationships between risk and protective factors, circular causality, and transactional processes that foster resilience” (p. 342). A major limitation of this model is the emphasis on causal
linkages between risk and coping strategies, and an insistence on predetermined health outcomes. In contrast, the constructivist perspective on resilience emphasises the complex, relative and contextual relationship between risk and protective factors across global cultures, as well as diverse social and political environments (p. 342). The ecological paradigm does not account for the diversity of resilience supporting practices among “at-risk” populations or the plurality of context-specific definitions of mental health (p. 345). Accordingly, the following section critiques the dominant Western “trauma” and “at-risk” discourses, emphasising the lack of uniformity of traumatic responses among war-affected populations, as well as context-specific approaches to mental health and local healing strategies.

**Unpacking trauma**

Approaches to trauma, recovery and resilience have traditionally tended to centre on the individual. For most citizens living in relatively safe, “first-world” countries like Australia, trauma is considered to be a temporary abnormality linked to an isolated life event such as the loss of a family member, a physical assault or unexpected natural disaster (Scheper-Hughes, 2008, p. 36). In the case of refugees who may have lived in constant crisis and been subjected to daily, repetitive trauma, Scheper-Hughes maintained, “the conventional wisdom and understanding of human vulnerability and resilience, especially as codified within the clinical model of post-traumatic stress, is inadequate” (2008, p. 37). As the resilience construct “presupposes exposure to significant risks”, researchers should be cautious of awarding “resilience” to all research participants without accounting for comparable or incomparable levels of trauma and adversity as well as local understandings of trauma, mental health and recovery (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 549).

Dominant psychopathological models of trauma commonly assume a uniform response to extremely traumatic experiences. In terms of refugees, IDPs, and other war-affected populations, there is a psychiatrically determined, blanket assumption that individuals within these communities are especially prone to elevated rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Kienzler, 2008, p. 219); moreover, that these
individuals are considered to be “at risk”, especially vulnerable or reluctant to talk about their experiences of torture and trauma (p. 219). According to Kienzler, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) – a cornerstone of Western psychiatric discourse – “describes and engages with disorders such as PTSD as though they were timeless, universal, and cross-culturally valid” (p. 219). Young (1995) considered that the PTSD category is, in many respects, a social construction that is “glued together by the practices, technologies, and narratives with which it is diagnosed, studied, treated, and represented by the various interests, institutions, and moral arguments that mobilize these efforts and resources” (p. 5). As Fassin and Rechtman remarked, “Trauma has become a dominant trope in discussions of the contemporary world” (in Kirmayer et al., 2009, p. 26). While the trauma metaphor has the power to reveal certain supervening effects of extreme violence on suffering, it also has the potential to conceal localised understandings of trauma and healing strategies. Although the PTSD construct is constituted in relation to researcher/practitioner technique and scientific reasoning, the pain that is suffered by individuals experiencing the symptoms of PTSD is quite real (Young, 1995, p. 10). Along similar lines to the sociocultural construction of resilience, trauma is dynamic, culturally inflected, and not subject to standardised notions of scientific inquiry.

Along similar lines, Scheper-Hughes (2008) argued that the PTSD model is based on an understanding of human nature “as fundamentally vulnerable, frail…as endowed with few and faulty defense mechanisms” (p. 37), and furthermore, that it is “normal” to be traumatized by organised or non-organised forms of violence and attack. Accordingly, Malkki (1995a) wrote,

although many refugees have survived violence and loss that are literally beyond the imagination of most people, we mustn’t assume that refugee status in and of itself constitutes a recognisable, generalisable psychological condition. (p. 510)

While the statistical likelihood of experiencing traumatic events and situations is significantly higher for refugees and IDPs, community service providers and mental-health diagnosticians are obliged to demonstrate self-reflexivity regarding the
assumptions they bring to their engagements with individuals and communities from a refugee background. Supporting this call to awareness, Malkki (1995a) explained, “We cannot assume psychological disorder or mental illness a priori, as an axiom, nor can we claim to know, from the mere fact of refugeeness, the actual sources of a person’s suffering” (p. 510). The recommendation that practitioners and service providers thoroughly explore and challenge underlying assumptions in relation to refugees and trauma survivors is not intended to dismiss the necessity of therapeutic intervention for individuals suffering from the debilitating effects of transient or chronic traumatic stress or other trauma-related issues. Pederson (2002) commented that critical social scientists must themselves recognise that there is no such thing as a “mere fact”. Moreover, “scholars and researchers themselves are inevitably linked to a particular social group and are working with a given social and cultural context” (p. 187). He explained:

While critical theory and the social suffering perspective serve as an important and productive counterpoint to the neutrality of orthodox “normal science” and public health, these views must themselves be subjected to the same scrutiny that they bring to bear on medicine and science including the criticisms that they themselves silence dissent – in this case through claiming a morally rather than scientifically unassailable position. (2002, p. 187)

Given the varied manifestations of PTSD and the subjective nature of the condition, practitioners have experienced difficulties in introducing the PTSD model in certain social, cultural and political contexts. In most cases, use of the PTSD diagnostic model has not taken into account the diversity of traditional healing strategies and local mental health paradigms. According to Kirmayer et al. (2009), “Culture influences the individual and collective experience of trauma at many levels” (p. 2). The most important of these influences is the way “culture gives meaning to the traumatic event itself allowing individuals, families and communities to make sense of violence and adversity in ways that may moderate or amplify their impact” (2009, p. 2). Lewis-Fernandez and Kleinman (1995) contended that a cross-cultural approach to diagnostic classification is necessary “to produce a comprehensive nosology [of psychological disorders] that is both internationally and locally valid”
(p. 425). The case of post-apartheid South Africa highlights the necessity of an inter- or trans-local perspective on trauma diagnosis and treatment. As Scheper-Hughes (2008) reported, practitioners had great difficulty adapting the PTSD model to the survivors’ unique set of traumatic experiences and culturally located expectations. Due to the ongoing nature of trauma, she commented that therapists and counsellors “rejected the idea of post-traumatic stress disorder among victims who were facing continual and constant stress. The post-trauma victims, they said, were the world’s lucky few” (2008, p. 40).

**Temporal considerations: the construction of post- and present trauma**

People experience trauma in different ways and at different times. Trauma is not something that people “get over” after a standardised amount of time has passed. As Kirmayer et al. (2009) claimed, the application of generic assessment tools and Western intervention strategies encourage people “to understand their suffering through the prism of individualistic psychological models that may not fit local values and concepts of the person” (p. 34). Accordingly, they posit that the “distress and suffering that accompany war or other forms of collective violence are not necessarily pathological responses to traumatic events, but may be normal responses to existential predicaments” (p. 34). For example, the supposition that having survived a traumatic situation, the survivor automatically moves into a posterior condition removed from the original trauma is problematic.

Although removed from the actual, real-time traumatic event, there seems to be very little which is post-traumatic for individuals’ experiencing symptoms of PTSD. For individuals who remember and affectively re-embody the traumatic episode(s) on an ongoing basis, the re-living or “re-present-ation” of supposedly retrospective traumatic episodes has important implications for relationships between trauma, affect, memory and conceptualisations of time. As Layne (1994) observed, “It is because the past has this living active existence that it matters so much” (p. 34). Along similar lines, Hodgkin and Radstone (2003) contended that the “past is not fixed, but is subject to change: both narratives of events and the meanings given to
them are in a constant state of transformation” (p. 23). For survivors of traumatic episodes, “the deconstruction of time is an inner survival skill” (Shay 1994). In a study of soldiers suffering the symptoms of PTSD, he explained,

The future is reduced to a matter of hours or days. Alterations in time sense begin with the obliteration of the future but eventually progress to obliteration of the past […] thus prisoners are eventually reduced to living in an endless present. (p. 176)

As a result of his time in a Nazi concentration camp, Levi (1988) conveyed a similar sense of temporal distortion to that of Shay’s participants. He explained,

We had not only forgotten our country and our culture, but also our family, our past, the future we had imagined for ourselves, because, like animals, we were confined to the present moment. (p. 75)

Commenting on the perceptual effects of trauma on a survivor’s sense of time, Brison (1999) observed that the “disappearance of the past and the foreshortening of the future are common symptoms among those who have survived trauma of various kinds” (p. 43). These two examples highlight the non-fixed nature of the past and future, and the ways that the present can colour and distort the past and future. Similarly, Cwerner (2001) remarked that in contexts of crisis and radical change such as migration and wartime experiences, the “normal rhythms and flows”, “sequences and frequencies”, “duration of activities and pace of daily life”, “social narratives” and “works of memory” may be disrupted:

By revealing the interplay between ruptures and continuities, old rhythms and new routines, a focus on the temporal dimensions of such experiences can provide a critical anchor for understanding the process, dynamics and possibilities of the migration process. (p. 15)

It follows that time is not a detached aspect of social activities, but rather a constitutive dimension of the transnational migration experience.
In contrast to psychological understandings of trauma, which tend to view the phenomenon as an acute experience that people recover from after a relatively short period of time, trauma is better conceived of as a persistent cognitive, affective and embodied experience. The remembrance and re-embodiment of original trauma is evidence of the non-sequential, overlapping nature of time. According to Hamilton (2007), “To be traumatised is to have one’s present perpetually – and painfully – invaded by the past” (p. 66). To state that the past is actually occurring as the subject remembers a trauma is far too large a claim. However, in an important sense, trauma, in its original form, can be emotionally, physically and psychologically re-experienced in the present through the mechanisms of memory and embodied emotion. Hamilton (2007) commented on the tendency of trauma and testimony scholars to focus on the negative aspects of memory and emotion, as well as the “dynamics between past and present in the process of remembering” (p. 66). He argued that instead of interpreting happy memories “as unmediated reflections of past happiness”, we should interpret such memories “as a dialogue between past and present in the life story, part of an autobiographical structuring of a life through the interplay of history, memory and emotion” (p. 75). As explored throughout this thesis, the capacity of Sudanese young people to draw upon negative past experiences as productive resources in the present is sympathetic to Hamilton’s focus on the agentic capacity of the rememberer to reflect on the positive aspects of an often traumatic past.

In the aftermath of traumatic events and circumstances, there is the likelihood of adverse psychological, affective and physical effects on individuals and groups. Nevertheless, there also exists the potential for post-traumatic growth. As Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) stated, “Although not prevalent in either clinical or research settings, there has been a very long tradition of viewing human suffering as offering the possibility for the origin of significant good” (p. 58). Accordingly, they found that “reports of growth experiences in the aftermath of traumatic events far outnumber reports of psychiatric disorders” (p. 58). Tedeschi and Calhoun were mindful of the fact that “posttraumatic growth does not necessarily yield less emotional distress”, and furthermore, that “a focus on this growth should not come at the expense of empathy for the pain and suffering of trauma survivors” (p. 58).
Importantly, for many survivors of trauma, “posttraumatic growth and distress coexist, and the growth emerges from the struggle with coping, not from the trauma itself” (p. 58). They offered a number of important caveats to their theory of posttraumatology, disclaiming that in no way is trauma “good” and that not all trauma survivors experience growth in relation to their struggles.

Understandings of recovery and growth in the shadow of trauma are relevant to refugees and other war-affected populations who have experienced prolonged exposure to trauma in their country of origin, en route to, and within countries of asylum. In this thesis, the notion of posttraumatic growth is similarly applicable to refugee young people who have utilised their experiences of suffering and trauma to accumulate social and educational skills, knowledges and competencies. Tedeschi and Calhoun’s conceptual linkages between growth and distress also have parallels with the dialectical relationships existing between suffering and resilience, hope and despair, discussed in later sections. In particular, the accumulative nature of resilience and hope seem to be triggered by and emerge out of the affective experiences of pain, suffering and despair.

**Trauma and the role of memory**

According to Hamilton, the close association between memory studies, testimony and trauma theory “has led to an emphasis on the suffering of victims of past catastrophes, one that tends to obscure other forms of memory” (2007, p. 65). The current emphasis of trauma and testimony theory implies that the subject is a victim of past events. As Hodgkin and Radstone (2003) maintained, trauma theory attempts to explain “the origins of particular types of psychic distress in relation to happenings in the real world” (p. 97). For some, an emphasis on the traumatic event as the origin of psychic distress is problematic. According to Hodgkin and Radstone, what is missing from this teleology of trauma and distress response is the way subjects retroactively make meanings out of the “traumatic” event (p. 97). Hamilton (2007) proposed an additional layer of complexity to trauma theory, suggesting that, “if we understand subjects as remembering their lives retrospectively with mixed
emotions, happy as well as sad, we can position them as agents in the construction of their own histories” (p. 66). The reorientation towards “happy memories” does not exclude painful ones: rather, it shifts the focus of cultural memory away from “what is lost of the past to what may be gained or won through the process of remembering” (2007, p. 66). In relation to the selective recollection of happy memories, he explained,

The recounting of happy memories need not involve a denial of oppression, or a “moving beyond” or “letting go” of the past. Nor do memories of past oppression necessarily preclude the recollection of happiness and hope in ways that may engender strength and signal agency. Rather than disabling change, such memories may act as an ingredient in formulating alternative futures. (p. 67).

As discussed in a later section, hoping practices that are oriented towards a better future do not necessarily require the “movement beyond” or “letting go” of past or present circumstances of adversity to serve a valuable, life-supporting function. Along similar lines to Hamilton’s emphasis on the non-exclusivity of happy and sad memories, hoped-for objects and outcomes, no matter how “unrealistic”, can signal strength and agency in the present moment of hoping.

Actively remembering times of happiness was interpreted by Hamilton (2007) as “a form of survival”, which “affirms the political agency of the autobiographical subject in the present” (p. 70). Pierce commented on a counter-intuitive feature of many post-bellum accounts of US slavery, noting that autobiographical accounts were unexpectedly marked by the reminiscing of happy times.

This may be explained by the fact that many of these narrators were young children at the time of Emancipation, and only had fairly mild personal experiences of bondage. However, I contend that some writers deliberately employ this device to cope with the brutality of the lingering impact of slavery, in order to maintain a semblance of hope for the future. (in Hamilton, 2007, p. 70)
For Hamilton, this mnemonic survival strategy “emphasises the agency of the subject in the face of victimization in the past” (2007, p. 70). In the midst of an overwhelmingly unhappy archive of memories, the critical selection of happy memories recasts victims as active in their ongoing survival. For many refugees and asylum seekers, negative memories may vastly outweigh positive ones. Hamilton’s emphasis on happy memories does not suggest that subjects should naively don rose-coloured glasses when surveying their memory bank. Rather, he highlights what seems to be a contextualised capacity of resilience; namely, the “bracketing off” of painful memories in favour of hopeful and joyous ones. In some respects, this inner survival strategy of selectively attending to joyous memories demonstrates a certain form of resistance to the call of painful memories and past events.

**The productive aspects of resistance**

Resistance is a form of resilience through exercising of people’s agentic capacity to deviate from, or choose other than, socially approved identities and conventions of appropriate behaviour. The role of human agency is often neglected in developmental research informed by determinist frameworks. For proponents of the developmentalist persuasion, the notion of agency is merely shorthand for the accumulated effects of, or reactions to, all previous environmental causes that contribute to the current situation (Davidson & Shahar, 2007, p. 221). According to Davidson and Shahar, by interpreting human actions as predetermined reactions to environmental causes, we lose “the fundamental role of human agency as an additional source or origin of motion, change, or activity itself” (p. 221). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) contended that the relationship between human subjectivity and environmental factors and events is a dynamic process that is both reciprocally determined and intentional in nature (cited by Davidson & Shahar, 2007, p. 222). In contrast to the overarching assumption of psychological discourse, which understands humans as “lacking completeness” and in constant need of acquisition to satiate an inherent deficit, Deleuze and Guattari understood the human subject as fundamentally productive and creative, “acting both to create and to preserve the real” (cited by Davidson & Shahar, 2007, p. 223).
Moving from a deficit or risk-based model of inquiry, as defined by early discourse on resilience, to a desiring-production, strengths-based perspective (Chase et al., 2006), “victims” are repositioned as active in their survival and are re-empowered through the re-inscription of their agentic capacities in and over the particular situation. Drawing on Tedeschi and Calhoun’s notion of post-traumatic growth, growth is here defined as the desirable and accumulative production of strengths emerging out of negative trauma criteria. As Comet (2005) noted:

The common wisdom is that we should get over it, put it behind us and move on. There is, however, a more profound response; that we should try to USE the trauma by transmuting it into creative energy. (p. 60).

As Davidson and Shahar (2007) wrote, viewing any human action as well-intentioned, affirmative and productive has far-reaching implications for empirical research and practice. By shifting the focus of inquiry to what the person is intending to produce or affirm through a given action, as opposed to what the person is reacting to, “objective” environmental or historical causes are reframed in terms of their “subjective”, future-oriented intentions. Therefore, the influence of environmental and historical antecedents becomes meaningful “in terms of their function or utility within the ongoing, active, creative life of the person” (Davidson & Shahar 2007, p. 226). This is not to suggest that war, displacement or any other traumatic episodes are inevitable or “good” for participants. Rather, individuals who were able to survive these particular situations are responding to the violent situation by producing their own responses in relation to such experiences. Accordingly, Hamilton (2007) claimed that the recounting of happy memories in the life stories of trauma survivors suggests that these individuals were active in choosing their feelings about the past and moreover, that the past “need not be defined exclusively by pain and suffering” (p. 66). He maintained that the selective recounting of positive, happy life events from a past marked by suffering does not make the events “less devastating” or “the perpetrators less guilty” (p. 66). What Hamilton is proposing is “an alternative to the emphasis on suffering and victimhood predominant in trauma and testimony criticism” (2007, p. 66). These alternative ways of coping are explored below in terms of young people’s situated practices of
resistance in response to psychological competence criteria and expected coping behaviours.

**Resistance as resilience**

As outlined above, the constructivist approach to resilience acknowledges the subjective experience of individuals and their construction of meanings. However, Bottrell (2009a) claimed that individualised accounts of adaptation tend to minimise the significance of cultural diversity, social inequalities and social positioning. She explained,

> With emphasis on “personal growth” (Ungar, 2004: 229) and “solv[ing] personal challenges in ways that are more widely accepted” (Ungar, 2004: 224) what may be lost in this process is young people’s legitimate critique and social protest based in their collective experiences of institutions and communities and their recognition of con-figurations of power in the interrelations of identifiable social groups (Bottrell, 2009a, p. 333).

Bottrell argued that “cultural practices, social processes, social change and the nature of individual-social relations are all significant aspects of the context for analysing resilience” (2009a, p. 322). Supplementing the standard, psychopathological definition of resilience as positive adaptation despite adversity, she defined resilience as “coping and competence despite adversity in which identity work and cultural management are central processes” (p. 323). Resilient young people are thus identified through their “engagement in processes that accrue positive outcomes”, defined normatively and in relation to specific contexts of adversity which may include and require resistances (p. 323). On the issue of resistance as a form of resilience, Ungar’s research offers a related counter-intuitive understanding of “troubled teen” behaviour, suggesting that “for many children, patterns of deviance are healthy adaptations that permit them to survive unhealthy circumstances” (2004, p. 6) According to him, young people regularly challenge certain activities, places
and relationships, normatively defined as “disordered” or “delinquent”, and use them as contextualised resources of “wellbeing, belonging and power” (cited in Bottrell, 2009a, p. 325).

Resistance can be an adaptive faculty of resilience, enacted in the pre- and post-arrival lives of many refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants. Resistances are commonly framed in terms of negative antisocial behaviours or maladjusted responses to social conventions, “centre” norms and “mainstream” identities. However, resistance can also be interpreted as an accumulated, albeit counter-intuitive capacity, which activates and enacts productive faculties of resourcefulness, adaptation, endurance and struggle in response to adverse events or circumstances. Although acts of resistance can represent a counter-intuitive resource of resilience, it is important to note that these behaviours are situated and do not always support the accumulation of resilience. Bottrell (2009b) defined “resistances” as “practices which express opposition to rules and norms in specific contexts, and which contain critiques of social relations, from the lived experience of marginalisation” (p. 599). Psychological discourse has a long tradition of defining and treating resistance and its psychosocial companion, “avoidance”, in negative terms. Traditionally, these phenomena have been treated as individual deficits, shortcomings or psychosocial roadblocks that individuals ought to acknowledge, become desensitised to and overcome.

However, as Bottrell (2009b) pointed out, young people deal with differentiation, marginalisation and disaffection in different ways, including situated acts of resistances and conformities, participation and non-participation (p. 598). Recognition of resistances as “resources of marginal culture” requires simultaneous attention to the dominant social processes and relations, or what Ginwright et al. (2005) described as “structural and institutionalized patterns of oppression”, that construct and perpetuate adversity in its varying forms and contexts (in Bottrell, 2009, p. 599). For example, although deficit positioning in schools has a role to play in terms of assessing individual student needs, eliciting educational support and improving competitive academic position (Bottrell, 2009b, p. 598), Furlong (2005)
contended that “it is clear that some young people are put in positions at school that effectively promote processes of cultural resistance as survival strategies” (p. 387).

Traumatic episodes or circumstances can have ongoing affective and mnemonic consequences for war-affected populations. At the same time, situated acts of resistance to trauma-related effects, negative affects and painful memories can be productively reframed as daily survival strategies. Social networks such as peer groups, families and community associations can provide support systems for young people during resettlement and beyond, but the same networks have the potential to encourage and produce what many would consider delinquent or undesirable behaviours. The earliest psychological discourse on resilience would likely define these social behaviours and networks in psychopathological terms, as “maladjusted”, “disordered” or “dysfunctional”. By classifying these practices as socially abhorrent or psychologically maladjusted, the resilience-related potential of these non-conventional modes of behaviour go unrecognised. Rather than analysing and treating these behaviours as always oppositional, maladjusted or antisocial, it is important that we take into account the specific sites and social conditions that give rise to and facilitate these resistant attitudes and behaviours (Bottrell, 2009b, p. 598). Although Bottrell highlights the resilience-related aspects of resistant modes of coping, it is also important that we do not valorise or romanticise the notion of resistance as a universal capacity of resilience. Resistance can be a situated expression of resilience, but can also produce certain outcomes that constrain or disable young people’s ability to accumulate resilience.

While acts of criminality or racialised violence should never be condoned, if young people engage in public acts of “misconduct”, it is important that researchers and community practitioners remain open to interpretations of these actions as non-normative modes of coping. Accordingly, Bottrell (2009a) maintained, “resistant modes of coping and cultural management are necessitated by the struggle to maintain positive identity in situations when ascribed identity is intolerable” (p. 329). As Kaplan (1999) explained,
The socially defined desirable outcome may be subjectively defined as undesirable, while the socially defined undesirable outcome may be subjectively defined as desirable. From the subjective point of view, the individual may be manifesting resilience, while from the social point of view the individual may be manifesting vulnerability. (pp. 31-32)

Most psychological inquiries into unconventional phenomena such as substance abuse, truancy, vandalism, or group-related violence arrive at predetermined conclusions via assumptions that such behaviours are maladaptive. Conversely, more conventional, socially approved behaviours are considered adaptive and functional. According to Ungar (2004), these inquiries ignore “the important generic functioning of protective mechanisms when resources such as power are limited” (p. 356). Bottrell (2007) suggested that young people’s “transgressions of dominant norms, attempts to counter negative stereotypes, and social critiques” work to reframe resistances, not as self-defeating deficiencies, but as situated capacities of resilience (p. 597).

Within traditional definitions of resilience, adaptive or “appropriate” behaviours are predominantly structured by conformity, and are defined by “centre” or “mainstream” participation. In contrast, resistant forms of resilience among marginalised young people require an appreciation of the specific contexts, available cultural options and alternative centres (Bottrell, 2007, p. 612). By re-centring youth behaviours described as asocial, maladjusted or resistant, we begin the process of normalising these behaviours (without condoning them). If we reposition resistance as an expression of resilience in schooling and neighbourhood contexts, migrant and mainstream young people can reclaim their marginalisation “as an alternative ‘centre’ where they obtain status, positive reputation, and a sense of belonging to their people” (Bottrell, 2009b, p. 597). In so doing, the focus of academic research and the allocation of service provisions are shifted to “youth potential rather than transgression, and point to the kinds of interventions which may strengthen rather than correct participation in a range of learning communities and contexts” (Bottrell, 2007, p. 612). Although a seemingly contradictory aspect of resilience, situated acts of resistance among young people can represent strategies of defence against painful
memories, negative stereotyping and marginalisation. However, resilience is more than a reactive survival response to societal constraints, threats or limitations. It is the accumulative, creative and resourceful capacity to endure, adapt and increase one’s capacities to act in relation to adverse circumstances or life events.

**Spinoza’s notion of conatus**

An emphasis on the accumulative dynamics of resilience is derived from the critique of early psychological models of resilience, which tended to define the phenomenon as an innate trait or set of behaviours. In contrast to psychologised models of resilience as a trait of especially “resilient” individuals, here, resilience is better conceived of as an accumulated and accumulating set of individual and sociocultural resources for recovery, adaptability and growth in relation to adverse events or circumstances. In utilising the notion of accumulation, it is important to avoid developmentalist constructions of resilience as travelling along an unchecked teleological trajectory, headed towards a state of invulnerability to adversity. Given the cumulative dynamics of resilience formation, Spinoza’s notion of conatus is a useful starting point for theorising the preservative and accumulative dimensions of resilience formation.

As conceived by Spinoza, conatus is the principle that each thing strives or endeavours to preserve its own being (Hage, 2002b). According to Spinoza (1994), conatus is not simply “a conservative principle of self-preservation”, but a striving to increase our “power of action”, “understanding of the world” and “to ensure we live securely and healthily” (p. 25). Central to the concept of conatus is the hopeful striving to “joy”. Spinoza described conatus as “the experience of the mind moving to a greater stage of perfection” or alternatively, to “destroy whatever we imagine to be contrary to it” (p. 169). Spinoza’s conatus is pertinent to this thesis, as it provides important links between the preservation of resilience, affect, memory and the future-oriented dimensions of hope. As Noble (2004) explained it, “Spinoza’s philosophy contains a link between the past and future action, which propels the
accumulation of being as a process of augmentation that preserves our being and increases our power of action” (p. 236). The concept of conatus establishes a connection between refugees’ experiences of displacement, migration and resettlement. On the one hand, it helps to explain refugees’ capacities for survival, coping and self-preservation in unsupportive pre-arrival contexts. However, as conatus is more than a principle of self-preservation, it also helps to explain refugees’ future-oriented aspirations towards achieving educational competencies and qualifications, and increasing their powers of action in the context of settlement. Ultimately, the striving to accumulate being and equip oneself with increased powers of action is motivated by the hope for a better future.

The striving to increase one’s powers of action coexists with a simultaneous struggle for those powers to be recognised. In Bourdieu’s (2000) discussion of the “symbolic struggle for recognition”, an empirical connection can be made between refugees and other migrants’ experiences of dispossession and a struggle to increase their powers of action, recognition, citizenship rights and access to their respective “host” societies. Bourdieu observed that in capitalist societies,

One of the most unequal of all distributions and probably, in any case, the most cruel, is the distribution of symbolic capital, that is, of social importance and reasons for living…there is no worse dispossession, no worse privation, perhaps, than that of the losers in the symbolic struggle for recognition, for access to a socially recognized social being, in a word, to humanity. (2000, p. 241)

Building on Bourdieu’s theoretical development of “mis/recognition”, Noble argued that it is through accumulated being in our material environments, and an associated confidence in the ongoingness of these environments, that “embodiment of our social location” is constantly recognised, accumulated and objectified (in Tabar et al., 2010, p. 170). Drawing on Taylor’s (1994) definition of “recognition” as “a vital human need” (p. 26), Noble observed that “recognition is fundamental to our quest for ontological security in the perseverance of our being and to our capacities for social
Noble’s work on the “accumulation of being” supports Bourdieu’s response to the utilitarian argument of critical anthropologists that all human action is aimed at accumulating capital. As Bourdieu maintained, “It is not true to say that everything that people do or say is aimed at maximizing their social profit; but one may say that they do it to perpetuate or to augment their social being” (cited by Hage, 2002b, p. 16). The affirmation of unique identity positions and augmentation of social being is, according to Taylor, “partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others” (1994, p. 26). As he argued, “Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (p. 25). Just as the “struggle for recognition” can shape and support the accumulation of being, equal rights and a developing sense of belonging, the misrecognition or nonrecognition of unique and different identities from within multicultural societies can lead to real damage, distortion and harm among newly arrived and/or recently traumatised refugees and migrants. In Australian schooling contexts, recognition of students’ pre-existing skills and competencies can signify important building blocks for the production of new knowledge. The issue of recognition also links to a central argument of this thesis that the recognition of both “positive” and “negative” affects can be drawn upon by traumatised populations as situated resources for dealing with past traumas and promoting ongoing growth.

**Happy endings (?)**: resilience and affect

The experience of being a refugee is a highly emotional one. The accumulation and circulation of positive affects such as “happiness”, “hope” and “belonging” are directly relevant to the broader enterprise of resilience formation among refugee groups as they contain the resilience-related potential to facilitate shared solidarity practices, understanding of and recovery from trauma. But resilience is more than some irreversible state of invulnerability to negative affect or circumscribed adversity. A thicker description of resilience must take into account the ways in which negative affects like despair, grief and guilt can give rise to positive affective outcomes like hope, happiness and a sense of belonging. Following on from the critique of resilience as an innate trait of “resilient” individuals, in this section I
argue that affects are transpersonal in nature and are accumulated through a complex and dialogical interaction between self and other, inside and outside. As a comprehensive historiography of theorised differences between affect, emotion, mood, feeling and sentiment is beyond the scope of this thesis, the present focus is on the productive and counter-intuitive ways that positive and negative affects are culturally produced, affirmed and managed as capacities to act and influence. In other words, I focus on how affects and their phenomenological variants are felt, interpreted and transformed by individuals and collectives. This process is facilitated by a critique of the long-standing psychotherapeutic assumption that negative affects are, in essence, things that get in the way of an eventual state of happiness and optimal mental health.

An emphasis on deficit, suffering and pathology among refugee populations has detracted from culturally located strengths such as resilience. As Te Riele (2006) explained, marginalised young people residing in conditions of adversity are often identified within “at-risk” discourses, which tend to highlight pathologies and antisocial behaviours rather than cultural competencies. This attitude towards marginalized, “at risk” young people has been perpetuated by psychotherapeutic discourse that has focused on the relief of suffering and treatment of individual pathologies (Davidson & Shahar, 2009). Although a certain amount of discomfort is required to promote change, Davidson and Shahar (2009) noted that clinical psychotherapists still “for the most part, envision an eventual state of happiness – both for our patients and for ourselves, as described, free of tension, pain, disease, and suffering” (p. 229). Challenging this assumption, they asked,

But if desiring-production is essential to what makes us human, would we not expect happiness or health to involve the active, creative process of producing? How can one produce anything while sitting, standing, or lying still? (p. 229)

Along similar lines, Weisskopf-Joelson (1955) argued that the mental-health value system has been founded on the unrealistic expectation that “people ought to be
happy”; moreover, that unhappiness is a symptom of maladjustment (cited by Frankl, 1984, p. 136). Contained within this psychological trope is the assumption that patients are somehow “fixed” once they are able to let go of “negative” harmful thoughts or feelings. In contrast to these traditional mental-hygiene models, I argue that resilience is supported by expressing the full range of affects, positive or negative, and extracting the creative potential of each.

A number of studies exploring the affective experiences of migrants have challenged the embedded psychological assumption that happiness or well-being “stands apart” from experiences of suffering (Crocker & Major, 1989 Fozdar & Torezani, 2008; Ruggireo & Taylor, 1997; Tsenkova, et al., 2003). A concern for Ahmed (2007) is how much the turn to happiness “depends on the very distinction between good and bad feelings that presume bad feelings are backward and conservative and good feelings are forward and progressive” (p. 135). Highlighting the productive potential of unhappy affects, Ahmed suggested that the airing of unhappy affects in their various forms provides people with “an alternative set of imaginings of what might count as a good or at least better life” (2007, p. 135). As discussed in a later section, the practice of hoping involves imagining a better future from a range of perceived possibilities. Accordingly, as Ahmed suggested, if nothing else, unhappy affects can provide some contrast to the idealistic construction of a happy future to come.

Along similar lines to Ahmed, Schoch (2006) maintained that we have erroneously moved away from the pursuit of happiness as a lifetime project in favour of more immediate pleasure and pain avoidance, “We’ve settled, nowadays, for a much weaker, much thinner, happiness; mere enjoyment of pleasure, more avoidance of pain and suffering” (cited by Ahmed, 2007, p. 10). While the pursuit and attainment of pleasure can be a component of a happy life, happiness often extends beyond the “pleasure principle” to include an enduring moral dimension to contribute to the lives of others. In the lives of refugee and diasporic populations, happiness can be derived from the observance of communal obligations to contribute within and across a variety of social fields.
The dialectics of accumulating positive affect

Similar to the catchall usage of “happiness”, “affect” is often employed as a non-differentiated, universal signifier. In much of the self-help and popular psychological literatures, happiness is often construed as a personal phenomenon originating from within individual bodies, which then expands outwards into the world. The framing of happiness as an enclosed, interior state displays similarities to the construction of resilience and affect as discrete personal phenomena, located in individual bodies and then seeping into the world. In the following section, the a priori foundations of resilience and affect are challenged, with a case made for a dialectical internal/external interaction in terms of their formation and preservation. Although there is a distinctly personal quality to the phenomenology of resilience, its accumulation is facilitated by productive interactions with others. Along similar lines, Brennan argued that affects have a certain materiality. In other words, affects are “material”, “physiological” things (Brennan, 2004, p. 6). According to Brennan, affective energies are actively transferable between people in a multidirectional interaction. By endowing affect with material qualities, it follows that positive affects may be transferred as resources within and across a number of social fields. As explored in Chapter 5, the exchange potential of affect is also useful for exploring the intensity and flow of local and transnational caregiving relationships among refugee communities and their countries of origin.

In discussing the translatability of happiness, Blackman (2007) argued that a cultural studies approach to affect as relational and dynamic draws attention away from the “inside out” model that locates “affect solely within the habits and actions of the [central nervous system] CNS, such that it becomes a singular, unified phenomenon, much like a personality characteristic” (p. 28). Similarly, Ahmed argued for an “outside-in” approach to the study of emotion, understanding emotions as coming from without and moving inwards as opposed to coming from within and moving outwards (2004, p. 9). However, for the accumulation and subsequent exchange of positive affect to take place, it seems more appropriate to posit a dialectical relationship between an inside-out/outside-in flow of affect. Although representing an important conceptual shift away from an inside-out model of affect, Blackman
and Ahmed underemphasised the transpersonal qualities of positive affect, so important in the formation of resilience within refugees’ social networks.

Moving the theoretical focus to an outside-in approach to affect represents an important movement away from the limitations of the Cartesian “inside-out” approach, but we need to remember that affects do not exist solely within individuals or the social world. As Anderson (2006) commented, “Empirical sociologies, and both mainstream and constructionist social psychology, have oscillated between conceptualizing emotions as either ‘inherent’ or ‘socially constructed’ (p. 735). As Ahmed (2001) noted, capacities to affect and be affected do not exist “in” a Euclidean vacuum or “in” linear time. Anderson (2006) postulated that “affect does not reside in a subject, body, or sign as if it were an object possessed by a subject” (p. 735). He offered an expanded attunement to affect, viewing the affectual and emotional “as a transpersonal capacity which a body has to be affected (through affection) and to affect (as the result of modifications)” (p. 735). The transpersonal capacity of affects to affect and be affected offers a framework for conceptualising resilience as a transpersonal phenomenon which is both individual and social in orientation. On the one hand, to be affected by trauma produces painful affective experiences like despair, hopelessness, shame and guilt (i.e. being affected). On the other hand, the experience and expression of the full range of positive and negative affects can facilitate creative projects and recovery as well as generate a sense of shared solidarity among refugees and their communities. However, Anderson’s claim that affect cannot be possessed by an individual subject is problematic for a view of positive affects as accumulative. It is perhaps more appropriate to theorise affects as involving a dialogical interaction between the individual and social, which sediments over time to increase one’s capacities to act.

**Economies of affect**

As a transpersonal capacity, affects involve the double movement of being affected and affecting. Trauma involves the experience of being affected by despair and a sense of hopelessness, but can also produce a hopeful response aimed at effecting
change in spite of these experiences. Ahmed (2007) discussed the dialogical relationship between being affected and affecting, suggesting that our impression of the affective situation also depends on what we affectively bring to the situation (p. 125), informed by what we have already accumulated. In other words, “what we may feel depends on the angle of our arrival” or more accurately, “the atmosphere is already angled”, as it is always felt from a specific position (Ahmed, 2010, pp. 36-37). While we may “feel the atmosphere”, we are not passive receptors of an autonomous atmospheric impression. This observation signals an important feature of resilience related to refugees’ observed capacity to manage their responses in relation to adverse circumstances. In the act of receiving, responding and/or aligning themselves to the specific impression, refugees are acting in relation to, or in spite of, the affective situation. This point is particularly relevant in terms of refugees’ and migrants’ arrival in host societies like Australia. Rather than arriving as dependent subjects, they arrive in countries of asylum with their unique histories, emotional baggage and accumulated set of affective repertoires.

Visits home are often conceived in terms of the negative emotional impacts of missing family, which motivates migrants to action (Baldassar, 2008), but perhaps we also need to recognise the positive dimensions of their accumulating resources over time. The notion of “angle of arrival” is similarly helpful in conceptualising return visits and repatriations, as returnees return to their county of origin with a revised and accumulated set of affective resources, which have been supplemented by the affective vocabularies of their respective host cultures. As Anderson (2006) explained, the experiences of being affected and affecting are “two sides of the same dynamic shift”. Massumi (2002) commented on this double movement, stating that “when you affect something, you are at the same time opening yourself up to being affected in turn” (p. 212). He claimed that affect is trans-situational. As affects inhabit our passage through situational contexts, affect is processional (p. 217). However, as affects continue after the passage, moving through and beyond the affected individual, affects are not isolated to a particular context or individual. These comments highlight the ongoing and cumulative nature of affect as well as the transpersonal experience of affecting and being affected. With affects posited as material “things” that can be accumulated and strategically employed, the resilience-
related potential of these affective stocks are diminished and diminishing unless they are renewed by beneficial engagements in contexts of resettlement.

The notion of affective impact in the form of ongoing impressions and residues is sympathetic to Spinoza’s distinction between affectus, as force, and affectio, as capacity. As Watkins (2010) observed, “Affectio may be fleeting but it may also leave a residue, a lasting impression that produces particular kinds of bodily capacities” (p. 269). Conceptualising affect in Spinozan terms – as capacities that are accumulated, managed, and exchanged by individual and communities – is useful for understanding how individuals cope, endure and adapt in lieu of often adverse migration and resettlement circumstances. Furthermore, by conceiving affects as material resources that can be felt, accumulated and employed, we move beyond an individualised, inside-out understanding of the affective foundations of resilience as something residing in a special brand of affected or “resilient” individuals.

Positive affect despite adversity

An interesting feature of refugee narratives is the paradoxical relationship between negative migration experiences and the reporting of a positive life outlook. In a study involving former Yugoslavian, Middle Eastern and African refugees, Fozdar and Torezani (2008, p. 30) investigated the “apparent paradox between high-levels of discrimination experienced by humanitarian migrants to Australia in the labour market and everyday life”, and the reporting of positive wellbeing. The interaction between negative experiences of discrimination and reports of wellbeing suggests a counter-intuitive propensity among refugees to adapt to and make sense of their migration experiences in unique, resourceful and life-affirming ways. In a study of unaccompanied Sudanese youth living in the United States, Goodman (2004) reported that “none of the participants displayed a sense of victimhood at the time of the interviews” (p. 1182). Although individual narratives did reflect a sense of victimisation and helplessness relating to the enormity of past trauma, the young participants viewed themselves primarily as survivors and agents of their own future. Goodman further stated that the tone of the refugee testimonials was not bitter:
“Instead, feelings of brotherliness, kindness, and hope prevailed” (p. 1183). Such response patterns among refugees and trauma survivors indicate a similar resilience-related capacity to positively interpret and derive meaning from negative migration experiences and associated emotions. This counter-intuitive capacity to locate meaning in contexts of significant adversity has parallels with the theories of hope and practices of hoping discussed below.

Being affected by civil war and forced displacement is often beyond the control of refugees and displaced populations. However, the ability of refugees to draw out the positive *effects* of negative *affects* is a resilience-related capacity, aligning nicely with Spinoza’s concept of conatus. Building on Tomkins’ (1962) work on the interconnections of positive and negative affects such as shame, disgust, joy, anger and contempt, Probyn (2005) recast traditional positive/negative polarities of affect by exploring the productive role of shame in our lives. For Tomkins, affect mastery is synonymous with optimal mental health. In other words, the maximisation of positive affect and minimisation of negative affect, as well as the expression of the full range of affects, are necessary for the system as whole to function at its optimal level. Tomkins’ discussion of affect mastery is useful for understanding the ways affects are productively and strategically exchanged within diasporic groups and “host” societies. According to Probyn (2005), the establishment of relational links between the seemingly opposite affects of shame and interest challenges us to reconsider our normative associations between supposedly positive and negative emotions. As Tomkins maintained, shame kicks in or “operates only after interest or enjoyment has been activated” (cited by Sedgwick & Frank, 1995, p. 399). Correspondingly, if an individual is not interested or affectively invested in the source or object of interest/enjoyment, the non-recognition or non-realisation of interest/enjoyment does not necessarily lead to shame. According to Husserl (1995), affective interest is a mode by which we intentionally turn towards the joy-Object. These observations highlight the intentional and constructive nature of hoping practices among refugees, explored in a later section, in particular, turning towards the joy-Object despite the unlikely odds of its attainment.
In highlighting the productive aspects of negative affect, Watkins (2010) maintained that shame “has a positive ethical dimension, an essential element of being human” (p. 274). In the lives of refugees, the positive ethical dimension of shame can motivate ongoing transnational involvement, such as monetary remittances and physical return. Although sacrifice can often lack immediate pleasurable payoffs, contributions driven by feelings of shame can have positive real-world outcomes for contributors and recipients. Along similar lines, Hemmings (2005) observed that a number of queer theorists have adopted Sedgwick and Frank’s (1995) and more recently Probyn’s (2005) restructuring of shame as a transformative capacity, “insisting that it should not be something we strive simply to overcome by turning to its dependent opposite, pride” (p. 549). Acknowledging the productive dimensions of shame is a concrete example of the way negative affects can be used as productive cultural resources in the lives of refugees.

An affective spectrum analogous to shame/interest relates to refugee and dispossessed communities’ experiences of despair and hope. Along similar lines to Probyn’s use of “shame”, the condition of despair is an indication that we are invested in our world. Although resilience and hope mitigate the effects of too great an exposure to psychological and physical trauma, the experience of despair is intimately tied to human growth and a shared experience of being human. Just as shame can represent lines of connection between people, so too can shared experiences of despair intensify connections between people and their respective pasts. Being affected by despair might seem to be a passive response to hopeless circumstances, but it can also signal a dynamic shift back towards hopefulness.

**Future visions, hopeful visions: the phenomenology of hope**

Whereas despair is commonly associated with feelings of powerlessness, hoping practices can empower and capacitate individuals and groups to transcend adverse circumstances, if only through the faculties of imagination. Hope is a crucial aspect of resilience, as it represents a present- and future-oriented mode of situated defense against adversity. The capacity to hope increases refugees’ powers of action despite a complex range of traumas experienced in countries of origin, migration and
resettlement. Although the symbolic dimensions of hope represent an important individual buffer against adversity, the pragmatic realisation of hoped-for objects and outcomes such as educational and vocational qualifications can effect significant social change within refugees’ social networks. Accordingly, hope is theorised throughout this thesis as a transpersonal force that is accumulated and drawn upon to help refugees cope with traumatic events and realise a better future in the context of resettlement.

Significant increases in the prevalence of war and disaster-affected populations makes qualitative research into the lived experience of hope a vital area of academic concern. Among health care professionals, Parse (1999) observed a growing interest in “the lived experience of hope as a phenomenon significant to health and quality of life” (p. vii). Hope is an integral aspect of resilience as it can act as a mechanism for coping and defense in relation to adversity. Interestingly, it is during times of hardship and adversity that the phenomenological experience of hope seems to “kick in” or “switch on”. With similarities to the “taken-for-grantedness” of resilience in everyday life, Anderson (2006) observed that hope and hoping “are taken-for-granted parts of the affective fabric of contemporary Western everyday life”. Although the lived experience of hope, namely, hopefulness, is commonly conceptualised as a “future-oriented” state of mind, the affectivity of hope, in the present moment of hoping, has important implications in terms of resilience formation.

The term “hope” is commonly employed in a tokenistic way, as a “nice” rhetorical device in the mind-body-spirit or self-help literature or as a strategic instrument in increasingly empty domestic and international political vocabularies. With a few notable exceptions (Anderson, 2006; Bloch, 1986; Godfrey, 1987; Hage, 2002b; Marcel, 1951; Parse, 1999; Zournazi, 2002), the concept of hope has received modest attention from within sociology and cultural studies. Along similar lines to early definitions of resilience, hope has been explored within the psychological, psychiatric and neuroscientific traditions as an individual mechanism for coping and defense against adversity. It should be noted, however, that hope is not a purely
social phenomenon. Although it has a certain materiality, sociality and transferability, it is not some autonomous or self-reproducing “thing”. Along similar lines to the dialectical inside-out/outside-in theorisation of affect, the formation and circulation of hope involves complex transpersonal and trans-situational interactions.

The phrase, the “lived deferral of hope” is an idea that brings together and holds in creative tension the two dominant perspectives on hope as a lived experience in the present and a deferred, future-oriented practice of hoping and hopefulness. Zournazi (2002) defined hope as a “basic human condition that involves belief and trust in the world” (p. 12). She argued that the meaning of hope is “located in the act of living, the ordinary elements of everyday life” and not in “some future or ideal sense” (2002, p. 18). She proposed a more “everyday” hope which “is not based on threat or deferral of gratification”, but is related to joy “as another kind of contentment – the affirmation of life as it emerges and in the transitions and movements of our everyday lives and relationships” (p. 150). While qualitative studies focusing on the everyday experience of hope have reinvigorated academic research on the concept of hope, the lived deferral of hope brings together Zournazi’s “everyday hope” and the future-oriented dimensions of hope and hoping practices, so important to the formation of resilience. Along similar lines to Ahmed’s (2010) suggestion that happiness “involves a specific kind of intentionality” that is “end-orientated”, practices of hope are also intentional and “end-orientated” (Ahmed, p. 33). If objects of hope are a means to happiness, as Ahmed wrote, “in directing ourselves towards this or that [hope] object we are aiming somewhere else: toward a happiness that is presumed to follow” (2010, p. 34), in other words, to a hope that is “not yet present”.

It is the capacity to imagine alternative possibilities in the future that can help individuals and communities endure adverse experiences in the present and inspire confidence in the ongoingness of their existence. Although well-intentioned, Zournazi’s “everyday hope” concept ignores the fact that in contexts of daily threat, loss and death there is often a distinct lack of affirmative or affirmable things. In these contexts, the deferral of joy and gratification, located in future objects, outcomes or ideals, might be the only means of getting through particularly difficult events or circumstances. Although Hage might argue that hope in hopeless situations can be disabling, I argue that hope is always enabling to some degree, as it can
facilitate alternative imaginings and temporary affective relief even in the most hopeless situations. In the lives of refugees, IDPS and asylum seekers, the deferral of joy, or what Massumi called “wishful projections” (in Zournazi, 2002, p. 211), can be all they have to cling to. Pontamianou (1997) noted a critically reflexive feature of hope practices (p. 57). This “psychic strategy” facilitates a “reality check” of “realistic” and “unrealistic” hopes,

As the vehicle of a state of trusting expectation, or even conviction, that what is expected can or must come to pass, the feeling of hope is a psychic strategy. On the one hand, this strategy remains attached to reality testing, because it acknowledges when our hopes are but lures and illusions, whereas, on the other hand, it tends to short-circuit the reality principle, which, of course, hands down the verdict that our internal wishes do not necessarily correspond to what can be found in the external world. At any rate, by introducing fulfillment of the wish as probably and sometimes even as practically assured, our hopes keep alive in the mind the image of a good object to come, able and willing to respond to our demands. (Pontamianou, 1997, p. 57)

In a related discussion, Hage (2002b) made an important distinction in relation to hope as a temporary affective practice and hope as an enduring state of being (p. 10). Within the psychological literature on hope, Farran et al. (1995) differentiated between hope as a state and hope as a trait. As a dispositional trait, hope “functions as an enduring attitude or approach to life, and is less subject to fluctuation in response to life’s vicissitudes”. As a state, hope is more closely associated with Hage’s discussion of it as a momentary affective practice. According to Farran et al. (1995), “as a state, it [hope] reflects the present feelings that persons have about a particular situation, it may fluctuate over time, and it can be influenced through growth or intervention” (p. 5). Rather than viewing hope as an innate trait, it seems more appropriate to conceptualise it as an accumulated affective practice shaped by both positive and negative experiences that sediment over time to become a disposition to hope.
The practised ability to exist in the tensioned space between what is and what could be is an important survival strategy for refugees facing uncertain stays in displacement camps. For Fromm (1968), hope is a situated “inner readiness”, which holds in creative tension an at-once passivity/activity: “It is neither passive waiting nor is it unrealistic forcing of circumstances that cannot occur” (p. 9). From Fromm’s discussion, momentary hope practices derive from and are motivated by a more enduring inner readiness or state of hopeful being. Following Bourdieu, the state of hope in “hoping subjects” – be it in individuals, communities and societies – is accumulative, reversible and unequally distributed (Hage, 2002b, p. 9). Jevne (1994) suggested that hope exists somewhere in between the dichotomous logic between what is and what could be:

As we move between the dichotomies of life, we feel the pulse of life, the pull homeward. We feel the tension between giving up and going on. A pulsing logic develops between a sense of being apart and being connected. Hope happens in the space between. Between the secular and the sacred. Between trust and skepticism. Between the concrete and the intangible. Between evidence and intuition. Between religion and spirituality. Between doubt and faith. (pp. 134-35)

From this discussion, we might conclude that hope is a matter of “been”, “being” and “becoming”. Hope is not solely a future-orientated phenomenon, nor is it located only in the lived “present”. Rather, it exists in the space between what is and what could be. This capacity to negotiate the competing poles of despair and hope, doubt and faith, and to maintain an inner readiness to act on changing situational developments is an important aspect of resilience in the lives of refugee populations. In practice, it is the learned ability to make sense of “what was” in the “here-now”, while also imaginatively constructing and aspiring to a better “not-yet”.

**Hope amidst adversity**
Hope bears similarity to resilience in terms of its facilities for coping and endurance. Likewise the formation and maintenance of hope can help individuals and communities endure and cope with adverse events or circumstances. The symbolic dimension of hope capitilizes individuals and communities to endure the present without the hoped-for outcomes and to live with the uncertainty of its attainment. The imaginative feature of hope is directly related to resilience in that it provides refugees with the ability to respond to adversity in productive and life-affirming ways. For Oliver (1974), hope “provides continuity between the past and the present…giving power to find meaning in the worst adversity” (in Parse, 1999, p. 16). In terms of making sense of the migration and resettlement experiences of refugees and other migrants, Lynch (1995) proposed a useful definition of hope as “the fundamental knowledge and feeling that there is a way out of difficulty, that things can work out” (p. 32). As it pertains to everyday mobility and life routes, Parse (1999) considered hope to be “essential to one’s becoming” (p. 32). She maintained that hope is a lived experience and “a way of propelling self toward envisioned possibilities in everyday encounters with the world” (p. 12). Expanding on her definition of the lived experience of hope, Parse stated, “Hope is anticipating possibilities through envisioning the not-yet in harmoniously living the comfort-discomfort of everydayness while unfolding a different perspective of an expanding view” (1999, p. 15). From Nietzsche’s “classically dark version of hope” (Hage, 2002b, p. 11), Parse’s “positive” definition of hope as a propulsion to envisaged possibilities would in all likelihood be defined as “the worst of all evils, for it protracts the torment of man”. Hage (2002b) correctly pointed out that both the positive and negative perspectives perceive hope “as a force that keeps us going in life” (p. 11). Parse’s more optimistic vision of hope as propulsion to envisaged possibilities links nicely to Spinoza’s concept of conatus as the striving to increase one’s powers of action.

Like resilience, hope is a lived experience in the present. However, an important aspect of both concepts is their past- and future-oriented directionality and locationality. At the same time, hoping practices establish lines of continuity between the past, present and future. As hope takes into account past experiences of
where and who one has “been”, the capacity to hope always already assumes that the hoping subject has accumulated a certain degree of resilience in order to reach the place of hopeful being. The future-oriented dimensions of hope and resilience also assist individuals and communities in the present by way of an accompanying aspirational and future-oriented function. As Gupta and Ferguson (1997) asserted, immigrants “use memory of place to construct imaginatively their new lived world” (in McMichael & Manderson, p. 11). The imaginative construction of hope, or what Wu (1972) described as the “imagineering” of alternative futures, enables people to “see beyond” current adverse events and situations to envisage other “possibles”. Nevertheless, the question of hope’s objectivity and realisation of hoped-for outcomes is in some respects of secondary importance to the hopeful affect accompanying such imaginings in the present. In support of this claim, Farran et al. (1995) observed, “Hope has the ability to be fluid in its expectations, and in the event that the desired object or outcome does not occur, hope can still be present” (p. 6). Along similar lines, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) explained, “hope and hopelessness are not the opposite ends of one continuum nor is hopelessness the absence of hope… Some sphere or dimension of hope is always present” (p. 389). These comments highlight the mutually inclusive interaction between despair and hope, in particular, the ways in which hope seems to emerge out of experiences of despair.

The presence of hope and resilience is only clearly known in paradoxical relation to the absence of these phenomena. Following Parse (1990), both hope and resilience represent paradoxical phenomena in that the qualitative experience of hope and resilience are “only clearly known in light of the ever-present possibility of no-hope [or no-resilience]”. From a Judeo-Christian perspective, Marcel (1951) wrote, “The less life is experienced as a captivity, the less the soul will be able to see the shining of that veiled, mysterious light, which…illuminates the very centre of hope’s dwelling place” (p. 32). According to Marcel, hope and despair cannot co-exist, as hope signals the overcoming of despair. Whereas Marcel argued that hope was distinct from despair, optimism and expectation, I would argue that these affective phenomena can exist simultaneously, feeding into broader processes of resilience formation. Interestingly, however, he noted that “the conditions that make it possible
to hope are strictly the same as those that make it possible to despair” (Marcel, 1965, p. 101). Contrary to the assertions of Marcel, hope can entail a double and apparently contradictory action of expectation and pragmatic patience in everyday life. As Bloch (1998) maintained, hope “dwells in the region of the not-yet, a place where entrance and, above all, final content are marked by an enduring indeterminacy” (p. 341). The expectant qualities of hope propel individuals and communities towards the hopeful object or outcome, while faith and patience enable them to live in and endure the present, adverse or otherwise, without the hoped-for object or outcome. It can be argued, therefore, that hope is an essential element of conatus, as it is the thing that preserves us in the present moment of hoping and fuels our strivings towards increased powers of action.

**Conclusion**

While psychological discourse has offered key insights into resilience, it is clearly more than “positive adaptation despite adversity”. For the purposes of this thesis, resilience is defined as an accumulated and accumulating set of individual and sociocultural resources and capacities. Drawing on theoretical contributions from a diverse range of disciplines such as cultural studies, sociology, cultural anthropology and philosophy, this thesis argues for a thicker, sociocultural description of resilience which shifts the debate away from resilience as an self-righting trait of “resilient” individuals towards an emphasis on the accumulative formation of resilience. Critique of the psychological discourse on resilience and trauma theory highlighted a widespread tendency to reduce the subtle complexities of the lived experience of resilience and trauma to universalising categories. The rationale for adopting a sociocultural approach to the issue of resilience is to provide a more nuanced vocabulary with which to explain and draw out the complexities of resilience and its related sociocultural phenomena.

Trauma survivors are affected in highly emotional ways by their experiences. Although commonly associated with despair and powerlessness, refugees often
respond to these experiences in unique, unexpected and life-affirming ways. Traumatic experiences have the potential to constrain people’s powers of action, yet these same experiences can elicit a productive response in the form of hope and resilience. Although an important aspect of hope is the capacity to imagine and aspire to improved conditions in the future, hope can also make meaningful adverse events or circumstances in the present. Accordingly, hope is an essential element of conatus as it preserves the hopeful subject in the present while also building resilience through the imaginative construction of a better future to come. While there is a distinctly personal quality to the experience of hopefulness, the realisation of hoped-for objects and outcomes such as educational skills, knowledges and competencies can effect positive change within and across local, translocal, national and transnational social fields.
Chapter 2

Methods and Methodology

Introduction

The rationale for in-depth qualitative research with fieldwork emerges out of the previous chapter’s critique of psychological notions of resilience as well as the sociocultural components of resilience including trauma, resistance affect and hope among young Sudanese people. In contrast to the long-standing psychological tradition of using quantitative statistical indicators to differentiate “resilient” from “non-resilient” individuals, a qualitative methodology with in-depth, semi-structured interviews and an ethnographic component was chosen for this study. This particular methodology was chosen to gain a “thicker description” (Geertz, 1973) of the sociocultural dimensions of resilience and to draw out the delicate information around young Sudanese people’s often traumatic experiences, with all the complexities of the lived experience of displacement, migration and resettlement. In this chapter, I argue that the design and application of research methodologies can, where appropriate, go beyond a harm minimisation model for dealing with “at risk” refugee populations to a benefit-oriented perspective. Methodological benefits can take many forms, from more situated, “on-the-ground” service provision to quieter forms of bearing witness to suffering both inside and outside the interview context. In this chapter, the constitutive nature of knowledge production provides a framework for the critical examination of theoretical issues, which attend to questions of trauma and resistance as discussed in Chapter 1, as well as trust, reciprocity, recognition, power, narrativity, and witnessing.
Sample information

In 2008, thirty-four face-to-face interviews were conducted during the data collection stage of this thesis, with a total of thirty-seven participants interviewed. The interviewees were seventeen young Sudanese men and women between the ages of eighteen to twenty-five years, twelve Sudanese-born community stakeholders including community leaders from the Dinka-Boar tribe, a mother of eight, Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) staff, and eight non-Sudanese community stakeholders including a Multicultural Police Liaison Officer, an IEC deputy principal, an IEC school counsellor and IEC classroom teachers. With the exception of one interview, all other interviews were conducted in the Greater Western Sydney area, including the suburbs of Blacktown, Auburn, St Marys, Werrington and Penrith. A comprehensive table summarising participant information is provided in Appendix ‘A’, including age, migration routes, date of arrival in Australia, and occupational details of the interviewees. The relatively small number of Sudanese interviewees enhanced the quality and depth of information gathered regarding the challenges faced by these individuals and their accumulation of resilience en route to and within Australia. As the information disclosed by Sudanese participants was expected to be of a sensitive and painful nature, the fact that the research involved a relatively small number of Sudanese young people facilitated the development of trust between the participants and myself. As discussed below, project invitations and information sheets were provided for all prospective participants. Pseudonyms are used for all interviewees.

In some cases, remembering traumatic life events can be a re-traumatising experience (Hesford, 1999; Nakell, 2007; Russell, 2006). Establishing a participant age range (18-25 yrs) and minimum duration of stay in Australia of at least 3 years for all young Sudanese participants was an attempt to avoid exacerbating recent trauma. Accordingly, on the few occasions when participants recounted personal experiences of trauma in Sudan and elsewhere, it was they who initiated the conversation topics and determined their cessation. The establishment of an approximate duration of stay of 3 years in Australia was also intended to ensure that
participants had had time to reflect on their experiences of migration and resettlement. It was expected that the young people’s participation in English classes and the improvement in their English proficiency over time would mean that they might be better able to verbally express their experiences, attitudes and opinions. A grounded example of the above concerns occurred during a group interview with three young Sudanese women. Rita, 18, started crying while recounting her experiences of discrimination in Australia. Her friend, Jade, also 18, admitted that it was the first time she had seen her cry. Her emotional response indicated that although attempts can be made to mitigate the negative impact of the research for the purposes of gaining insights into core issues without causing added distress, the 3-year timeframe is in some respects arbitrary, as individuals experience the impact of trauma differently and at different times. As discussed in Chapter 1, trauma is not a discrete event, but has differential and contextual effects over time. This example also highlighted the highly emotive nature of resettlement as well as the supportive role played by friends and friendship groups in developing resilience.

**Sampling technique**

For participant recruitment, a snowball sampling technique was adopted. In the initial stages of the fieldwork, MRC, IEC and Catholic Education Office (CEO) staff contacted eligible Sudanese men and women to discuss participation in the study. As knowledge of the research began to circulate within the social networks of young Sudanese, the frequency of interest in participation increased significantly. According to Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), the snowball method “yields a study sample through referrals made among those who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest” (p. 141). A major strength of this method is its applicability “when the focus of the study is on a sensitive issue, possibly concerning a private matter” and thus requiring the knowledge of key actors to locate specific individuals to participate (p. 141). Yet this feature of snowball sampling can also lead to bias, as it can hide other intersecting and emergent relationships and data. Snowball sampling is often criticised in the methodological literature as “self-contained” and “self-propelled”.

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Contacts can at times be fortuitously stumbled upon, but as Biernacki and Waldorf correctly pointed out, “researchers must actively and deliberately develop and control the sample’s initiation, progress, and termination” (1981, p. 142). On the issue of sampling control, they explained that it is “exercised in an attempt to ensure that the sample includes an array of respondents, that in qualitative terms, if not in statistical ones, reflect what are thought to be the general characteristics of the population in question” (p. 155). While representativeness of the sample and generalisability of findings using a snowball method are potential weaknesses, use of the snowball method within the social networks of these young Sudanese in Western Sydney helped to identify pre-arrival relationships between participants in refugee camps and countries of residence as well as their divergent migration routes in coming to Australia. This provided an empirical basis for the conceptualisation of resilience as multi-sourced, as emerging in a variety of different migration contexts and in relation to the specific migration routes taken by young Sudanese men and women.

**Qualitative interviews**

The primary method of data collection for this thesis was semi-structured, open-ended, face-to-face interviews. Qualitative face-to-face interviews were chosen as the primary means of data collection in an effort to bring to light the “many subtle contradictions” and “heterogeneous behavioral patterns” (Lahire, 2003, p. 346) occurring within and between young Sudanese people and their respective families, peer groups and communities. It should be noted that identification of these subtle contradictions and patterns are negotiated within the limits of the researcher’s ability to interpret them. At the same time, in-depth interviews offer the researcher unique insights into the lived experience of participants, a central issue within cultural studies. According to Silverman (2000), qualitative methods like semi-structured, open-ended interviews “exemplify a common belief that they can provide a ‘deeper’ understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data” (p. 89).
The qualitative interviews with Sudanese young people were conducted in a variety of informal settings around the Western suburbs of Sydney, such as homes, cafés and libraries. Local cafés and libraries were chosen as interview settings as they were often close to train stations and other public transport options. The public nature of these locations was intended to provide a sense of comfort for the participants as well as give them a degree of personal agency over the situation during the interview. Interviews with community service providers and other stakeholders were conducted in more formal settings such as centre offices and conference rooms. Interviews with these individuals were more often than not conducted during office hours to coincide with the participants’ workday. It is interesting to speculate whether their responses would have been different in less “official” interview environments. The duration of these interviews was between 45 and 90mins.

Fieldwork with an ethnographic component

Although not part of the original research design, fieldwork with an ethnographic component emerged as a valuable method for gaining insights into the everyday contextualised experiences of young Sudanese people in Western Sydney. As Singleton et al. (1988) have stated, “Field research is essentially a matter of immersing oneself in a naturally occurring…set of events in order to gain firsthand knowledge of the situation” (p. 11). Supplementing the analysis of formal interviews, ethnographic strategies were adopted in an effort to understand participants’ social contexts and sensory embodied experiences. On a weekly basis in 2009, I met with a group of young Sudanese men in their domestic apartment in Western Sydney or a professional recording studio in Sydney’s inner west. As detailed in Chapter 6, I became involved with the Sudanese hip-hop group, assuming a short-term, pseudo-managerial role. For me as a participant observer, the ethnographic element of these collaborative exchanges produced critical insights into the resourceful ways in which these Sudanese men negotiated their spatial and material limitations in order to pursue their dreams of becoming successful in the Australian hip-hop marketplace.
Atkinson (1990) defined ethnography as a social research method for observing, knowing and writing about the world. Describing the role of the ethnographer, Hammersley and Atkins (1983) maintained that he or she participates “overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions…and collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned” (p. 2). The systematic yet flexible approach to social research was mirrored by Atkinson et al. (2001) who noted that “the ethnographer may find herself or himself drawing on a very diverse repertoire of research techniques – analysing spoken discourse and narratives, collecting and interpreting visual materials…collecting oral history and life history materials and so on” (p. 5). This multiple-methods approach afforded additional insights into the everyday sensory experiences of the Sudanese participants. As Atkinson et al. observed, “ethnographic research remains firmly rooted in the first-hand exploration of research settings” (2001, p. 5). For example, during an interview with two Sudanese girls, Natasha, a prominent NSW community leader and mother of Jade, 18, offered me a cup of sweet Madeeda Hilba, a traditional Sudanese porridge containing flour, milk and sugar which is leavened with baking soda and flavoured with fenugreek. Although it was too sweet for my palate, that sweetness helped me to understand a small part of the participants’ embodied experience of taste and their traditional practices of hospitality.

Transcription and data analysis

Taping and subsequent transcription of face-to-face interviews was the best method of recording the subtle and situated conversations with Sudanese and non-Sudanese participants. Given the thick regional accents and developing English proficiency of Sudanese participants, it was important that recorded interviews could be replayed to improve the quality of transcription and analysis. As a number of interviews were conducted in public places like cafés and restaurants, the sound quality of some recordings was quite poor. Although all Sudanese participants could speak English there were significant variations in their overall proficiency. These interviews often required several listening and transcription attempts, the consequences of which
added an extra month or two onto the expected transcription timeframe. For written fieldnotes, participant observations were jotted down in a series of notebooks during and after formal interviews, and expanded upon after each field session. As described by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), fieldnotes are the traditional method in ethnography for recording observational information and “consist of relatively concrete descriptions of social processes and their contexts” (p. 145). In the present study, fieldnotes constituted shorthand reminders of informal discussions, performative gestures and impressions of the social contexts.

**Confidentiality and informed consent**

Informed consent and confidentiality are always crucial issues in qualitative research, and especially when dealing with people such as refugees who might have undergone traumatic experiences. Although academic researchers are ethically required to remind participants of their right to stop the interview at any time, Hopkins (2008) explained that refugee participants may still feel obliged to continue their involvement due to a broad range of assumptions and expectations. These can include issues related to control, gender and race, as well as “determinants of power and privilege based on their pre-flight experiences” (2008, p. 40). Hopkins also stated that the amount of time required to gain participant consent is an undervalued ethical consideration. In addressing this issue, he outlined a number of stages related to the consent process. These stages include full explanation of the research purpose, clarification of the researcher’s motivation for conducting the research, details pertaining to research funding, and adequate time provisions for participants to read through the provided materials. In reflecting on his own research, he explained, “it was important to me that I took the time to explain the research fully to all of the children, giving them plenty of time to ask questions and think carefully about participating” (2008, p. 41). Prior to the commencement of interviews in the present research project, consent forms and a detailed synopsis of the project were provided to potential participants.
After the project summary had been read by or read to participants, time was allocated for a thorough discussion of participation responsibilities and related issues, research affiliations, and expected outcomes of the project. It is acknowledged, however, that signed consent forms do not necessarily guarantee a complete understanding of the research by participants (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001, p. 142). An example of this occurred during my interview with Andrew, a Sudanese youth leader and Western Sydney hip-hop performer. Having verbally read the information sheet and explained the consent process, I asked if he had any questions. Quite unexpectedly, he asked, ‘What is resilience?’ This is the first time it had occurred to me that the complex term of ‘resilience’ may not be understood by participants, and furthermore, may not have a corresponding word in their regional Sudanese dialectics, a point discussed in a later section.

In a study concerning refugee experiences in Cairo, Clinton-Davis et al. (1992) reported that some refugee participants were concerned that their responses would negatively affect their status as refugees. In a related study, Tipping (2006) reported on the traumatic encounters of Sudanese refugees with corrupt officials and government representatives in Sudan and en route to Australia, noting that some of these interactions resulted in the disappearance of family members. A young Sudanese woman in Tipping’s study reflected on her inability to trust the Australian government and its representatives:

> The government itself is the one who abuses people in Sudan. They arrest people, they do a lot of things. That’s why I don’t trust the system, but I think the longer I am here [in Australia], you know, the more time I am here, I will learn to trust the government if they do the right thing. (2006, p. 161)

In the hope of allaying such fears, propriety standards and confidentiality were strictly observed in this study via the use of pseudonyms in all cases for transcribed interviews. Moreover, clearly stating my non-governmental affiliation and research
aims was an attempt to help overcome what Fozdar and Torenzi (2008) have termed the cultural “politeness imperative”, a tendency among some refugees to always answer positively and not openly criticise others. Interestingly, the politeness imperative was encountered with non-Sudanese participants like MRC or IEC staff who had some organisational affiliation. On the other hand, Sudanese participants seemed to have fewer reservations about critiquing existing settlement services or disclosing experiences of racism and discrimination from segments of Australian society.

The developmental category of “youth”

As this thesis explores the migration and resettlement experiences of Sudanese “youth”, the absence of Western developmental stages such as “youth” in certain parts of Sudan calls into question the appropriateness and usefulness of the category. According to Cassity and Gow (2005), the process of resettlement and cultural identification for Sudanese young people is complicated by “an immediate shift into a new semi-autonomous identity called ‘youth’” (p. 52). In the more rural areas of Southern Sudan, a person’s age is commonly measured in relation to seasonal, weather or notable village events. Although archival records are kept in more cosmopolitan centres such as Juba and the former capital of Sudan, Khartoum, it was a common occurrence for young Sudanese interviewees to be unaware of their exact date of birth. In submitting an asylum or resettlement application with respective United Nations (UN) offices, applicants are required to nominate a date of birth, if not known. More often than not, the date of birth Sudanese people select falls on 1 January of an estimated year. For researchers this presents a dilemma in deciding whether or not a prospective participant falls within the predetermined participant age range. A related issue concerns the differentiation of lifespan “ranges” or “categories” in many parts of Southern Sudan. In rural village life, the transition from childhood to adulthood is marked and celebrated by ceremonial rites of

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5 Interestingly, 1 January of each year celebrates more than the commencement of the New Year. It is a day of celebration among many diasporic Sudanese communities.
passage. These may include, but are not limited to, the incision of deep marks on the candidate’s forehead. Depending on the successful completion of these ceremonial rites of passage, the “child” becomes “adult”, assuming both adult responsibilities and entitlements.

Adding to the complexity of this issue was the diversity of young Sudanese participants’ countries of origin and migration routes. Although a number of the young participants had been born in Sudan, a significant number resided in Sudan for a relatively brief period of time during their childhood. Some participants were born in neighbouring countries of asylum or temporary residence such as Uganda, Kenya or Egypt, and others were born in Australia. Nevertheless, the ways Sudanese young people negotiated “youth” identities as well as the entitlements and limitations of “being youth” in the Australian context was of significant interest. As many of the community workers interviewed were Sudanese themselves, it was common for them to unintentionally overlook the stated 18 to 25 age range when referring me to potential young Sudanese participants.

As already stated, not all the young Sudanese men and women interviewed were born in Sudan. Although all young Sudanese participants had one or more Sudanese-born parents, a number of the young people had been born either en route to or within Australia. This added a further layer of complexity to the analysis of resilience in Sudanese young people, as not all participants would have experienced the same social, political or economic adversities. However, by including Sudanese young people born in Sudan and in places other than Sudan, a comparative approach became available, which provided valuable insight into the qualitative differences between the experiences of refugees born inside and outside their respective countries of resettlement.
Gender and participation

In the preparatory stages of this project, my aim was to conduct a total of 32 interviews. Sixteen of these interviews would involve Sudanese young people, while the other 16 would engage with community service providers and other stakeholders. Of the 16 interviews with Sudanese participants, eight would be conducted with young Sudanese men and the other eight with young Sudanese women. The relatively small actual sample size of Sudanese young people emerged from a realisation that reaching into the lived experience of migration and resettlement would benefit from interviews of a greater depth, quality and richness. The rationale for this decision came from the recognition that extra time in the field would be needed to build trust among the young people and within their community networks, as well as to gain knowledge of their social contexts. In support of such an approach, Rock (2001) observed, “Ethnography is intense, lengthy and ‘data-rich’, and it cannot and probably should not embrace too many people and too wide a field of activity” (p. 33). While broader ethical issues of access and trust are examined in later sections, these methodological concerns are here explored in relation to recruitment along gender lines. In particular, my status as a 26-year-old, white male researcher became particularly relevant in the recruitment and real time interviews with young Sudanese women. In conversations with MRC staff about the observance of traditional proprietary standards among Sudanese ethnic groups, I was warned of a potential reluctance (and resistance) from Sudanese community parents and elders to my approaching young women to be involved in the research project. This was largely due to the fact that certain traditional and customary relations are still observed between unmarried Sudanese men and women in Australia.

As conveyed to me by Yasmine, a Catholic nun at a Western Sydney community centre, these proprietary dynamics extended beyond gendered interactions within Sudanese communities to include engagements with non-Sudanese individuals like me. Yasmine explained to me the importance of observing an appropriate meeting place and ensuring that a community representative be present when I interviewed young Sudanese women: “I am just thinking about trying to meet the girls, meeting
place is going to be the difficult thing to do…You see, if you could arrange, with somebody else here, it is going to be much easier to get them to come. They would be nervous meeting you”. Indeed, it proved quite difficult to recruit the expected eight Sudanese young women. In all, I interviewed seven young Sudanese women. For interview location I sought to ensure a safe, open and public setting. In most cases, the female interviewees chose the location themselves. Notably, of the seven Sudanese women interviewed, four were university students whose responses conveyed a certain resistance to the gendered code of appropriate behaviour. Three female students in an interview were chaperoned by the mother of one and a Catholic nun. Although the presence of the Catholic nun seemed to convey to the girls that I was a trustworthy person to talk to, her presence did constrain the content and vocabulary of their discussions. Interestingly, when Yasmine left the room to attend to other business, the burden of proprietary constraints around certain conversation topics and the apparent injunction against expletive language was lifted, producing some of the richest ethnographic data of the data collected.

**Negotiating access with community gatekeepers**

The first interviews were organised with the help of staff from affiliated community service providers. These preliminary interviews constituted important rapport- and trust-building practices. In the early stages of the interview process, Sudanese community workers from a Sudanese background provided reliable points of access to Sudanese young people. It became apparent that these individuals interacted both inside and outside their respective community networks. In other words, they were members of ethnically diverse Sudanese communities as well as service providers for their respective communities. Over time, contacts within and access to the ethnically diverse Sudanese community living in Western Sydney significantly increased. This was due in no small part to the time taken to develop relationships of trust with community gatekeepers. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) noted that in some formal organisations, the ethnographer’s “initial access negotiations may be focused on formal permission that can legitimately be granted or withheld by key personnel” (p. 63). They added that the selection of relevant gatekeepers is not always clear and it is
not always obvious whose permission needs to be obtained for initial and ongoing access (p. 63). In the present study, gatekeepers included MRC staff as well as community leaders, elders and parents. The frequency of interviews with the target population (i.e. young Sudanese men and women) increased at about the six-interview mark. This marked rise in access to Sudanese young people is explained by reference to the complex transmission of information within the social networks of Sudanese communities. In the early stages of the interview process, I was treated as yet another well-intentioned but ultimately short-term academic investigator. As recognition of my sustained involvement among young people spread, opportunities for access that were previously closed began to open up.

For the first 3 months of the interview process, interviews consisted primarily of community service providers and youth workers. As my visibility in and around community organisations and events increased, I was offered access to previously “hidden” and “off limits” individuals, most notably young Sudanese women. This occurrence is reminiscent of Hammersley and Atkinson’s observation that community gatekeepers may “attempt to exercise some degree of surveillance and control, either by blocking off certain lines of inquiry, or by shepherding the fieldworker in one direction or another” (1983, p. 65). A protective gatekeeping hierarchy exists within the Sudanese community structure, which overlaps with the community services sector. An example occurred during an interview with a multicultural police liaison officer. At the beginning of the interview, Gregory exclaimed, “tell me about the whole thing [research project]”. By asking me to summarise “the whole” project on the spot, he was doing more than inquiring about my intentions and expected research outcomes. His push towards full disclosure of the research outcomes was testing my suitability as a candidate to receive delicate and sensitive information about young Sudanese people’s encounters with Western Sydney police.

As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) observed, “Gatekeepers, sponsors, and the like (indeed, most of the people who act as hosts to the research) will operate in terms of expectations about the ethnographer’s identity and intentions” (p. 75). The
Phenomena of community gatekeeping and gatekeepers are explored in a number of community development studies relating to “at risk” migrant, elderly, disabled and indigenous population samples (Capp et al., 2001; Ferris et al., 2001; Fletcher & Hirdes, 2004; Harrison et al., 1995; Hopkins, 2006). For my access to Sudanese young people in Western Sydney, the community and service provider “gatekeeper hierarchy” negotiated different amounts of information and access to potential participants on the basis of their perceived levels of vulnerability and trauma, language proficiency and gender. Understandably, the most difficult group to access was individuals affected by experiences of torture or trauma as a result of their migration experiences. For the reasons explained above, the next most difficult group to access was those who spoke little to no English. Most commonly these individuals were newly arrived, and more often than not, women.

Consultation with service providers and youth workers helped to identify individuals who were in a position to discuss their migration and resettlement experiences. These individuals also acted as community gatekeepers to some extent. As Wyness (2008) stated, “Adult gatekeepers remain the last point at which access to a child population may or may not be granted” (cited by Hopkins, 2008, p. 39). Although adult gatekeepers observed a semblance of client-provider confidentiality, after an initial face-to-face discussion and my communication of the research project and its’ aims, the contact details of young Sudanese men and women were willingly, if not enthusiastically provided. The enthusiasm displayed by Sudanese-born service providers in providing the contact details of potential participants seemed to reflect their personal desire to realign the public’s perception of the Sudanese community, which had been affected by the Australian news media’s negative coverage.

The New South Wales Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) demonstrated consistent and unwavering reluctance to engage with an outside academic researcher. After repeated attempts to contact and arrange meetings with STARTTS staff, it became increasingly clear that the resources of this particular refugee service would not be available. In email replies to my inquiries, STARTTS staff explained that due to the issues around confidentiality
and the particularly traumatic migration experiences and specific needs of their clientele, they would be unable to provide client contact details and, as it turned out, information generally. On the issue of access, Hammersley and Atkinson have suggested that access and data collection are not simply practical matters or “distinct phases of the research process” (1983, p. 55-56). Rather, the discovery and overcoming of obstacles to access are in fact “insights into the social organization of the setting” (p. 55). In the present case, they signalled the organisation’s “gatekeeping” function as well as the intensity and long-term consequences of torture and trauma. Given the focus of my research on the ways young Sudanese refugees accumulate capacities of resilience in relation to traumatic experience, the legitimacy of STARTTS’ staff “gatekeeping” function was perhaps questionable in this instance.

Obvious differences emerged between the representations of the challenges facing young people in Western Sydney as portrayed by Sudanese elders, MRC staff, parents and the young people themselves. During my interviews with Sudanese community leaders and MRC staff, an official and idealised version of the success of young people’s integration efforts was often presented. As Denzin (1997) commented, “Those we study have their own understandings of how they want to be represented” (p. xiii). Along similar lines, Eastmond (2007) observed that “What is remembered and told is [...] situational, shaped not least through the contingencies of the encounter between narrator and listener and the power relationship between them” (p. 249). On reflection, it became clear that these “sanitised” representations were part of the protective role played by these individuals as official gatekeepers of their communities. Although explaining my non-government affiliation and detailing the specifics of the research project to community leaders and workers, older interviewees were understandably suspicious about the public outcomes of the research and my motivations for conducting it.

Others believed that as a result of the public nature of the research, I would convey, on their behalf, a positive representation of young Sudanese people’s productive activities, thereby reversing the promulgation of recent negative media
representations of “Sudanese youths” and “Sudanese gangs”. On the other hand, young Sudanese participants were more candid in their representations of the specific difficulties facing young Sudanese people in Western Sydney. In a number of cases, there was a visceral sense of desperation, frustration and melancholy in the young participants’ voices, the origin of which was that community leaders and service providers “knew best” and were not listening to their specific concerns. At the same time, it was important to recognise that the concerns of community elders were legitimate and not “cultural barriers” that impeded the “more accurate” representations offered by Sudanese young people.

**Status overlap**

Further complicating the definition and recruitment of Sudanese participants was the overlap of actual and perceived roles and responsibilities within their respective communities. Some young Sudanese men within the 18-25 “youth” range were also considered to be community leaders or community leaders in the making. For example, a Sudanese liaison officer fell marginally outside the prescribed youth range, also worked for a denominational education office and held the position of a community leader within his ethnic/tribal community. A participant’s occupation of multiple identity positions within the respective community and across governmental and service provider hierarchies highlights what Tabar et al. (2010) termed, “the paradox of ethnic capital” (p. 168). At one level, participants’ accumulation of specific types of capital and status within their respective communities and among local service providers are important sources and sites of recognition, enabling significant capacities to act within these particular contexts. However, as Tabar et al. (2010) pointed out, “In becoming ‘ethnic leaders’ – that is, leaders who are recognised outside their specific constituencies – they attempt to convert their localized forms of capital into a broader form of symbolic capital’ (p. 147). Although the conversion and configuration of localised forms of capital into a broader form of symbolic capital can extend ethnic leaders’ inter-domain powers to act and influence outside their specific community networks and relationships, this newfound political recognition, access and power has the potential to produce “paradoxical allegiances”
and initiate wider processes of policing and surveillance (p. 147). It was also important to consider the impact of paradoxical allegiances on the data and in terms of response bias. Young female participants commonly held roles and responsibilities of “student”, “housekeeper” and/or “parent” for younger siblings and relatives. Young Sudanese men had also adopted new domestic responsibilities in the context of resettlement, which ran counter to prescribed gendered domestic roles and associated responsibilities in Sudan. Due to the overlap of participant statuses, a flexible approach to predetermined participant age ranges and identity categories was necessary.

**Tribal/religious/regional identities**

Although ideological divisions between the predominantly Muslim north and Christian/animist south underpinned the First and Second Sudanese Civil Wars, the current unrest in the Darfur region of Sudan is better described as an undertaking by the central Arab elite in Khartoum of a much maligned process of ethnic cleansing of the marginalised black African and Muslim minorities (Lesch, 1998, p. 3). The process of “Islamisation” has resulted in Muslims, Christians and followers of traditional African religions being targeted by government-sponsored liberation armies and militia. Given the complexity of shifting ethnic, political and militia affiliations, it was unwise to select the participant sample along predetermined geographical, religious and/or ethnic lines. For example, the Nuba people who reside in and around the foothills of the Nuba Mountains in central Sudan speak over 50 languages and dialect clusters (Stevenson, 1984). The Nuba people also embrace Islam, Christianity and a variety of animist beliefs.

Research into the lived experience of Sudanese young people in Australia must therefore account for the complexity of regional identities, internal movements (as a result of Arab militia raiding and land seizure) and changing regional alliances in Sudan. Young Sudanese participants identified primarily with the Dinka, Nuer or Aweil regions of Sudan’s 10 southern states. It is interesting to note that when asked
about their current identifications, the majority of participants would omit their tribal affiliation in favour of the hyphenated “Sudanese-Australian”. As Chapter 5 explores, the broader construction of Sudanese-Australianness is as much for the benefit of the general public as it is a situated practice that demonstrates commitment and loyalty to Australia. During interviews with a number of Sudanese participants it emerged that ethnic relations and historical tensions are still present within and between the different tribal groups in Australia to varying degrees.

As has been noted in previous studies researching refugee communities (Fatahi et al., 2010; Sachs et al., 2008; Sriram et al., 2009) interviewer bias, interviewer inexperience, regional dialects and informed participant consent are ever-present evaluative concerns for working with these groups. In cases where a participant’s ability to articulate opinions and concerns is hindered by a lack of English proficiency, an interpreter is often required. Given the number of regional dialects spoken in Southern Sudan alone, locating a skilled interpreter who was adept in both English and the specific regional/tribal dialect proved to be a difficult undertaking. Due to the multifarious regional dialects spoken in Southern Sudan, as well as time and economic constraints, it was necessary to identify individuals who were proficient in English and had had time to process traumatic events and were able to recount particularly relevant migration and resettlement experiences.

**Scheduling and the phenomenon of “Sudanese time”**

Dealing with young Sudanese people produced a number of challenges during the interview process. For participants who were involved in full-time university study, TAFE accreditation courses, the Job Network program, or some private employment agency, participation in this research project often conflicted with workplace commitments, training or other domestic commitments. As employed participants regularly worked long hours, a flexible approach to meeting times and places was required. Silove (1999) explained that lack of recognition pertaining to previous qualifications and skills means that Sudanese migrants often find themselves in
menial, low-paying jobs. It is common for these jobs to involve long hours and night-shift work. To overcome or at least mitigate the issue of conflicting schedules, it was important that I travel to interview locations most amenable to interviewees. Most commonly, these were local libraries, cafés or homes.

Another challenge that influenced the interview process with Sudanese participants was the phenomenon generally referred to as “Sudanese time”. In the early stages of recruitment, Sudanese and non-Sudanese community service providers informed me that I would need to accommodate the phenomenon of “Sudanese time”. In practical terms, this meant that Sudanese participants might arrive to scheduled interviews anywhere up to one hour late. The notion of “Sudanese time” was treated with patronising endearment among a number of service provider staff. Interestingly, while Sudanese participants and community service workers were aware of this tendency, little effort was made to rectify or reconcile this temporal disparity. The practical appropriation of “Sudanese time” extended beyond participants who had grown up in Sudan to include those born in Australia. In rural Sudan, time is commonly marked and evaluated by reference to environmental or seasonal events such as village traditions or weather patterns. In the context of resettlement in Australia, this more flexible, non-technical understanding of time seems to have been replicated and to some extent reinvented by young Sudanese as a means of justifying their lateness. For participants who were born in countries other than Sudan, the observance of “Sudanese time” can be explained in a number of ways.

One way of explaining the observance of “Sudanese time” for participants born outside Sudan is the generational and communal transfer of this temporal framework. More specifically, as a result of growing up within Sudanese familial and communal structures, the temporality known as “Sudanese time” may have been passed down to younger community members. Another way of explaining the continued observance of this phenomenon for participants born inside Sudan and elsewhere is that by justifying “lateness” with reference to “Sudanese time”, young people have a certain amount of temporal elbowroom in their daily interactions. An example of this involved Rose, 27, who showed up for an interview an hour late. She apologised,
appealing to “Sudanese time” as her justification for arriving late. It could be argued that the observance and reinvention of “Sudanese time” by younger Sudanese men and women is representative of a situated practice of resilience, in particular, the recognition and appropriation of existing public perceptions of Sudanese people’s flexible observance of agreed-upon meeting times. However, the flexibility offered by appeal to “Sudanese time” is restricted to engagements with other Sudanese individuals and service providers who are privy to this cultural practice. In the context of workplace relations and interviews as well as secondary education and governmental assistance services, observance of “Sudanese time” could adversely affect young people’s continued ability to accumulate capacities of resilience. In other words, the humorous “in joke” of “Sudanese time” that exists between service providers and members of the Sudanese community might in fact become a more serious issue in other less-flexible bureaucratic and governmental settings.

Researcher position

The negotiation of researcher positionality is a particularly important and ongoing process when working with individuals and groups who may have experienced torture, trauma or other adversities. As my participation in the lives of a number of young people extended beyond the immediate interview context, ongoing evaluation and subtle adjustments in terms of these relationships was required. These broader epistemological and ontological concerns centre on the establishment and intersubjective negotiation of a researcher’s “ethnic location” in refugee communities. Gow (2002) identified a number of continuing ethnographic, ethical and methodological considerations for researchers working with African communities:

Recognizing my location, having to name the ground I was coming from and conditions I had taken for granted compelled me to come to terms with my “whiteness”. Importantly, I looked to the very people that I was purportedly studying for basic social/emotional fellowship, which at times created ambiguous tensions: was I there as a friend or a
researcher? What happens when the project finishes? Like the problematic of representation, these tensions remain unresolved. (pp. 22-23)

Since 2008, I have developed what Gow (2002) described as a “social/emotional” friendship with a number of participants. In mid-2009, an MRC community worker referred me to “Andrew”, the leader of a Sudanese hip-hop group. Having arranged to meet Andrew at his Western Sydney apartment, I was greeted by the other two full-time members of the group. As the interview progressed, I became aware of Andrew’s reluctance to elaborate on his life in Sudan or journey to Australia. Where possible, he would reorient the interview back to the hip-hop group’s effort to break into the Australian hip-hop industry. As a whole, the interview reads more like an attempt at self-promotion than an academic transcript. However, residing just below the surface, my interviews with the group reveal a number of issues around power, reciprocity, resourcefulness and resilience.

For the next year, I sought to assist the group, where possible and appropriate, to realise their more proximal musical aspirations. This included organising free recording time at an inner-city recording studio, promotional posters and album art. All the while, I was aware of ethical caveats against becoming too involved with research participants. Jacobson and Landau (2003) explained that charitable acts with refugee communities could lead to the methodological problem known as “reactivity”, an issue where “presence of the researcher potentially influences the behaviour and responses of the informants, thereby compromising the research findings” (p. 192). These problems become particularly acute when the participants are from refugee, marginalised, poor or disempowered backgrounds. In such cases, reactivity, as a methodological issue, can quickly become an ethical one. Since mid-2009, I have continued to be of assistance to members of the Sudanese community as well as service providers and, where possible, will continue to do so.
Following Bourdieu’s injunction to adopt “objectivity without objectivism”, a reflexive balancing of active participation in the lives of participants and ongoing management of critical distance was a necessary consideration during the interview and data analysis phases of the research. Highlighting the potential benefits of this ambivalent space, Lofland (1971) pointed out, “the research generates ‘creative insight’ out of this marginal position of simultaneous insider-outsider” (cited by Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 100). Powdermaker (1966) described the ideal ethnographic space as intellectually poised between familiarity and strangeness or between “friend” and “stranger”. At the same time, participation in everyday forms of activism can inform academia in a dialogical interaction (Mountz et al., 2003). By the researcher’s engaging with participants with the intention of beneficence, researcher and participants can become involved in a collaborative form of knowledge production, enriching the research experience for both parties. As Mackenzie et al. (2007, p. 299) stated,

researchers should seek ways to move beyond harm minimization as a standard for ethical research and recognize an obligation to design and conduct research projects that aim to bring about reciprocal benefits for refugee participants and/or communities.

A standard ethical consideration for working with “at risk” or “vulnerable” populations is non-maleficence, or “at least do no harm”. This ethical principle is an important guiding standard for all researchers and practitioners, especially for new researchers. However, it is an ethical standard reflected in the long-standing “positivist” tradition, which sets the objectives and influences of activism and academia as opposing trajectories As Mackenzie et al. (2007) commented, when and where appropriate, researchers might aspire to more than harm minimisation – to a revised methodological principle that seeks out reciprocal benefits or “to at least do a little good” (p. 311). Beauchamp and Childress (1983) defined “beneficence” as the principle that “research on human subjects should produce some positive and identifiable benefit rather than simply be carried out for its own sake” (pp. 18-19). Given the diversity and unpredictability of participant responses – especially among
those who have experienced torture or trauma – it was important not to assume cathartic release or any other benefits as a direct or indirect result of involvement in the participants’ lives. As Murphy and Dingwall (2001) cautioned, the positive or negative consequences of research interactions are unstable, reversible and “not directly controlled by the researcher” (p. 340). In addition to a “well intentioned state of mind” (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 22-23), qualitative researchers can promote non-maleficence and beneficence by understanding the surrounding social and cultural contexts of their participants.

It is widely accepted within the humanities and the social sciences that the presence of the observer influences the observed, and vice versa (Appardurai, 1986; Cassell, 1988; Emerson et al., 1995; Neuman, 1997). In exploring the sociocultural accumulation of resilience among young Sudanese people, I quite unexpectedly became part of this process. Reflecting the famous maxim of the late Professor Fred Hollows, “No survey without service”, Mackenzie et al. (2007) wrote:

it is unethical for researchers merely to document the difficulties of refugees and their causes without, whenever possible, offering in return some kind of reciprocal benefit that may assist them in dealing with these difficulties and, where possible, in working towards solutions. (pp. 310-311)

Understandably, there are those who would argue that the negotiation of “reciprocal benefits” could potentially “undermine the objectivity or impartiality of the research, raise unrealistic expectations of the research or function as an inducement that compromises voluntary participation” (Mackenzie et al., 2007, p. 311). Considering the risks of reciprocity, I was also mindful of observing a working balance between volunteerism and the important principle of critical distance. While it is important to acknowledge the unique position and subjectivity of the researcher (Pickering, 2008), academic research is ultimately an intellectual exercise and not simply about the validation of the researcher’s experience, beneficent intentions or charitable efforts.
Given the complexities around working with young refugees and communities, research must include what one might call a degree of “strategic reciprocity”. This refers to reciprocal gift exchanges between researchers and participants as well as the ongoing management of actual, or perceived, unequal power relations. The concept of strategic reciprocity is sympathetic to Spivak’s (1988) notion of “strategic essentialism”. In drawing on Spivak’s discussion of strategic essentialism, Noble et al. (1999) explored its wider applicability as the symbolic articulation and strategic mobilisation of “an irreducible otherness” in the everyday lives of Arabic-speaking young people in Sydney’s south-west (p. 31). It was a common occurrence for Sudanese elders and youth leaders to inhabit multiple identity positions, proudly identifying with the ‘Sudanese community’ in Western Sydney, their tribal/ethnic group and the broader Australian public. The uncritical celebration of their identification with the Australian people was often counterbalanced by comments that were reminders to themselves of their pre-existing allegiances to particular ethnic and tribal groups.

During my interview with George, a high-ranking NSW Sudanese community leader, he positioned himself as being ‘in touch’ with, and advocating, the needs of Sudanese young people in Western Sydney, and at the same time, acting as an influential representative who manoeuvred within the inner-circles of state politics and among non-governmental agencies. However, all the examples he provided of young people’s educational ‘success’ were drawn from young people’s achievements in the Sutherland Shire; a relatively small region of Sudanese resettlement and geographically removed from the Greater Western Sydney area.

In the present study, young Sudanese people and other community members – both during and after the scheduled face-to-face interviews – strategically employed traditional Sudanese practices and offerings apparently to establish certain unequal power relations, which, I, myself could equalised through specific forms of assistance. Attempts to elicit specific forms of assistance were quite common during
the interviews, but it should be noted that the welcome, openness and eagerness of
Sudanese participants to disclose personal information and life histories were quite
real, unexpected and overwhelming. It is therefore more likely that the observed
practices were forms of genuine civility and strategy.

Following de Certeau (1988), the appropriation of customary practices of civility and
hospitality among newly arrived Sudanese participants might be described as
“clandestine forms” of “dispersed, tactical and makeshift creativity” in response to a
lack of longer-term governmental and community service assistance and
opportunities (pp. xiv-xv). Making an important distinction between “strategy” and
“tactic”, he claimed that “strategy” involves a calculated assessment of existent
power relations, becoming possible when subjects locate themselves within a place
of their own. According to de Certeau, a “tactic” is a calculated action enacted within
a space or terrain “imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power”
(1988, p. 37). Therefore, the term “strategic” reciprocity is used rather than “tactics
of reciprocity” for an important reason. As participant practices of civility,
hospitality and subsequent expectations to reciprocate were enacted predominantly in
their domestic homes, I was decidedly “on their terrain” and within their own places.
As de Certeau maintained, “strategies are able to produce, tabulate and impose these
spaces...whereas tactics can only use, manipulate and divert these spaces” (p. 30).
Although delivered with great respect, Sudanese participants’ requests for and
expectations of financial assistance were quite calculated and conveyed with a
seeming expert proficiency. In a sense, these requests and reciprocal expectations
were tactical and opportunistic, but on reflection, the flow of certain interview
transcripts and certain practices of civility and hospitality seemed, at times, to be
heading towards young participants’ elicitation of practical and financial assistance
from me.

The most common practice of hospitality included drink offerings on ornate serving
platters and an insistence on paying for refreshments at public interview locations. In
an important sense, the offering and sharing of food and beverages was a
communicative device, which spoke as loudly as any verbal exchange. As
McMichael and Manderson (2004) observed, “Food…holds strong social value and symbolic meaning and is a means by which people communicate with each other” (p. 96). Following Butler (1994), the stylised repetition of acts of hospitality and generosity cultivated a sense of belonging in the homes of interviewees (p. 140). It could also be argued that these practices of civility and hospitality are undifferentiating traditions, extended to all visitors regardless of their ethnicity, status or institutional affiliation. Nevertheless, in some cases there was a sense that these practices were leading somewhere and being strategically employed for specific purposes. In these instances, supposedly “complimentary” offerings were counterbalanced by participant expectations that I ought to reciprocate in some way. For example, having offered to drive me back to the station after an interview at his Mt Druitt home, Mark, 23 asked if I would be interested in donating money to a Sudanese charity appeal. While the request was delivered in all politeness, the assumption that I would give (and had the money to give) carried a certain weight of expectation. From a less critical perspective, it could also be argued that this was a completely reasonable request, given the nature of what had been offered during and after the interview.

Mauss (1970) explored the obligations to give and receive among the Polynesian clan, the Dayaks, observing a “series of rights and duties about consuming and repaying existing side by side with rights and duties about giving and receiving” (p. 11). In effect, the unequal exchange of gifts, which circulate as a form of social capital, produces economies based on reciprocity. He noted that “one gives because one is forced to do so, because the recipient has a sort of proprietary right over everything which belongs to the donor” (p. 11). Although the intensity of reciprocal obligations among Sudanese participants was not as acute as the Polynesian example, comparisons can be made in terms of the reciprocal obligation to return or repay gifts received. That is not to suggest that these reciprocal expectations were ill intended on the part of Sudanese participants. Rather, an awareness and exchange of biographical narratives, as gifts, on the part of some participants established a reciprocal imbalance that could be rebalanced by an act or acts of financial assistance or service provision.
Narratives as analytical tools

Although retellings in the form of biographical and diasporic narratives are not sufficient for recovery in and of themselves, narratives can represent a powerful device for coming to terms with and transforming past and present hardship, while also envisaging a better future. Herman (1997) identified processes of narrative reconstruction as a central element of healing. According to her, the process or “work” of narrative reconstruction “actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor’s life story” (1997, p. 175). When one is analysing the lived experience of forced migration, personal narratives and life histories become a useful methodological and analytical tool, providing cultural researchers, historians and service providers with “unique phenomenological insights into the life, times and places of experiencing subjects” (Eastmond, 2007, p. 249). Qualitative studies focusing on the phenomena of forced migration can also offer contextualised insights into the ways refugees and other migrants “make sense of displacement and violence, re-establish identity in ruptured life courses and communities, or bear witness to violence and repression” (2007, p. 248). Eastmond adds an important definitional caveat, stating that “narrative is a form in which activities and events are described as having a meaningful and coherent order, imposing on reality a unity which it does not inherently possess” (p. 250). According to Pickering (2000), “what is gathered in the name of experience cannot simply be presented as raw data, or regarded as offering a direct expression of people’s participation in different cultural fields” (p. 19).

Although displaying shorthand analytical usefulness, reference to the “lived” experience of research populations is an often taken-for-granted signifier. A commonplace tendency to insert the precursor “lived” before “experience” is underpinned by a tautological assumption that researchers receive a more authentic, less mediated line of access into people’s everyday experiences, attitudes and opinions. As Pickering (2008) rightly pointed out, experience is always lived and “always involves interpretation of what happens in life, of what makes our perceptions, feelings, and actions meaningful” (p. 19). What makes experience
meaningful is the way it comes into expression, and is “conceptualised, organised and given temporal identity or, in other words, how experience is given the quality of narrative” (p. 19).

It should be noted that what is remembered and told by interviewees to interviewers is also situational and “shaped not least through the contingencies of the encounter between narrator and listener and the power of the relationship between them” (Eastmond, 2007, p. 249). The subjective, relational character of personal narratives is also influenced by the interpretation and representation of the narrative, by the researcher. However, as Chamberlain and Leydesdorff (2004) explained, oral testimony, as expressed through life histories and personal stories, is still a narrative. Accordingly, oral testimony is “subject to the same forms and controls as more popularly acknowledged narratives” (p. 232). Oral testimony is a dialogic process that is never finished (Bakhtin, 1981). As Chamberlain and Leydesdorff (2004) stated, “the interviewer or historian is engaged with the informant or the subject in negotiating and creating a text” (p. 232).

With regard to resilience formation, the creative co-construction of narratives by interviewer and interviewee can be seen as facilitating a dialogical re-imagining of past events. Following Bourdieu and Wacquant’s (1992) notion of methodological becoming, Mountz et al. (2003) understood research “as knowledge production in a perpetual state of becoming” (p. 30). Furthermore, as representing post-contextual editions of the actual event/s, narrative methods, in their various forms, can provide the interviewee – in concert with the interviewer – certain opportunities to transform the original event in the retelling. In the context of resettlement, refugees and other forced migrants may be invited to convey their migration stories in a variety of formal and informal contexts. The re-awakening of past trauma and “narrative fatigue” are important ethical considerations when working with diasporic and exilic populations, yet the repetition and customised revision of migration histories in a variety of contexts may build-up or accumulate greater capacities of defence against suffering and other painful affects associated with the recollection of traumatic events or situations. Eastmond (2007) maintained that story telling is a way for
individuals and communities to “remember, bear witness, or seek to restore continuity and identity” (p. 251). She argued that, in the lives of refugees, storytelling can act as “a symbolic resource enlisted to alleviate suffering and change their situation” (p. 251). A related consideration concerns the ethnographic spaces and places in which narratives are constructed, expressed and witnessed. Nettles and Mason’s (2004) phrase “zones of narrative safety” is appropriate for describing and identifying safe, secure and supportive interview sites that promote formal and informal therapeutic exchanges. Zones of narrative safety are spaces or forums that can promote reflective dialogue around issues of ethnicity, race, sexuality and difference between and among displaced migrants, counsellors, teachers, service provider staff and the general public.

Besides ensuring safe and secure interview settings, trust-building practices and an observance of appropriate discussion topics were all-important ethical considerations during the interview process. As many of the participants had lived through traumatic experiences in Sudan and in coming to Australia, reflection on past trauma could potentially constitute a re-traumatising experience in itself. The most obvious risk to the well-being of individual participants related to the potential for emotional and psychophysical distress caused by personal reflections on trauma and grief experienced during migration and resettlement. As already noted, the severity of these potential ethical issues was offset, albeit inadequately, by certain safeguards, including the 3-year duration of stay requirement for participants as well as an open-ended narrative approach that would enable the participant to share or withhold particularly distressing life events.

As part of this research project explored the effects of trauma on traditional family dynamics, the dissemination of research results could have been considered embarrassing for certain members of the participants’ family. The potential risks were managed through an observance of propriety standards, confidentiality and de-identification (i.e. pseudonyms in all cases for transcribed interviews), and the provision of project invitations and information sheets for participants prior to their involvement. As De Haene et al. (2010) suggested, while narrative researchers’
emphasise the social justice aspects and transformative power of narrative methods, researchers should be mindful of the uncritical assumption that participants always benefit from in-depth retellings of their stories (p. 1). According to De Haene et al., “a narrative approach mobilizes those aspects of psychosocial functioning that are most deeply affected by traumatization” (p. 2). They argue that a narrative methodology in refugee health research has the potential to replay or reactivate certain traumatic experiences in the interview context or research relationship.

On witnessing

Bearing witness is a quieter, but no less important way that researchers can productively contribute to the lives of their research participants. Building on the work of Oliver (2001), Zembylas (2006) observed that, “Bearing witness implies taking response-ability to become a transformative agent of awareness and reception of Others’ trauma” (p. 315). Laub (1992) claimed that bearing witness to trauma is a multidirectional process that includes the listener and the expresser (cited by Felman & Laub, 1992, p. 69). She explained that the “re-externalisation” of the traumatic events “can occur and take effect only when one can articulate and transmit the story, literally transfer it to another outside of oneself and then take it back again, inside” (Felman & Laub, 1992, p. 65). In the context of research with forcibly displaced refugees, the listener, or researcher as it were, is a witness to the traumatised subject as well as a witness to himself or herself. As expressed by the expresser, it is unlikely that the listener can ever fully comprehend the magnitude and intensity of the traumatic episodes or circumstances. In order to enable the testimony or narrative, the listener must become attuned to the overlapping, yet ultimately incommensurable, inner battleground of forces and flows going on within themselves and the witness (Laub, 1992, p. 58).

In this sense, the researcher and the participant embark on a mutual journey of discovery into their respective pasts (Lederach, 2005). To varying degrees, both researcher and participant invest in each other as travelling companions, trusting that
they will be able to enter and return from the exploration of uncomfortable, risky and often traumatic pasts. Similarly, Gordon (1997) maintained that the task of confronting traumatic events in others and ourselves pulls “us affectively into [others and our own] structure of feeling a reality we come to know as recognition” (p. 63). As Oliver (2001) added, witnessing must go beyond mere recognition of historical trauma and “Otherness”. Although recognition is an important component of bearing witness, witnessing trauma and social suffering “involves becoming more open to the possibilities of ethically responsible and politically liberating affects such as love and empathy” (Zembylas, 2006, p. 313). As Zembylas pointed out, “The victims of trauma and oppression are not merely seeking recognition, but they are also seeking witnesses to horrors that are beyond recognition” (p. 313).

It is important to note that not all research studies and participants achieve, or necessarily need to achieve cathartic release through the interview process. As the intensity of past events always exceeds their possible narration, witnessing should not be viewed as a directive approach to relieving painful or trauma-related affects heading towards some predetermined therapeutic outcome. Along similar lines, Oliver (2001) observed that witnessing involves a double sense of “eyewitness testimony based on first-hand knowledge on the one hand, and bearing witness to something beyond recognition which can’t be seen, on the other” (p. 16). In an important sense, techniques of witnessing and narrative analysis are impossible, as these techniques can never truly “get at” the original sensory experience or what Hoffman (2004) called “the traumatic element of trauma” (p. 41). Accordingly, Oliver (2001) argued that oppression, subordination or trauma “undermines the possibility of becoming or maintaining subjectivity by destroying or damaging the possibility of witnessing” (p. 7), which establishes a paradox between the necessity and impossibility of witnessing trauma.

**Conclusion**
Given the complex, situated and diverse range of experiences of Sudanese young people en route to and within Australia, a qualitative methodology with open-ended interviews and an ethnographic fieldwork component was the best methodological fit for drawing out the rich, nuanced and contextual understandings of participants’ social worlds. When working with refugee populations who may have undergone trauma or other adversities, methodological considerations include related substantive and theoretical issues of access and community gatekeeping, public representation, social context and networks, researcher reflexivity, and the applicability of conceptual categories. In the context of empirical research with diasporic and exilic populations, the interview process might be considered an opportunity to, if not resolve, then reflect on certain migration experiences in a safe and reciprocal interview context removed from the original experience. The extent to which this occurs is conditional on a number of individual and environmental factors. These include the proximity of past trauma, the linguistic ability of the interviewee to reflect on and express these events, the psychological condition of the interviewee, interview time constraints, interviewer empathy and competency, as well as the perceived safety of the interview setting. At its vigilant and empathetic best, the co-constitutive process of biographical narration and witnessing can be transformative, providing critical spaces for the shared negotiation and mutual recognition of new subject positions; to “imagine otherwise” and even reconcile, in part or in full, past traumas, grief and social suffering (Oliver, 2001, p. 139). As Jackson (2002) concluded, “without stories, without listening to one another’s stories, there can be no recovery of the social, no overcoming of our separateness, no discovery of common ground or common cause” (pp. 104-105).

When working with refugee populations, cultural researchers are conferred with certain ethical responsibilities and duties beyond “do no harm”. As a result of their encounters with refugee and other trauma-affected populations, researchers are presented with not only the responsibility of “holding harm”, but also the opportunity to use the unique phenomenological insights offered by their participants to assist them in their recovery and “on-the-ground” formation and accumulation of resilience. As De Haene et al. (2010) commented,
At the core of this continuous concern for harmful aspects of a narrative research process is the researcher’s responsibility to accept the complexities of harm and benefit within the research relationship, and thus to accept the responsibility of holding harm. Holding harm entails the willingness to share in the pain that is involved in revisiting traumatic experience, to remain present with its fragile balancing between suffering and recovery, and to accept some part of the responsibility of the society that is represented by the research context. Holding harm implies the ethics to listen, not only to the experience of trauma within participants’ lives, but equally to the experience of trauma within the research relationship itself. (p. 10)

The response-ability of researchers to “hold harm” is tied to their ability to not only “hear” the stories of participants, but also “listen” to and empathise with them. The inter-subjective nature of empathy requires an affective investment on the part of the researcher and researched to affect and be affected; a fragile agreement beyond the signing of consent forms and unresolved debates of activism versus academia. The relational dynamics enacted in the research context extend to the theorised dialectical interaction between the individual and sociocultural dimensions of resilience and hope formation among young Sudanese people and their social networks.
Chapter 3

‘The only thing that give me hope’: educational opportunity and the pre-migration experiences of young Sudanese people

Introduction

Although the lived experience of hope can be interpreted as a stand-alone human phenomenon, the presence (or absence) of hope is inextricably tied to broader processes of resilience formation in all people. Hope is an essential element of resilience as it preserves the hopeful subject while also building resilience through the imaginative construction and pragmatic realisation of a better future to come. The connection between hope and resilience resembles Jevne’s (1994) inclusion of “hope” in a family of concepts which include “coping, courage, faith, resilience, and empowerment” (in Parse, 1999, p. 18). With a focus on the pre-arrival educational experiences of young Sudanese participants, this chapter highlights the ongoing consequences and associated effects of civil conflict, displacement, and migration routes on the formation of resilience, hope and educational capacities prior to arrival in Australia. While the pragmatic outcomes of formal education are crucial to young people’s integration in host countries like Australia, aspiring to the symbolic dimensions of education as a hope-ideal feeds into the broader formation of resilience among young Sudanese people and their communities. A sociocultural approach to hope and education is adopted in order to draw out the individual and social implications of young people’s pre-arrival experiences of education and their ongoing consequences in terms of achieving effective settlement outcomes and formation of resilience.

The accumulation of hope as a symbolic resource, as well as more instrumental educational capacities, is influenced by a variety of pre-arrival factors. The accumulation of these resources and capacities are shaped in no small part by the quality and quantity of schooling experiences in Sudan, refugee camps and temporary countries of residence. Although educational participation and
achievement represent a future-oriented hope-object among young participants for imagining a better future, realisation of these hopes is facilitated by the acquisition of everyday pragmatic skills and competencies. Furthermore, the rationale for attaining these symbolic ideals is strongly associated with the traditional understanding of what it means to be an educated Sudanese person and its associated social function in becoming a communal resource. The availability, quantity and quality of these experiences are linked to young Sudanese people’s preparedness for and adjustment in Australian school settings. In this chapter, I argue that the accumulation of formal, non-formal and informal educational competencies, skills and knowledges are transportable and transferrable within and between a diversity of migration contexts. Although English language proficiencies are important for academic and vocational success, these other capabilities are also valued as a means of forming and participating in social networks and navigating Australian society more generally.

**Education in emergencies**

The UNHCR Education Field Guidelines (EFG) (2003) define access to education as a basic human right and humanitarian response, as well as a vital set of practices that enables hope for a better future. There is a noticeable lack of academic research that takes into account refugees’ lived experiences of education in protracted refugee situations like those encountered in refugee camps and temporary countries of residence (Courtney, 2007, p. 2). While the literature focusing on education in emergencies (EIE) is expanding, Courtney (2007) has observed that it originates largely from a United Nations (UN) or NGO-practitioner perspective. Furthermore, it remains quite small and marked by “significant gaps”. Education for children in emergency situations is a context-specific and multidimensional provision, the operation of which seeks to protect the well-being and overall social, emotional and physical development of children affected by conflict and disaster (Tefferi, 1997). According to Sinclair (2002), EIE is especially important in times of crisis, providing access, resources, activities and curriculum as well as local co-ordination and capacity building. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1999) identifies an educational emergency “as a crisis
situation created by conflict or disasters which have destabilized, disorganized or destroyed the educational system, and which require an integrated process of crisis and post-crisis support” (cited by Sinclair, 2002, p. 22). In terms of the academic literature on educational emergencies, Courtney (2007) has highlighted a lack of empirical studies that take into account the qualitative experiences of refugees regarding their education as well as contextual factors that constrain or promote learning during migration.

Although a dominant assumption of this chapter is that education, in its various forms, benefits individuals and their communities, the literature around peace building and education highlights the counterproductive, and at times, divisive aspects of education and schooling in conflict zones. These aspects include schools as wartime targets, sites of militia recruitment, the promulgation of inflammatory or subversive curriculum, untrained teachers and insufficient student resources (Isaacs, 2002). Accordingly, this chapter seeks to address a number of the pre-arrival factors that constrain and promote learning, as well as their effects on the social and cultural preparedness of young Sudanese participants. These pre-arrival influences include migration routes, exposure to racism and discrimination in temporary countries of residence, language acquisition and literary proficiency, as well as systemic variations in educational practices, academic assessment and progression. As will be shown, adjustment and transition to Australian schools is highly contingent on pre-arrival migration routes and, in particular, the quality and quantity of pre-arrival educational opportunities.

Besides the resilience-related capacity to deal with and resist adversity, young people also display a future-oriented capacity to hope in the midst of adverse or unsupportive migration contexts. In response to Courtney’s (2007) call for the incorporation of refugee stories from a variety of pre-arrival situations as well as camp and non-camp based refugees, this chapter analyses the migration experiences of a broad range of Sudanese-born and non-Sudanese-born young people, including individuals who arrived in Australia via displacement camps in Sudan, refugee camps in neighbouring African countries, countries of temporary residence such as...
Egypt (non-camp based refugees), and a number of self-identifying Sudanese young people born in Australia.

“Education is everything”: the symbolic dimension of education

Hope is a way of imagining a better future and a way of conceiving the means to get there. In drawing out the symbolic and pragmatic dimensions of hope, Godfrey’s (1987) distinction between “ultimate” and “fundamental” hope is a useful one. According to him, the ontology of “ultimate hope” connotes movement towards “what is believed desirable and believed possible although difficult to obtain” (1987, p. 55). On the other hand, “fundamental hope” presumes a general orientation and “openness of spirit” to the future and is not aimed at a particular hope-objective. For refugees, the symbolic dimensions of hope located in the idea of “a better future” might be thought of as a form of “fundamental hope”, as it involves an openness of spirit to the future in spite of significant daily threats and odds against survival. The pragmatic or instrumental dimensions of hope, which involve the everyday accumulation of desired educational capacities, could also be considered a variety of “ultimate hope”, as these specific skills, knowledges and capacities are possible, yet difficult to acquire in some pre-arrival contexts. For refugees and economic migrants, Godfrey’s two perspectives on hope are not necessarily divergent, as the imaginative construction of “a better future” can come to represent a desirable and legitimate hope-object, in and of itself.

For Ahmed (2010), the object-ification of “a better future” becomes a “happy object” that accumulates positive affective value and then circulates as a social good, preserving hope for individuals and their communities in times of significant hardship. Along similar lines to Gupta and Ferguson’s (1997) claim that immigrants use their facilities of memory to imaginatively construct their new lived worlds, the imaginative construction of “a better future” draws on specific capacities of memory, imagination and hope (in McMichael & Manderson, p. 11). As discussed in Chapter 1, Wu (1972) described the imaginative construction of hope as the “imagineering”
of alternative futures, enabling people to “see beyond” current events and contexts to envisage other “possibles”. To some extent, the notion of “imagineering” bridges the divide between the symbolic and pragmatic/instrumental aspects of hope, establishing a dialogical relationship between imagination and real-world outcomes.

Education as a symbolic ideal is reflected in the conventional Sudanese proverb, “Education is my mother and my father” (Pacheco, 2011). Among Sudanese participants, belief in education as a “metacurricular” (Ninnes, 1997) symbol of freedom, hope and empowerment is synonymous with Bourdieu’s (1999) assertion that the accumulation of symbolic capital equates to the accumulation of reasons to live. On a more everyday level, the symbolic power of education as an enduring hope-object is substantiated through the acquisition of specific educational capacities, which include an array of valued skills, knowledges and capabilities. Drawing on Spinoza’s concept of conatus, the symbolic dimensions of hope and pragmatic acquisition of specific capacities are interwoven through a dialogical interaction between the principle of self-preservation and the striving to increase one’s powers of action via the attainment of specific educational outcomes.

“Education is hope”: the way to a better future

Access to educational provisions and opportunities and the very concept of education was valorised to the point of obsession by a number of Sudanese research participants in this study. As one Sudanese participant exclaimed, “education is everything”. For other Sudanese participants, the issue of education, or lack thereof, goes to the heart of both the historical and contemporary challenges facing Sudan and its refugee population. As Rose, 24, a Sudanese university student, asserted, “education is all the reason; it’s the main reason that we came here [to Australia]”. In a study of the vocational aspirations of young African refugees in Brisbane, Australia, Tlhabano and Schweitzer (2007) reported that for more than a third of the respondents, the desire for an education surpassed the pursuit of safety and refuge as the reason for migration. Along similar lines, Courtney (2007) reported that young
Sudanese participants defined education as a lifeline pursuit and a key to their future. During interviews, Courtney’s Sudanese participants maintained that educational aspiration “was an essential component of their survival” (p. 33). As her participants explained, without the hope of education, “daily life in the camps would have been intolerable and life beyond the camps would have been equally bleak” (2007, p. 34). From these statements, it seems that hoping processes are integral to refugees and IDPs’ everyday coping through the envisaged possibility of a better life outside the context of adversity. Courtney concluded that participant responses suggested that education was viewed not as an ancillary to survival “but equally important as food and water” (2007, p. 35). Along similar lines, Rose explained that the thing that gave her hope, above all else, was her educational studies.

Hope is a matter of being and becoming. For young Sudanese people living in refugee camps and neighbouring countries, the symbolic construction and pragmatic realisation of hope are essential to their being and becoming. More specifically, the hope of education is a sustaining force for “being in the present”, and at the same time is inextricably linked to young people’s “becoming in the future”. As a consequence, education is more than a resource for immediate or present survival; education is also a resource for young Sudanese people’s cultural futures. Zournazi (2002) suggested that “our lives are subsumed by a deferral of gratification” or “the hope of things to come in cultural, aesthetic or monetary terms” (p. 150). Although this form of hope is a more obvious driver in the lives of young Sudanese, Zournazi also proposed an everyday hope, which is “not based on threat or deferral” (p. 150). In other words, hope in the present is closely related to the accumulation of positive affect or joy “as another kind of contentment – the affirmation of life as it emerges and in the transitions and movements of our everyday lives and relationships” (p. 150). Hage (2002b) reflected a similar sentiment, explaining, “Joy is the experience of a growth from one state of being to a more efficient one as it is happening” (p. 152). The processual description of joy as moving from one state of being to a more efficient one can be compared with the notion of conatus, in particular, as the striving to preserve one’s powers of action as well as accumulate greater powers for action.
For Sudanese people whose displacement and migration experiences are commonly marked by daily threat, loss or death, Zournazi’s hypothesis of an everyday hope overlooks the distinct lack of affirmative or affirmable things in the context of civil war, forced displacement and residence in openly hostile countries. In these often joyless situations, hope is necessarily deferred to things like education as a future ideal. It is important to note, however, that hope in education as a future ideal also gives life meaning, reason and purpose in the present. As Hage (2002) maintained, “hope as the deferral of joy becomes a variant of ressentiment” or “a surrender to the logic of deferral, masquerading as a higher ethics used to justify the non-pursuit of joy” (cited by Zournazi, 2002, p. 171). In the lives of displaced migrants, however, surrender to the logic of deferral and joy to come is often all that they have in the adverse present. Along slightly different lines, Massumi (2002) argued,

From my own point of view, the way that a concept like hope can be made useful is when it is not connected to an expected success – when it starts to be something different from optimism – because when you start trying to think ahead into the future from the present point, rationally there really isn’t much hope. (cited by Zournazi, 2002, p. 211)

Massumi reflects a distinctly Western position in relation to his views of hope in the world. For Sudanese migrants living in ill-equipped displacement camps in Sudan or as unrecognised refugees in neighbouring countries, thinking ahead, or what Massumi called “wishful projections” (2002, p. 211) to their possible futures in countries like Australia, however irrational or fanciful, can represent their last bastion of hope and reasons to live. With the majority of Southern Sudanese refugees of Christian denomination, one such reason to live is located in the perceived omnificent intentions of an omnipotent Judeo-Christian God.
“I survived the war because of God”: the spiritual foundations of hope

A number of Sudanese participants shared a passionate belief in the ability of education to provide a better future, which was comparable to their faith in the beneficence of God to liberate them from their adverse circumstances. As Neil, 23, a Sudanese youth leader, maintained, “God is the one to liberate us out of this situation…not ourselves. God is the one to bring peace in Sudan”. For many participants, their survival of the civil war in Sudan and subsequent arrival in Australia was attributable to, and made possible through, their belief in the redemptive powers of a Judeo-Christian deity. These findings are illustrated in other studies which demonstrate that Sudanese people’s belief in God was a specific coping strategy for dealing with the suffering associated with migration (Brune et al., 2002; Gorman et al., 2003; Khawaja et al., 2008, Spaulding, 2009). Although not peculiar to Sudanese refugees, participants’ survival and escape from Sudan was rationalised in terms of God’s “decision” to “spare” them, as opposed to their own capacities of resilience. As Sarah, 23, a Sudanese university student stated, “I survived the war because of God”. For Belle, a Sudanese mother of eight, “We just leave everything in God’s hands, and expect God’s going to give us”. She maintained that “with God” and “through God”, “nothing is hard; everything is possible”.

In a study of coping and resilience among Sudanese refugees in Australia, Tlhabano and Schweitzer (2007) found that a belief in God helped participants cope with difficult migration experiences. According to them, “Belief in God provided participants with a mechanism via which they could regain some of the control and meaning they had lost over their lives” (2007, p. 11). One participant in their study said, “I was losing my control and I decided to walk out and just leave it to God, that’s just what I said and nothing has happened since then”. In the present study, Sarah explained that the daily habit of building a relationship of trust with God and

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6 When directly quoting Sudanese participants, I have attempted to translate and convey the richness of their distinctly African expression. It is hoped that this will provide the reader with additional insights into participants’ developing oral proficiency in the English language.
“putting God as part of my life” was a significant source of hope during difficult times in Kakuma refugee camp.

Similarly, in times of poverty and hardship, Belle maintained that the “only thing left”, “the only thing give me hope” was a belief in the powers of God. As she reflected, “when you have difficulties in your life, that way you think of God, but when there is no difficulty, you don’t make it a very big deal”. Sarah concluded, “I think it is through hardship that where you evolve that habit of knowing God”. In their critique of the deterministic undercurrents of developmental research, Davidson and Shahar (2007) claimed that the “the fundamental role of human agency as an additional source or origin of motion, change, activity” is lost (p. 221). From the above responses of Sudanese participants, it seems that the deferral of control to “God” represents a loss of personal agency in their particularly difficult situations. Rather than losing their fundamental agency, participants’ intentional decision to put their faith and lives in the hands of God defers or minimises the horribleness of their situation by positing a greater good.

As previous studies on hope have found, meaningful relationships with others, nature and God are significant processes of maintaining hope (Herth, 1993; Parse, 1999; Stephenson, 1991). As previously discussed, compensatory or protective factors are those aspects of an individual’s environment that can minimise exposure to risk in the first place (Garmezy et al., 1984; Luthar & Ziglar, 1991). For many diasporic populations, religious affiliations and faith are identified as powerful compensatory or protective means of fostering resiliency and solidarity (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). Brune et al. (2002) concluded that firm belief systems act as a “protective factor against post-traumatic disorders in traumatized refugees” (p. 451). Furthermore, by contextualising traumatic events as determined by “God’s will”, refugee participants were able to find meaning in their loss and suffering. In a study by Goodman (2004), one of his Sudanese participants exclaimed, “I believe that I am now alive because of God. I can’t believe I escaped all those difficulties by myself. I believe God was working with me at that time” (p. 1187). Mirroring these sentiments, Richardson (2002) defined resilience as the motivational force within
everyone that motivates them “to be in harmony with a spiritual source of strength” (p. 309). However, for refugees and other war-affected populations, the recognition of God’s will or “fate” as assisting in their survival sits next to a parallel, and largely unresolved, vision of themselves as productive agents of their own survival and futures. Jevne (1994) went some way to explaining this dichotomous logic, suggesting that it is in the space between the dichotomies of life where hope happens; in the space between agency and determinism; between the secular and sacred; between doubt and faith. (pp. 134-135).

As is the case with education, individuals’ beliefs in something “bigger” and “outside” their immediate contextual confines is an important source of hope and, by implication, the self-preservative and accumulative aspects of resilience. The existential truth or objective beingness of the hope-object, be it education or God, is in some respects of secondary importance to the individual’s “mobilisation of hope” in the present (Zournazi, 2002, p. 126). Correspondingly, Craig, 25, a Sudanese university student, explained that by reading and reflecting on the biblical parable of Job, “you see the lives of someone…who went through very tough times and he eventually got over it”. For Craig, the message of Job is relevant to his own circumstances because “we sometimes feel like, if you are in a very tough time, you are near something good”. From this statement, we can conclude that the ability to “see” and “move” past present experiences of hardship and adversity is an important feature of hope and resilience.

According to Craig, the “toughness” of tough times is recognised as a sign and precursor of good things to come. For Mark, 23, a university student, a belief in God enabled him to reframe pain and hardship as a productive life experiences, “I still believe in God, so my whole life, all this pain, all the pain that I’ve got, so it has actually contributed to my life”. In their ethnographic study of spinal cord injury patients at a long-term care facility, Laskiowski and Morse (1993) described a similar interaction between “negative” and “positive” affect, concluding that despair was “part of the process essential to the modification of hope, and the process of learning to accept a changed life” (p. 143). Accordingly, the counter-intuitive capacity to
reinterpret negative experiences as precursors to positive experiences is an essential aspect of hope, feeding into the broader accumulation of resilience. From the responses of Sudanese participants, the perceived ability of education to bestow certain proficiencies, insights and ways of coping is analogous to their deferral of survival to the omnipotent powers of God. Direct parallels can be drawn between Belle’s belief that through God “everything is possible” and Richard’s belief that “through education, everything is possible”. Ongoing participation and faith in each is believed to endow or transfer certain capabilities to cope and endure, while also providing a source and site of hope for a better future.

“An infant is considered to be a learner”: approaches to education in Sudan

While Sudanese respondents perceived education as particularly relevant in terms of their hope for a better future, a number of interviewees acknowledged the pragmatic or instrumental aspects of attaining an education, framing them in terms of basic communication and understanding between people. The hopeful realisation of educational skills, knowledges and competencies in Australia rests largely on young people’s ability to acquire basic language proficiencies in Sudan and other temporary countries of residence prior their arrival. As the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) figures indicate, there are significant statistical differences between school enrolment in Northern and Southern Sudan, “In 2004, an estimated 78 per cent of children were enrolled in Khartoum state whereas only 26 per cent were enrolled in South Darfur state” (2007, p. 19). Although literacy rates increased from 45.8 percent to 60.9 percent between 1990 and 2004 for persons aged 15 and over, overall literacy rates remained quite low and marked by significant gender inequality (71.1 percent for males versus 51.8 percent for females). However, even these statistics are open to contestation as the information provided by local education officials in Southern Sudan between 1990-1999 is widely regarded as inaccurate and unreliable. Accordingly, the SPLM Secretariat of Education (2001) noted a widespread tendency of education aficionados to provide incorrect or inflated enrolment information and figures as a method of acquiring more schooling materials or funds from the donor community. Of the estimated 30 percent enrolment
rate of school-age children in Southern Sudan, UNICEF estimated that only 0.3 percent of these children complete the eight year primary school cycle, with only “12% of children proceeding past Grade 2 and less than 4% progress past Grade 4” (Brophy, 2003, p. 3). In Sudan and neighbouring refugee camps, community elders and teaching staff with basic academic training often lead young people’s education in informal settings such as in homes or in open-air schools.

The UNHCR (EFG) defines “basic education” as a component of “formal education”, “which refers to a system of providing primary and lower secondary education as well as alternative education programs for out-of-school youth and adults”. Formal education activities include English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, basic skills or general educational development (GED), college or university degrees or certificate programs, vocational or technical school diplomas, certificate or apprenticeship programs, as well as work-related courses or training in addition to college and vocational certificate programs. The provision of non-formal education refers to less formal education settings and environments with less structured activities, which do not necessarily lead to recognised certificates or diplomas (UNHCR, 2007, p. 59). In the lives of young Sudanese refugees, access and exposure to various levels of formal, non-formal or informal educational provisions and learning prior to arrival in Australia influence their preparedness for and successful participation in Australian schools as well as the accumulation of social and cultural competencies, belonging, hope and resilience.

In this study, a significant number of the Sudanese parents and elders viewed educated young people as valuable communal resources. As explored in Chapter 5, successful educational and vocational outcomes are linked to the fulfilment of transnational obligations to friends and relatives in Africa and are considered to be an investment in the rebuilding of Sudan following the Sudanese Civil War. According to Ben, a Southern Sudanese community leader, if a child is “born normal” (i.e. without any physical or mental disabilities or impairments), the child learner “will bring a fruitful future for the parents or the community in general”. While the commodification of learning (and the learner) at such a young age may be
unpalatable to some Western audiences, for tribes and communities in rural parts of Sudan, a healthy “normal” child is considered to be a valuable communal attribute.

In rural parts of Sudan, informal education often begins with the intergenerational transfer of knowledge. As Ben explained, “when the child is moved to spending time with the grandparents, the child will be talking to the grandmother asking questions, and the grandmother will be educating that little child on how to grow and be a good child”. Coombs and Ahmed (1974) equated informal education to a “lifelong process by which every person acquires knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights from daily experience and exposure to the environment – whether at home, work, or at play” (p. 8). Importantly, they added, “Informal education is unorganised and perhaps also unsystematic, yet it accounts for the bulk of any person’s total lifetime learning” (1974, p. 8). In relatively safe “First World” countries like Australia, learning can be distributed over the course of a lifetime. In contexts of civil war and resettlement, however, educational and vocational outcomes are an urgent capacity of survival, and are accelerated by communal expectations to achieve.

A number of Sudanese participants explained that competency-based class advancement in Sudan conflicted with a predominately age-based model of class advancement in Australian schools. These differences were perceived to significantly affect young people’s ability to “catch up” and “keep up” with their peers. As Pacheco (2011) reported, the formal education systems in Sudan and Kenya are “modeled after the British system in which primary school consists of Standards 1-8”, and “secondary school is Forms 1-4” (p. 39). In the formal schooling system in Southern Sudan, progression from one class year to the next is based largely on competency rather than student age. While it is not uncommon for children to be held back or repeat a year in the Australian school structure, advancement from one class to the next is usually determined on the basis of age. In terms of the effects of school disruption prior to resettlement, Tlhabano and Schweitzer (2007) noted that young African participants reported instances where they were promoted to higher grades “regardless of their prior achievement as a way of catching up with peers” (p. 15). As a result of this grade skipping, respondents were unprepared for the upper
grade, as they had had insufficient time to meet their particular “lower” grade outcomes. Although the age-based advancement model has the potential to facilitate a sense of belonging between Sudanese students and their peers, it brings into question whether the learner will be able to cope with the higher-grade curriculum.

According to Neil, 23, a university student and youth leader, the largely age-based allocation and academic progression in the Australian context represents one of the “biggest challenges” facing Sudanese students. Commenting on the detrimental effects of these dissimilarities, Callum, 21, a youth leader and university student, explained,

Like here it sort of goes by age, if you're seven you start kindergarten, if you're thirteen you start year seven. Over there [in Sudan] it’s like if you’re thirteen and you don’t know anything and you fail, you can sort of stay in that year like year two, whereas here, it’s sort of like by ages systems and you get a lot of sort of um, well… sort of kids that are a year younger who are sort of put into year nine and they can’t really cope.

One possible solution, according to Forrest, a Sudanese MRC worker, is to “assess students on the basis of what he or she knows” and not on their age. During an interview with Neil, 23, a Sudanese university student, the social implications of systemic misalignment between the Sudanese and Australian schooling systems were discussed. He commented that for young people who are academically at a year 6 or 7 level in Sudan and are placed in year 10 or 11 in Australian schools, the likelihood of their being unable to cope and dropping out is significantly increased. While the focus is on participants who have been able to participate in Australian schools and receive an education (and remain committed to it), it is worth observing that a number of Sudanese young people are unable to do this. When Sudanese young people drop out of high school, Neil observed that they “Come together and they do nothing; that’s why they go to the train station. They end up at the train station doing nothing at the train station”. The congregation of Sudanese young people in and
around local Western Sydney train stations and associated cases of public misbehaviour are discussed in subsequent chapters. It is of relevance to the current discussion that a number of research participants perceived these acts of public nuisance and associated alcohol abuse as connected to young people’s inability to manage grade level curriculum and keep up with their classmates. In a study of the educational needs for African refugee students in Manitoba, Canada, Kanu (2008) found a link between the lack of targeted and specialised support for refugee students and the high dropout rate of African refugee students in the region.

For Sudanese young people in Western Sydney, it is reasonable to suggest that the impact of dropping out of school and associated community stigma on their sense of hope around educational success is potentially quite devastating.7 Ironically, what may be contributing to the significant number of Sudanese dropouts is the inflexible nature and weight of these expectations. Although the systemic differences between the Sudanese and Australian educational approaches undoubtedly present a significant challenge for young Sudanese people, the first and second civil wars signified a far more insidious and overwhelming threat to educational participation and achievement, cultural identity, and basic survival.

“…because of war”: the Sudanese Civil War

The first and second civil wars in Sudan had disastrous consequences for Sudanese young people and their communities in terms of physical and psychological trauma, interrupted schooling and the breakdown of traditional forms of knowledge transfer. Ironically, it is in these contexts of adversity that capacities of hope, resourcefulness and resilience are forged and accumulated. According to Ian, 22, a university student, despite the threat of war, sporadic militia attacks, and other unsupportive conditions, students would absorb as much education as possible, when and where possible. He

7 Without overstating the point, it is also important to recognise that public sites like train stations can represent important spaces for youth interaction, intercultural engagement and artistic expression.
highlighted resilience in the double sense of coping amidst circumstantial adversity and the future-oriented accumulation of capacities of adaptability and resourcefulness: “So there were on and off classes, so you study permanently because you might study now, and the war will break out. So the condition will not be conducive. So they’ll [government sponsored militia] be coming to schools, maybe killing the people, so you can’t study in those conditions”. Frankl (1984) articulated a similar capacity for adaptability and growth in relation to various levels or intensities of adversity through his phrase “a tragic optimism” (p. 62). According to him, a tragic optimism “presupposes that life is potentially meaningful under any circumstances, even those which are most miserable. And this in turn presupposes the human capacity to creatively turn life’s negative aspects into something positive or constructive” (p. 62).

During an interview with Trevor, a high-ranking Sudanese community leader, I inquired, “Where do you think that motivation for education, that love of education, comes from originally?” Reflecting on the counter-intuitive propensity for hope amidst adversity, Trevor replied, “It comes from the war, because there has been a war for more than 22 years”. For him, education is “the source” of spiritual, psychological and physical freedom, “the source of education is the only way out…education is the way out”. His belief in the liberating qualities of education is analogous to Lynch’s (1995) definition of hope as “the fundamental knowledge and feeling that that there is a way out of difficulty” (p. 32). The propulsion to achieve an education that Trevor described is also reminiscent of Parse’s (199) definition of hope as “a way of propelling self toward envisioned possibilities” (p. 12). This conception of hope is also indicative of Spinoza’s notion of affectus, as a force which sediments over time to become particular kinds of bodily capacities (i.e. affectio).

For many Sudanese young people, the Southern Sudanese political leader Dr John Garang personifies what can be achieved through education. John Garang de Mabior led the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) during the Second Sudanese Civil War, between 1983-2005. Following the signing of the CPA in January 2005, Garang briefly served as the First President of Southern Sudan in a power-sharing
agreement with the current President, Omar al-Bashir. As Rose, 24, a university student, commented, “All the well-known people in Sudan, they are well known because of education. Like for example, John Garang, he was educated… And so, you want to be studying law to be like them”. She goes on to explain, “You want to be a doctor, you want to be these good things, you just want to be something else. So that’s why, respect and pride”. For other young Sudanese like Ian, John Garang represented a symbol of morality, enlightenment and resistance, “so those people who rebel against the Sharia law, maybe those who were educated like Dr John Garang. So through education then, you know your rights. So if you’re not educated, how would you know your rights?” For Ian, Garang continues to be a Southern Sudanese role model who embodied a learned, informed and moral form of resistance against authoritarian rule.

According to Jeremy, an MRC community worker, young people’s valorisation of political and military personalities can be attributed to the loss of fathers, uncles and brothers during wartime. This breakdown of communal role models meant, “we were very desperate for a male presence in our lives”. In the Australian context, the story of John Garang continues to be recounted among young Sudanese students. As Heather, an IEC teacher, commented, “get them to talk about their heroes and they’ll tell the story of John Garang more times than anybody else. You expect for other kids you’ll get Beyonce and Mariah Carey. No! You get John Garang every time”. One might expect that, having been exposed to Australia’s popular fascination with North American celebrity culture, young people would expeditiously find replacements for these political and historical figureheads. Their resistance to pop-culture personalities and cultural trends in the United States indicates an enduring and meaningful transnational connection to Southern Sudan and the inspiring political figures who have helped to shape it.

“It’s a really difficult life”: refugee camps and Cairo, Egypt
For those individuals and families who fled Sudan during the civil war years, the hope of receiving an education remained a central part of their migration journeys. For some, education would be found in neighbouring refugee and displacement camps, with classrooms run by the UN, UN implementing partners or missionary church groups. For others who travelled through Middle East countries such as Egypt, access to educational services proved to be a far more difficult proposition. These significant differences between educational access in neighbouring refugee camps and transition countries in the Middle East deeply affected many of the participants in this study. While the circumstances and conditions encountered in refugee camps were, for the most part, better than those experienced in the Middle East, life in refugee camps was marked by its own unique set of challenges. The migration routes travelled by Sudanese young people and their families to Australia also influenced their preparation for Australian schools in terms of academic, social and cultural preparedness and of integration more generally. Nevertheless, it was in and through these difficult journeys that resilience and hope were shaped and accumulated.

The Egyptian experience

While neighbouring refugee camps or Egypt represent extremely difficult and, by all accounts, undesirable temporary or extended places of residence, the general consensus among participants was that Middle Eastern countries throw up far greater challenges than those encountered in refugee or displacement camps. As participants remarked, these difficulties included a lack of educational opportunities, exposure to racism and discrimination, political marginalisation, and social isolation. As Louise, an MRC director, recounted, “from what people tell me, like, Egypt, yeah it’s just you’re – you’re not in the camp, you’re in the city and you sort of have to fend for yourself a bit more and whatever or you don’t get any firm education”. Noting the difficulties faced by those who came through Egypt, Sarah, 23, remarked, “those who came from Cairo, they had no idea, so they find everything hard”. Along similar lines, Phillip, a community leader, discussed the educational disadvantages for those who travelled through the Middle East, “Those who come from Cairo, or from
Middle East in general, will not have the basic education”. For Phillip, the major disadvantage for Sudanese people travelling through these countries was the lack of formal education in formal Arabic or English, “They speak in Arabic, but even, they didn’t go to school with that Arabic. They just got it in ‘market Arabic’. So they don’t have the basic education when they come here, and that’s another issue for them. It’s not easy for them to catch up in English”.

As the host Egyptian population does not recognise Sudanese arrivals as “refugees”, basic hospitality and entitlements to public services and amenities are often denied to the Sudanese population (Moro, 2004). According to Louise, young people who did receive a “firm education” in Egypt were “the lucky ones”. Young Sudanese men and women whose parents had been fortunate enough to find work often found themselves consigned to life at home looking after younger brothers and sisters. Commenting on the living conditions in Egypt, Natasha, a Dinka community leader, stated that it was not uncommon for seven Sudanese families to inhabit one apartment unit. Similarly, Rose, a university student, commented that Cairo represented “a really difficult life”. She explained that she used to work as a housekeeper in Egypt in order to pay rent and support her younger brothers and sister so they could go to school. Whilst participants described themselves as being “stuck” at home with younger siblings, this sense of responsibility and commitment to family is anecdotal evidence of the communal nature of resilience. To some extent, the challenges of daily life in Cairo city are counterbalanced by the benefits of group solidarity and “togetherness”. As Herman wrote, “The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experiences” (1997, p. 214). Although resilience has a uniquely personal dimension, the above responses indicate that individual resilience is supported by a complex set of familial and communal strategies for coping.

In addition to schoolwork, cleaning jobs and other family responsibilities, Sudanese young people regularly experienced racism and discrimination, social isolation and physical assault in Egyptian cities. According to Callum, 21, a university student, some of the Egyptian population “had this idea that we were inferior and we were
invading or coming to live in their country”. He added, “we did it tough in our own way, walking to school and getting food chucked off the balconies and all those things and people calling us ‘chocolates’”. Peter, a community liaison officer, attributes the response of the local Egyptian population to “a clash of cultures”. Correspondingly, Richard, 23, a university student and youth leader, attributes the Egyptian reaction to the Sudanese people to a long-standing Christian-Muslim conflict, contending that “the problem of Sudan” is underpinned by tensions between Southern Christians and Northern Muslims. He noted, “Sometimes tensions come up, they’ll (Egyptians) say, “oh, you are the ones fight Islam in Sudan”. Moreover, some of the Egyptian population hold the view that the “Islamisation of all these (African) countries is blocked only because of Southern Sudan”.

While racism, discrimination and cultural marginalisation are common experiences for many displaced Sudanese in Cairo, it is important to recognise the diversity and complexity of experiences among Sudanese communities. For Rita, 18, a high school student, growing up in Alexandria, Egypt, was quite a positive experience. She noted that it was a “good community” with few instances of racism and discrimination. Rita also noted that she had a number of friends who were Egyptian. As a result of prolonged exposure to discrimination in parts of Egypt, Heather, an IEC teacher, commented that “students coming through Egypt have a great sense of victimisation, funnily enough, and a greater sense of discrimination against them”. According to her, the accumulation of these negative experiences means that “they’re a little bit quicker to see discrimination and a little bit quicker to fire up about discrimination [in Australia]”. This defensive response pattern of “firing up” can be productively recast as an accumulated capacity to identify and respond to dangerous situations or encounters. It also links to Bottrell’s (2007) framing of resistance as a contextualised expression of resilience.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Massumi (2002) claimed that affects are trans-situational, arguing that they are not isolated to a particular context or individual. Accordingly, it would seem that the young people’s affective responses have been shaped and
sharpened by their experiences in pre-arrival countries. To some extent, these experiences have left a lasting impression that is reproduced in Australian social contexts. As a result of these negative experiences in Egypt, Heather stated, “when they came to Australia, they knew what to look for. They knew what discrimination looked like”. As a result of his experiences in Egypt, Callum explained that a residual resentment has coalesced for those who went through Egypt. In contrast, there is general agreement among Sudanese participants that life in African refugee camps was relatively easier than life in Egypt, as it provided access to a basic level of education.

**Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya**

Although a significant number of Sudanese participants arrived in Australia via Egypt, a large number spent time in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. In the Kakuma camp, primary school education is sponsored and run by denominational and secular humanitarian agencies (Pacheco, 2001). However, Hollenbach (2004) noted that the “possibility of any education beyond primary level is slim” (p. 1). Courtney (2007) maintained that an estimated 60 percent of children in Kakuma refugee camp and 36 percent in the Dadaab camp had access to “some form of education”. By Western standards, these percentages are by no means adequate, but as Courtney (2007) observed, these rates are “are high when considering that only 30% of refugees around the world have access to education” (p. 8). In his study of unaccompanied young people from Sudan, Goodman (2004) reported, “For some, the hope that school provided, even the limited schooling they were able to get in the refugee camp, provided the impetus for them to remain in the camps despite the hardships” (p. 1190). From her discussions with Sudanese who had arrived separately via Egypt or Kenya, Louise explained, “some people tell me that it’s actually probably better to have gone through Kenya because there are a few more formal school settings”.

Although a number of research respondents noted certain advantages to staying in refugee camps, June, an IEC counsellor highlighted a significant downside to extended stays in refugee camps. According to her, “when they’re in a refugee camp
that they been sort of standing still”. June further commented, “a lot of the students come in here [to the IEC] have had no education at all. Have had no form of schooling; so only a couple of hours under a tree, or something like that, but they value education”. Although indicative of her concern for students’ lack of prior schooling, June’s comments seem to devalue the role of informal learning in these pre-arrival contexts, a point further explored in Chapter 4. As Peter, an community liaison officer, explained,

A lot of kids did some school in the camps or displaced area. The first thing they don’t have basic English or basic way of being in the school itself…if you are in a camp, you go to the school whereas, there’s no teachers there…If the rain rain, for example, you cannot go to school. School is depending on the conditions.

Bauman (2002) described the conditional and uncertain nature of life in refugee camps as a “lasting state of temporariness” (p. 142). As explored in Chapter 6, the indeterminate state of “frozen transience” experienced in refugee camps significantly affects inhabitants’ management of despair and future-oriented practices of hope.

**Overcoming the limitations of refugee camps**

Although many of the research participants recounted negative experiences in terms of pre-arrival educational opportunities, others suggested that their education before arriving in Australia prepared them in various ways for participation in Australian schools. These divergent responses highlight a complex array of contextual factors involved in young people’s migration journeys to Australia. Whereas Clifford, 23, a university student, acknowledges the incompleteness of his education in Ethiopia, his response draws attention to the importance of even “a reasonable” education in preparing him for life in Australia, “So the bit of education I had in the camp really helped me a lot”. Commenting on Clifford’s educational opportunities in an
Ethiopian camp, Margot, a Catholic educational officer and close friend of Clifford, remarked that his “advantage is that the refugee camp he was in, in Ethiopia, had not a bad education system in there, so they got good, a reasonable education; and that happens in some refugee camps. Jesuit Refugee Service for instance really has a big push on education”. Along similar lines, Forrest, an MRC youth officer, discusses the role played by the UNHCR in relation to school funding, teacher recruitment and support in refugee camps, “in the refugee camp, when we went there, there were refugee schools funded by the UNHCR and basically, what that means is that there were teachers employed from the refugee community, the host community, the Kenyan community”. Interestingly, and in a somewhat contradictory follow-up, he remarked,

there were no adequate service given in our camps of teaching and other services in the whole refugee camp…Education itself was not sufficient. So you could go to class, the whole day, no teacher there; there was your books, then you come back home…And so we have to read and we sit for the exams at the end of the term.

Forrest’s response suggests that although there was some access to education and trained teaching staff, learning and educational achievement fell largely to the student. As the formation and preservation of resilience in young Sudanese people extend into, and is supported by, communal networks, in contexts like refugee camps, individualised capacities of coping, learning and hope are essential to survival in the absence of supportive familial or other social networks. These capacities for learning are carried over to resettlement in Australia where the discipline to learn continues. As explored in Chapter 6, young refugees have different short- and longer-term responses to these conditions and do not always respond to them with hope or resilience.

Ivan, a Sudanese MRC community officer, commented that when Sudanese refugees cross the border into Kenya, they go to “an unknown place”. The geographical isolation and foreignness of Kakuma refugee camp is reflected in its Swahili
translation, “nowhere”. The translation of Kakuma as “nowhere” is reflected in the concept of “non-places” (Augé, 1995), which refers to ordinary, everyday places that “do not integrate other places, meanings, traditions and sacrificial, ritual moments but remain, due to a lack of characterization, non-symbolized and abstract spaces” (Diken, 2004, p. 82). According to Ivan, the presumption and expectation that life in refugee camps is a “temporary phenomenon” and an “exceptional” space” meant that “it’s not a home”. Although viewed by Ivan as a “transitory phenomenon”, refugee camps are increasingly becoming, as Diken has suggested, a “permanent” location, with the supposedly “transient” condition of refugees extending “indefinitely, becoming an irrevocable and permanent situation” (2004, p. 93). In a study of the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, Agier (2002) reported that the indefinite status, lack of life purpose and monotony of daily camp life often results in camp inhabitants expressing feelings of powerlessness and uselessness (p. 329). Paradoxically, it is in these contexts of despair that hope can be formed. As Parse (1990) explained, the experience of hope can only be known in relation to the ever-present possibility of no-hope. It is in these spaces of indefinitude and uncertainty where despair and hope are negotiated. These sentiments are reflected by Bloch (1998) who proposed that hope “dwells in the region of the not-yet, a place where entrance and…final content are marked by an enduring indeterminacy” (p. 341). It seems, therefore, that feelings of hopefulness are always already counterbalanced by feelings of uncertainty, doubt and even despair. This signals the dialogical interaction between despair and hope; namely, that the feeling of hope is a productive and life-affirming response in relation to feelings of despair. However, hope is constructed not only in spaces of uncertainty. As hope is theorised as an accumulative positive affect, hope can attach itself to and build upon other positive affects like happiness, joy and belonging.

An important dimension of resilience is located in the ways people respond to despair and suffering. According to Craig, 25, a Sudanese university student, time spent in a refugee camp “actually strengthened my response [to] most of the things”. His comments highlight the paradoxical relationship between suffering and resilience; namely, how it is through the endurance and overcoming of adversity that hope and resilience sediment to become more enduring capacities to act. Furthermore, Craig’s claim that his time in refugee camp strengthened his response
“to most things” indicates the accumulative, generalisable and transferable dimensions of resilience. In a related discussion, William, 25, provided an example of this counter-intuitive practice of drawing out the positive aspects of experiences of hardship. He explained that “there are strong points” to life in Kakuma and Cairo, “You get to know other worlds. You get to know other opportunities”. Along similar lines, Sarah expresses mixed gratitude towards Kakuma refugee camp, “So we not forget Kakuma, but there are bad things and good things about Kakuma, yeah”. In contrast to the binary framing of nostalgic feelings as “good” or “bad”, Sarah’s discussion of the co-presence of “good” and “bad” memories and associated mixed feelings is sympathetic to Hamilton’s (2007) claim that nostalgia is more productively viewed as a “multi-layered memorial process” (p. 70), involving a combination of bittersweet emotions. The multi-layered and multi-directional characteristics also connect to the discussion of transnational connections and diasporic longing in Chapter 5.

“Bad things and good things”: nostalgia and nostalgic memories

The critical category of memory generally referred to as “nostalgic memory” represents an interesting phenomenological variety of memory in the everyday lives of exiled and diasporic populations. In the case of Sudanese participants, nostalgic memories are productive in terms of their capacity to establish historical continuity between the past and the present, as well as a resource for the preservation of hope in an imagined future to come. In the recollection and evocation of nostalgic memories, a complex affective vocabulary is invoked, embodied and traversed. Feelings of nostalgia that accompany nostalgic recollections are commonly framed in binary terms, such as sadness and happiness, bitterness and sweetness, despairing and hopefulness. Nostalgic memories and the nostalgic emotions evoked by their recollection are often criticised as being overly sentimental, escapist and unproductive (Bal et al., 1999, p. xi). In contrast to the tendency to frame nostalgia in negative terms, as “a form of memory that strips the past of all traces of pain”, Selkides et al. (2004) emphasised “the “bittersweet” dimensions of nostalgia (cited by Hamilton, 2007, p. 72).
Along similar lines, Hamilton (2007) proposed a “definition of nostalgia that stresses memory as an emotional process involving agency in the present”, while “foregrounding the positive feelings evoked by nostalgia” (p. 72). Traditional understandings of nostalgia are criticised for their reconstruction of a past that never was, and will never be. As Stuart (1993) wrote, “Nostalgia is a sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience. Rather, it remains behind and before that experience” (p. 23). In contrast, Spitzer (1999) argued that nostalgia has the capacity to empower in certain contexts “if critically tempered and historically informed” (p. xi). He asserted that nostalgic memory “sets up the positive from within the “world of yesterday” as a model for creative inspiration, and possible emulation, within the “world of the here-and-now”” (1999, p. 92). Nostalgic memory thus enables subjects to “get outside of”, and even traverse the common, linear conception of time, segmented along past, present and future tense. By entering into the affective experience of nostalgia, nostalgic rememberers are equipped, perceptually at least, with a certain temporal manoeuvrability, which, if not freeing them from a teleological concept of time in toto, at least provides them with a certain amount of elbow-room from which to reposition themselves in relation to normatively defined “negative” trauma criteria and other universalising labels.

In her discussion of productive nostalgia, Blunt (2003) shifted the focus of inquiry away from nostalgia as a device of narration or the imagination to an emphasis on the embodiment and enactment of nostalgia in practice (p. 717). Drawing parallels with Zournazi’s discussion of hope as a form of future nostalgia, Blunt contended that productive nostalgia is “orientated towards the present and the future as well as towards the past” (p. 717). This contrasts with analyses of nostalgia, which frame the phenomenon in terms of loss, mourning and the impossibility of return (2003, p. 717). According to Blunt, the concept of productive nostalgia “refocuses the desire for both proximate homes and more distant homes” (2003, p. 717; italics added). Productive nostalgia is defined as a longing for home that is “embodied and enacted in practice”. In contrast to the retroactive construction of nostalgia, it is better conceived of as a productive capacity oriented towards the future as well as the past.
During an interview with Ian, 22, a Sudanese university student, I asked, “Do you think it’s important to remember those times [in refugee camps and unsupportive neighbouring countries] or do you try and push them to the back of your mind?” He responded, “Sometimes it’s important to remember them so that they make you feel strong and find that you have been through many things”. From these comments it would appear that the selective recounting of painful experiences reminds him of his ability to cope with and endure difficult times. However, his use of “sometimes” suggests that these experiences can be quite volatile and selectively recalled for a particular purpose. Ian also maintained, “So you have to remember them at some point…not all the time, otherwise you would get distressed”. By mediating the frequency of these distressing recollections, he seems able to regain a certain sense of control over these experiences. In his discussion of the productive potential of selective recall and ordering of traumatic memories, Brison (1999) argued that narrative memory is not passively endured, but rather gives “shape and temporal order to the events recalled, establishing more control over their recalling, and helping the survivor to remake a self” (p. 40). As discussed in Chapter 1, early trauma studies often assumed a causal teleology; namely, trauma followed by an expected distress response (Hodgkin & Radstone, 2003, p. 97). Missing from this causal trauma model is an emphasis on individuals’ agentic capacities to strategically recollect and retroactively make meaning out of past hardships. For Hamilton (2007), actively remembering times of happiness is a survival strategy, which works to reaffirm “the political agency of the autobiographical subject in the present” (p. 70). The ability to recall times of happiness – without forsaking times of sadness – links to the concept of conatus, as it not only preserves the self in the present but also establishes a platform of positive affect from which to imagine a better future.

Tomkins (1962) argued that maximisation of positive affect and minimisation of negative was necessary for optimal mental health. In a similar vein, Ian’s responses suggest that the recollection of painful memories and associated “negative” affects can, at times, be engaged as productive resources in the present. As Ian explained, personal experiences of hardship and loss “are part of your journey as a person. So you have to remember them. They remind you of your past, and you have to use the past to influence the present”. Based on this statement, Ian understands the past as a
pedagogic space that can be resourcefully drawn upon to make sense of and influence the present. The location of hope in educational opportunities, be they symbolic or instrumental, past or present, can represent a sustaining force in the lived present as well as an imaginative mode for becoming. As a symbol of hope, education provides continuity between the past and present, “giving power to find meaning in the worst adversity” (Oliver in Parse, 1999, p. 16).

“My little basics”: preparation for the Australian school system

Discussions with participants regarding their pre-arrival experiences of education and the success of this education to prepare them for school and life in Australia revealed a number of varying, conditional and context-specific responses. While some respondents agreed unequivocally that their pre-arrival education did prepare them for education in Australia, levels of preparedness were conditional upon access to English classes, which were also relative to their particular migration routes. When asked, “Do you think that your experience with education in Kakuma has prepared you for education in Australia?” Sarah, 23, exclaimed,

I will never forget Kakuma. I learn English in Kakuma and when I finished my high school, I worked with UNHCR. So when I came here [Australia], you know, I understand what I was doing. I can communicate with other Australians and made it more easy for me. So resettling wasn’t that hard.

From Sarah’s response, it seems that the early stages of resettlement and relative ease of cultural transition are closely linked to the acquisition of English proficiency in pre-arrival contexts. Furthermore, her ability to communicate in English highlights the interconnection between education as a symbolic ideal and the pragmatic dimensions of hope as realised through the acquisition of specific capabilities (i.e. English language proficiency). A number of other participants also explained that the
acquisition of even a basic level of English in refugee camps or other temporary countries of asylum helped them in the early stages of resettlement in Australia. Although the interview questions explored interviewees’ perceptions of previous education and preparedness for schooling in Australia, participants emphasised the importance of pre-arrival English studies as a vital resource from the moment they arrived in Australia. For Richard, 23, a basic understanding of English was fundamental to his early cultural orientation:

Oh, definitely, it did. When I came first in Australia as soon as I stepped my foot in the airport, none of my family speaks English, but because of my little basics that I know from the camp, got me to at least communicate with people…which one is agent? What’s your name? Or, where is your passport?

Along similar lines, Neil, 23, a university student, suggests that while the education he received in Uganda “was not much of anything”, at the same time, “everyone need to know that basic English, same, since like, ‘hello’ and other things”. It appears that time spent in camp schools provided a number of interviewees with a limited but indispensible degree of oral English proficiency. Highlighting ambivalence towards the adequacy and role played by schools in refugee camps, Neil concluded, “So in some way, it did prepare me, but it did not do much because there were no proper education in the refugee camp, yeah”. As Neil could communicate in English as a result of his prior schooling in Africa, his phrase “proper education” indicates his understanding that education extends beyond the acquisition of a basic competency in English to specific cultural and vocational capacities.

Similarly, Callum asserted, “I received a tiny, tiny education. I went to school daily and it was in a church, um, and it was, there was a lot of kids, um, and they had minimum resources and, um, the quality of education wasn’t high”. Neil and Callum’s responses reflect a common experience of many Sudanese refugees who arrive in Australia via African refugee camps. From their responses, we might conclude that there is much more to preparedness for cultural and educational
orientation than a basic level of English proficiency. As Margot, a denominational administrator, commented, “It’s very difficult to explain an electric kettle if you’ve never seen an electric kettle and you don’t know how it works”. While a rudimentary level of English is an essential resource for young people’s social and cultural transition into Australian society, their longer-term educational aspirations can only be realised through the accumulation of specific forms of social, cultural and educational skills and capabilities.

“A little bit about a lot”: capacities other than English proficiency

Although it is not unique to Sudanese people, participants in this study regularly expressed an expansive and sophisticated capacity for general knowledge. General knowledge is an accumulated capacity of generalised and generalisable knowledge highly relevant to survival in specific foreign settings. In the absence of formal education in pre-arrival countries, this distributed intellectual resource represented a situated and transferrable capacity for adaptation within and across a variety of sociocultural contexts during migration and resettlement. For displaced Sudanese refugees in Africa, generalisable capacities of general knowledge and poly-lingualism were considered resources of survival within unfamiliar foreign settings and among new populations. As one participant explained, the ability to “know a little bit about a lot” increases migrants’ ability to navigate foreign countries and communicate with local populations. During interviews, the expressed ability of some participants to remember exact dates and events in Sudan’s history was quite marked. That said, one might also expect that living through a civil war would produce informed participants through their active engagement in their contested national histories and surrounding political context.

In addition to a sophisticated general knowledge, Linda, an MRC youth officer, commented on young people’s social organisation skills. As she related, while young Sudanese people often struggle with English acquisition, they enthusiastically display other strengths and abilities in terms of organising youth and community events, “We’ve got a young 16 year old boy from Darfur and he really struggles with
his writing skills but he is also organising a football [soccer] program”. She recounted an instance when a young boy from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background attended the soccer program for the first time, and the older Sudanese boys running the soccer program were “really pointing him, engaging him and supporting him...when he missed a shot, they were like, “no worries mate, you’re doing all right”. Along similar lines, George’s bilingualism and desire to contribute to other, less fortunate Sudanese young people was recognised by STARTTS. According to George, STARTTS had offered him a financial scholarship for the last year of a psychology course, promising him employment on completion. Given these other communal skills and strengths among young people, June, an IEC teacher, maintained that these “pre-existing skills and knowledge are something we can build upon”. This is a particularly important insight as it indicates the cumulative nature of resilience. In particular, it demonstrates that pre-existing strategies of coping and survival can be built upon to realise young people’s broader educational aspirations.

“The land of opportunities”: pre-arrival perceptions of Australia

During the course of the interviews, the term “opportunity” emerged as a key trope. More often than not, opportunity was linked to and prefaced by “educational” opportunity. This is not surprising given the temporary, interrupted and inadequate schooling available to many of the interviewees in Sudan and en route to Australia. As Craig, 25, exclaimed, “Australia is a land of opportunities”. He also indicated that opportunity and hope are closely aligned, “I have the hope of doing my masters, I can do my PhD and hopefully work in Australia, buy a house, you know, buy anything that I can”. These comments trace the multi-scaled trajectories of hoping processes, from a symbolic ideal to the pragmatic dimensions of hope realised through its mobilisation in specific educational and occupational capacities. Similar is Sarah’s comment, “to get a job, I just need to learn. I find it as an opportunity, but when I was in Africa I would have not done it”. She also underscores the connection between opportunity, hope and happiness, asserting, “Yeah, so it has been in my hopes to study. So, I’m so happy”. In one sense, hope and happiness are end-
oriented, presumed to follow at some future time through a specific kind of intentional action (Ahmed, 2010 p. 33). In another sense, Sarah’s reflections are reminiscent of Tomkins’ (1995) claim that “affective amplification is indifferent to means-end difference” (cited by Sedgwick & Frank, 1995, p. 7). In other words, hope and happiness can be felt in the present, and need not necessarily follow the realisation of some future ideal. Building on Tomkins’ assertion that “It is enjoyable to enjoy. It is exciting to be excited” (in Sedgwick & Frank, 1995, p. 7), we can conclude that the affective experience of hopefulness in the present emerges out of intentional practices of hoping.

As discussed in Chapter 1, hope and hopefulness also have “social” or “transindividual” consequences and are more than personal experiences (Anderson, 2006). In the following quote, Clementine articulates a perceived association between opportunity, hope and happiness: “It’s a better life here. It’s freedom. You don’t have to think, ‘If you do this, you won’t get any benefit of it’. So you can do whatever it takes, and at the end, you will get the results”. Pontamianou (1997) explained that hope is preserved or “kept alive in the mind” through some assurance in the fulfilment of the hoped-for object or outcome (p. 57). In Clementine’s case, her hopefulness in education as a symbolic ideal is kept alive through the simultaneous realisation of measurable or “visible” external achievements.

For Trevor, a Sudanese community leader, there is no limit to what Sudanese young people can achieve in educational settings such as universities. Given young people’s interrupted or non-existent prior schooling experiences in pre-arrival contexts, his claim that there is “no limit” to Sudanese achievement and contribution in Australia is perhaps an over-estimation of young Sudanese people’s abilities. There is an important distinction to be made here between aspiring to a hoped-for ideal, tempered by a pragmatic patience, and the fantastic claim that Sudanese young people can achieve anything given their particular, often traumatic, migration histories. These statements might be indicative of his pride in the achievements of Sudanese students and/or his efforts to positively portray them, but they also signal a certain detachment from what Fromm (1968) described as a situated “inner
readiness” that holds in creative tension a passivity and activity, which is neither “passive waiting” nor the “unrealistic forcing of circumstances that cannot occur” (p. 9). As Trevor lives in the Sutherland Shire of Sydney, his geographical distance from the “core” Sudanese population in Western Sydney may go someway to explaining his disengagement from young people’s everyday struggle to manage the many daily challenges and the expectant wait before the realisation of educational and vocational hopes.

The “key” to success

The acquisition of specific educational skills, knowledges and capacities are crucial for realising educational aspirations. While hoping practices are often used as strategies of coping and survival in adverse circumstances, a thicker description of hope brings together the everyday feeling of hopefulness and the actualisation of hoped-for outcomes through capacity building. The multi-dimensional aspects of hope as symbolic ideal and pragmatic set of capacities are both implicated in the individual and social formation of resilience. Although it is a seemingly obvious statement, oral language proficiency is essential for communication between people. As Masgoret and Ward (2006) explained, “Knowledge of the language spoken in the receiving country plays a central role within the cultural learning process, since language is viewed as the primary medium through which cultural information is communicated” (p. 63). A number of studies have shown that the acquisition of English literacy skills among newly arrived refugees and transmigrants is an influential factor in facilitating social acceptance, economic self-sufficiency, cultural competencies and access to services (Martin, 2004; McBrien, 2005; Poppitt & Frey, 2007; Schweitzer et al., 2007; Shandy & Fennelly, 2006; Spaulding, 2009; Turner, 2008). Certainly proficiency in the language of temporary countries and other host societies can facilitate communication between the “host” and “hosted” population. In support of this claim, Coronado (2003) pointed out that shared meanings within the diasporic community can also assist in the settlement process since communication flows more easily and there are fewer risks of misunderstanding.
As Phillip, a Sudanese service provider, stated, “Without an education I shouldn’t be talking with you now, because through education, we’ve got communication”. For Ben, a community liaison officer, English language proficiency is likened to an additional sensory capacity. He compared language acquisition to a resource for basic survival and life direction. According to him, proficiency in English is synonymous with the possession of a cultural directory for navigating and reaching expected destinations.

Because without the language, it’s like you are a deaf or blind person. Just like that, you’re a blind person or you can’t look for yourself and get something into your mouth...If you don’t have language, how can you...it’s like if you are driving to Melbourne and you don’t have street directory, how can you drive to Melbourne unless you know how to read this road going to Melbourne?

In discussing the importance of education in terms of access to vocational opportunities and future success, Ben maintained, “The education is the key to their success, you know?” His interpretation of education as a prerequisite for access and navigation was shared by one of Courtney’s (2007) participants, who declared, “Education is a tool”. Ben extended the metaphorical comparison between language proficiency as a sensory capacity or tool that unlocks certain social, educational and vocational potentialities, “If you’ve got language you can ask, you can speak, you can look for what you want; that is the key”. Rather than framing education as a singular, unidirectional entity, Forrest, a Sudanese MRC staff member, frames education as a series of useful and adaptable “gifts” which enable young people to “tackle” educational and other challenges encountered during migration and resettlement. By interpreting educational processes and qualifications as a material commodity and an unpackaged gift, Forrest endows educational qualifications and knowledge outcomes with a useful transportability and exchange potential within and across different migration contexts.
The acquisition and accumulation of educational resources among Southern Sudanese people seem to retain an almost “magical legacy” (Mauss, 1969, p. 42) in terms of their capacity to empower, access and realise hoped-for outcomes. Furthermore, the ability to communicate in the language(s) of the host country can also assist in the formation of social and peer networks. In their study of social support systems for “at risk” students, Brown et al. (2006) reported that “success with the social aspects of school was…key not only to fulfilling friendship needs but also as an important way of developing academic language and understanding” (p. 159). In a study of Bosnian refugee women in New York schools, Mosselson (2006) found that students used academic participation and acquisition of language as productive resources for overcoming isolation and making friends.

**Unlocking social networks**

For survivors of traumatic events, recovery and self-worth are largely dependent on their ability to develop a feeling of connection to others. Pilkington (1999) emphasised the importance of feeling hope, maintaining that the phenomenon originates in feelings rather than in facts or logic (p. 10). It would seem that the acquisition of communication proficiencies establishes the instrumental building blocks for an affective connection to the host society and its population, and more specifically, the realisation of social and educational hopes. It is important to note that young people’s ability to participate and achieve in Australian schools is affected and shaped by an array of pre-arrival factors, which may include interrupted or non-existent schooling, experiences of trauma or torture, authoritative parental and communal expectations, and the formation of friendship groups and supportive social networks. As Pedersen (2002) noted, the health consequences of war, death and trauma-related psychiatric illness extend beyond the individual to include economic and social institutions and the fabric of societies generally (cited by Kirmayer et al., 2009, p. 20). Pederson maintained that the consequences of violent conflict can be observed in the personal biographies and life trajectories of individuals, “but also in
collective memory and identity and communal strategies for coping with violence and adversity” (cited by Kirmayer et al., 2009, p. 20). Brison (1999) commented on the importance of social supports in the recovery from trauma, claiming that the study of trauma “provides support for a view of the self as fundamentally relational – vulnerable enough to be undone by violence and yet resilient enough to be reconstructed with the help of others” (p. 40). This point is further discussed in Chapter 6 through an examination of the role of families in developing supportive social networks and building resilience (Baldassar, 2008). Brison’s comments allude to the delicate fragility of human minds and bodies, but also highlight the robustness and collective strength of individuals in social networks as well as the role of hope in the formation of resilience.

Conclusion

While the symbolic dimensions of hope assists young Sudanese people’s capacity to survive, endure and cope with trauma, despair and other adversities in pre-arrival contexts, the realisation of hoped-for educational aspirations is interwoven with the pragmatic acquisition and accumulation of specific skills, knowledges and competencies. This chapter argued that there is a material and transportable quality to educational skills and competencies, which displays functional similarities to the theorised transmission and transferability of resilience and hope across geographic and symbolic spaces. Based on the responses of Sudanese participants, it was argued that hope is a resource for daily survival whose location is the ideal of education. As well as educational aspirations, belief in the beneficent powers of God, the existence of role models and group solidarity practices represent important affective investments to the symbolic reservoir of hope. It was interesting to note that some Sudanese participants conveyed an uncritical belief in the supervening and omnipotent powers of a Judeo-Christian God to liberate them from hardship. On the face of it, it would seem that the deferral of personal agency to God decreased or limited their sense of self-efficacy and powers of action in escaping or overcoming particularly difficult situations. At a deeper level, however, as an object of affective
investment – whether factual or delusional – the idea of God as a source of comfort, peace and understanding reminded participants of their ability to endure their uncertain futures. As one participant explained, it is through hardship that one comes to know God. The interaction between hardship, struggle and knowledge of God exhibits an uncanny resemblance to the intermingled natures of despair and hope, suffering and resilience.

At the same time, the acquisition of pragmatic capabilities such as proficiency in host societies’ languages and general knowledge were considered valuable resources of survival, access and navigation, which are transferable within and across a variety of migration contexts. As the discussion of nostalgic memories demonstrated, young people displayed a counter-intuitive capacity to transform and draw upon their experiences and memories of hardship in productive ways. These findings also highlighted the dialogical relationship between despair and hope, as well as suffering and resilience. The intertwining of bittersweet emotions that accompany nostalgic recollections paralleled the complex interplay of positive and negative affect involved in the formation, accumulation and maximisation of resilience. Specifically, it is in and through experiences of despair and suffering that hope and resilience is forged and accumulated. Young Sudanese migrants arrive in countries of asylum like Australia with unique sets of accumulated social, cultural and educational “baggage” in the form of acquired proficiencies and expectations. The following chapter highlights the ways young people’s pre-arrival experiences and proficiencies are built upon or constrained by their everyday interactions in Western Sydney schools.
Chapter 4

‘The spirit to study’: building resilience, realising hope, and the early schooling experiences of Sudanese young people in Australian schools

Introduction

For Sudanese young people, educational and vocational aspirations remain ideals unless they are supplemented by the realisation of their capacity to learn. Building on the previous chapters’ discussion of hope in the context of migration, it is argued that the symbolic ideal of education is realised through the acquisition of specific educational capabilities and represents an accumulated resource of hope and resilience in the participants’ lives. For the majority of young Sudanese in this study, education was viewed as a way out of war, conflict and ignorance and into a future of prosperity, understanding and happiness. Furthermore, they believed that the accumulation of academic skills, knowledges and capabilities acquired in countries of origin and migration are applicable and transferrable to Australian educational contexts. Drawing on interviews with IEC staff members, including a deputy principal, school counsellor and teachers, as well as Sudanese young people, this chapter argues that to fulfill young people’s educational aspirations, a delicate and ongoing balance must be negotiated between the short-term pastoral care, counselling and rehabilitation services offered by IECs and the transfer to students of academic competencies that will equip them with the necessary capacities to achieve their goals. In short, this chapter argues that the best pastoral care is quality teaching and learning.

As the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) (2003) discussion paper Quality teaching in NSW public schools stated, “of all the things that schools can control, it is the quality of pedagogy that most directly and most powerfully affects
the quality of learning outcomes that students demonstrate”. As IECs are often the first point of access into the Australian education system for young Sudanese migrants, participant reflections on their experiences in two Western Sydney IECs act as a starting point from which to explore a complex array of factors relating to the initiation of trauma discourse, provision of counselling and psychological support, educational and vocational aspirations, pastoral care and academic tuition. Although it is argued that the emphasis on pastoral care services in IECs could detract from young people’s acquisition of specific academic competencies, the notion of care displays cross-cultural complexities in terms of refugee groups’ desire and ability to participate in transnational caregiving relationships. It should also be noted that this chapter does not engage in educational research per se, nor does it seek to evaluate the IEC programs and provisions. Rather, the focus is on the ways young Sudanese people build specific social, cultural and educational capacities in the IEC school environment.

**Intensive English Centres**

The primary role of IECs and Intensive English High Schools (IEHSs) is to provide the requisite academic proficiencies to newly arrived young refugees and migrants for their transition to mainstream classes (Ferfolja et al., 2009). In New South Wales, newly arrived high-school age students typically enrol in one of the fourteen IECs or IEHSs located in Sydney and Wollongong (Cassity & Gow, 2006). As well as providing a scholastic space for the development of particular academic skills and proficiencies, IECs also offer a variety of formal and informal pastoral care and rehabilitation services to their students. Although these pastoral provisions are important considerations for dealing with survivors of torture, trauma and other significant adversities, a major challenge facing IECs is how to balance academic capacity building with the pastoral care of new arrivals. Highlighting the unique demands of refugee students on schools and school staff, Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2008) stated that “the educational needs of refugees present special demands on schools and teachers, challenged to provide an environment that is responsive to their needs” (p. 328). As the drafters of the NSW Quality Teaching
Framework (2003) asserted, while teachers function in highly complex environments and as part of the “larger school context including the local school community, the organisation of curriculum, cultural traditions and personal relationships” (p. 4), the focus and quality of pedagogy should be their primary concern.

For newly arrived young migrants, the allocation of time in IECs is assessed on a case-by-case basis and takes into account factors such as previous exposure to English, student age, and home languages. According to the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC), the IEC course program “is conducted over a maximum of three terms for regular students, and a maximum of four terms for special needs students, including refugees and special humanitarian entrants” (cited by Cassity & Gow, 2005, p. 1). According to Irene, an IEC counsellor, the normal allocation of time for students in an IEC is three school terms or approximately 30 school weeks, also noting that this time frame is contingent upon the students’ developing language skills. In the IEC introductory program, students learn oral language skills and receive a basic background in reading and writing English. Acceptance into the IEC is determined on the basis of reading and writing scores as well as schooling in their country of origin and temporary residence. As a general rule of thumb, Irene noted that if the student “had a normal high school education in their country of origin, three terms is enough to sort of get them started”. Conversely, if students arrive with “special needs” – as is often the case with newly arrived refugees – the IEC offers an extra term. If after four terms a student continues to experience difficulties, the IEC counsellor refers the particular case to the NSW government, requesting an extension in IEC by another term. The implications of “special educational needs” and “trauma” vocabularies on young people’s sense of belonging, preservation of hope and accumulation of resilience are explored below.

According to June, an IEC deputy principal, Sudanese students in Australian schools arrive with certain “problems that are over and above what you’d normally [get], what we’ve experienced in the past with other refugees, with other refugee groups”. As previously discussed, young Sudanese people are commonly affected by torture or trauma, dispossession and displacement, loss of family and friends, interrupted
schooling, racism and discrimination prior to their arrival in Australia. School staff and the education system more broadly are facing a new set of challenges with the increased arrival of African refugees and war-affected student populations. As Cassity and Gow (2006) commented, “overall, we found that the schooling system is not working well for many recently arrived African young people… There are success stories but, in general, students are struggling with new institutional settings” (p. 3). The challenges facing school staff and youth specialists centre on “a range of unfamiliar cultural, linguistic and historical backgrounds” presented by African young people (2006, p. 1). Arrival of refugee and war-affected populations provokes certain redefinitions in relation to directive approaches to teaching and learning, teacher expectations and the balancing of pastoral and academic classroom provisions. Nevertheless, this complex set of issues facing Sudanese students also offers opportunities to challenge long-standing, “one size fits all” teaching approaches and established curriculum.

**Conatic hopefulness**

When aligned with the specific educational needs and aspirations of newly arrived students, educational settings like IECs can represent sites of “conatic hopefulness”. Drawing on Spinoza’s concept of conatus, Hage (2003) defined “conatic hope” as an enduring bodily disposition that is most often activated during times of hardship and adversity. Relating to the discussion of hope as a multi-levelled phenomenon, conatic hopefulness has parallels with the young Sudanese participants’ symbolic construction of education as a hope-ideal or what Anderson (2006) described as “background feelings that take place in addition to the emotion of hope” (p. 743; italics added). As originally used by Spinoza (1994), conatus refers to the principle that each thing strives to increase its own being, power of action and understanding of the world. Spinoza (1994) defined conatus as the experience of the mind moving towards a greater stage of perfection, and the associated destruction of whatever we imagine to be contrary to this process (p. 169). In many ways, this understanding of human striving towards greater perfection at the expense of “unhelpful” or
“unproductive” past experiences largely determines the educational and therapeutic paradigm of IECs.

Interestingly, normatively defined “negative” affects, memories and past experiences are often drawn upon and utilised in productive ways by young Sudanese people in the context of migration and resettlement. In this sense, Spinoza’s cordonning off of “unhelpful” past experiences deemphasises the productive potential of these past experiences as transformative resources and capacities among Sudanese young people. Along similar lines, Tomkins (1962) wrote, “Although the progressive education movement has stressed the importance of engaging the positive affects in education there has been a gross neglect of the significance of the mastery of negative affects” (p. 368). He added, “a progressive philosophy of education must include prominently within its program the development of those abilities to tolerate negative affects” (p. 368). It seems more appropriate to frame the accumulation of resilient capacities as a multidirectional process that increases young people’s “powers of action” through the recognition and utilisation of available past, present and future resources and competencies. Over-emphasis on the therapeutic or pastoral dimensions of education may inadvertently undermine young people’s hopeful disposition towards learning, by devaluing or de-emphasising their stated desire and hope for specific educational and vocational skills. This being said, a more immediate desire or hope might be to overcome their particularly painful experience of psychological distress, thus requiring pastoral support and intervention.

**Counselling and psychological support**

As well as preparing migrant young people for their transition to mainstream classrooms, IECs offer both formal and informal counselling and psychological support services for their students. An exploration of Sudanese participants’ attitudes towards the Western therapeutic model and engagement with psychological support services provides the groundwork for later discussions of the ways young people’s educational aspirations intersect with the dominant “pastoral care” framework within
two Western Sydney IECs. At the heart of the issue are the culturally located ways Sudanese people traditionally deal with trauma and other adversities. The responses of Sudanese and non-Sudanese participants highlighted an undercurrent of suspicion and resistance to these services and call into question the cultural appropriateness of these approaches when dealing with issues of trauma and other “pastoral” issues in the IEC context.

In contrast to the psychoanalytic tradition, which understands the externalisation and “working through” process of psychic discordance to be a primary method of psychotherapeutic recovery (Ekstein, 1965; Pick, 1985; Wallerstein, 1969), a number of Sudanese participants expressed more private capacities of silence and stoic dispositions when dealing with internal psychological discomfort. As Forrest, an MRC youth officer explained, within the Sudanese culture, people “don’t talk about the mental state of another person… it is also not possible for someone that’s affected to talk openly about what he or she experienced [in Sudan or during migration]”. In Forrest’s experience, it appears that silence or non-verbalisation of certain feelings is a traditional approach to dealing with trauma and other adversity.

The reluctance of community members to engage with these services in the first place is partially attributable to deeply held attitudes towards formal counselling and appropriate ways of dealing with adversity. As Linda, an MRC youth coordinator, noted, “sometimes within the community, it’s like, ‘well, I went through the same thing too and I’m all right and I’m dealing with it, so stop complaining’”. It remained unclear whether this “silence” is a chosen “healthy” silence or a culturally enforced one. A number of studies have shown that migrant young people can be “silenced” by a variety of influences including language and cultural obstacles (Chase, 2010; Craig et al., 2006; Gronseth, 2006) as well as family instruction to convey a “thin” description or particular story to assist their asylum claims (Chase, 2010; Kohli, 2003). According to Almqvist and Broberg (1997), strategies of denial and silence among traumatised pre-school children and their parents can be viewed as adaptive forces and protective mechanisms. If, however, the traumatic experiences penetrate the family survival strategy of silence and denial or what Almqvist and Broberg call
the “as if it never happened” strategy, the rupturing of the protective parental shield may leave children and parents in acute crisis (pp. 420-423). The characterisation of silence as an adaptive “force” has useful parallels with the notion of conatus. It would appear that selective silence is a coping strategy young people employ to preserve their being and to deal with the multiple and often overwhelming demands of resettlement. As elaborated in Chapter 1, resilience involves both complex strategies of defence and coping against bodily or identity threats as well as a future-oriented capacity to imagine and create a better future.

Forrest seems to suggest that young people’s silence may be motivated by community attitudes towards dealing with mental health issues, “there are those, which is one of my concerns at the moment, that you find young people committing suicide, not because to me they choose to, but because they’ve been experiencing the challenge for quite a while and they are keeping it to themselves”. In her study of Somali refugees in Ethiopia, Zarowsky (1997) observed, “Private suffering and personal problems certainly exist and can be spoken about but these stories were never mentioned, let alone told, in public discussions or private interviews” (p. 12). As Forrest indicated, keeping psychological issues to oneself is an embodied capacity of resilience within Sudanese culture. If these strategies of silence are in fact attempts to retain a degree of agency and control, they seem to contradict the psychotherapeutic assumption that the verbalisation of traumatic experiences in therapeutic settings is the main route to psychological recovery and health (Kris, 1956; McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Pynoos & Nader, 1988). However, given the multiple stressors, responsibilities and expectations encountered by young people in the context of resettlement, the communal taboo around “affected” community members expressing their mental health concerns may do more harm than good.

The availability of psychological services and young people’s reluctance to participate in them poses a significant challenge for community service providers. While support services exist, Forrest noted, “It’s difficult culturally for the young people or any other community members to come and say, ‘Look, I have difficulty in this’”. In no small part, this is due to traditional beliefs among the Sudanese
community around issues of mental health and appropriate ways of dealing with them. As Ben, a community liaison officer, explained, “When you say to the parents, let them [young Sudanese people] go to counselling, they will say, What is counselling? It’s only good for mad people”. Accordingly, Linda, an MRC youth worker, commented, “I think counselling is such a taboo issue from the community because a lot of people say, you know, ‘Oh I’m going to see a counsellor. I’m not crazy’”. When approaching a young Sudanese person with a potential mental health issue, Linda adds that the “type of language” used in suggesting counselling is an important consideration. She noted that “a lot of the time it’s how we approach the young person and what language we use...often, I won’t say “counsellor”, I’ll say it’s someone who can talk you through and give you suggestions and this is what they do. I do say it’s a counsellor but I always say this is what they do [italics added]”. Linda’s comments seem to suggest that her Sudanese clientele have negative associations of the formal labels “counsellor” and “psychologist” rather than for the services they provide. By framing the role of “counsellors” in a more descriptive way, she observed that young people are more willing to participate in these services.

The challenge of dealing with mental health concerns among young Sudanese people is partly due to the conceptual “foreignness” of counselling and the critical need among refugees and service providers to negotiate cross-cultural understandings of care. As Forrest maintained, “can I say that counselling is treated as a foreign concept in the Sudanese community”. The guided, exploratory approach of many Western therapeutic models, or as Forrest described it “taking me through my experience...putting into words my experience”, is misaligned with the directive, “outcome-based” approach for dealing with mental health matters in Sudanese communities. According to him, “in the Sudanese community, all I need to do in the Sudanese [is say], ‘look, Michael, I have a problem here, what can I do?’” He explained that a “Sudanese” method of dealing with mental health concerns is to approach a community leader or elder for a private consultation. Following this meeting, an individual receives a pragmatic and directive “course of action” for the alleviation of their particular concern. Forrest noted, “that is entirely different from the [Western] concept of counselling”. Along similar lines, Natalie, a Sudanese
community worker, commented that the Sudanese community is a “bit untrusting because the counselling, the way we see the counselling in our country is not the way we call it here as counselling, because when something happen back home there, you’ve got those elderly people and they come and talk to you to comfort you, to encourage you, yeah”. As a result of forced displacement and resettlement, a breakdown of traditional advisory pathways and support hierarchies has occurred, posing significant challenges for the mental health of Sudanese young people in Australia.

The exploratory methods of current Western psychological discourse runs counter to the pragmatic approach to mental health employed within Sudanese community hierarchies. According to Forrest, the problem with the Western model is the lack of pragmatic advice for how to overcome a particular issue, “so when they come they expect you [a psychologist] to tell them…as an expert, ‘I know you have these problems, this is how it can be done. So do it like this. Don’t do it like this’”. His problematisation of the non-directive models of Western psychotherapeutic intervention has parallels with the IECs’ view of pastoral care as a precondition of educational success. In terms of Western-oriented psychological support, the therapeutic scaffolding and guided nature of Western psychological invention does not seem to factor into Sudanese participants’ attitudes towards client-centred, traditional, or reflexive healing.

Moreover, apart from the non-directive approach of Western therapeutic practices, Forrest offers an insight into the perceived failure of positivist models to provide relevant psychological support given Sudanese refugees’ intensely personal experiences of civil war and migration: “It will not be easy for you to understand what I’m saying because I’m just putting my experience, our experience as young Sudanese in words, and all you are getting is history in words, but not seeing it practically”. For Forrest, the recounting of traumatic experience in words is an insufficient mode of expressing the inexpressibility of trauma and other difficult experiences associated with forced migration. Zembylas (2006) commented on the inexpressible nature of traumatic events and witnesses’ inability to recognise them,
“The victims of trauma and oppression are not merely seeking recognition, but they are also seeking witnesses to horrors that are beyond recognition” (p, 313). As discussed in Chapter 2, Oliver (2001) similarly observed that witnessing involves a double sense of “eyewitness testimony based on firsthand knowledge…and bearing witness to something beyond recognition which can’t be seen” (p. 16). In this sense, recognition of the “foreignness” of Sudanese people’s experience during migration is just as applicable to the therapist as it is for the Sudanese “patient”, “client” or “student”. As Richard, 23, a university student and youth leader, pointed out, “The people that give counselling, they would not understand what are really sensitive things, and what are sensitive things…and also for the counsellors or the people who help, they are not, they’ve never been in that situation, so they will not understand”.

Given Sudanese people’s particularly traumatic migration journeys and their embodied and communal strategies for dealing with mental health issues, the one-on-one approach and counsellor guidelines for dealing with trauma survivors overlook the historical background and other cultural factors when dealing with these experiences. Richard also maintained that psychological therapeutic models are culturally determined, and at times cannot accommodate and fully account for the severity of Sudanese people’s migration experiences or their formation of resilience. Highlighting young people’s accumulated and adaptable capacities of resilience, he observed that young Sudanese “have that ability of how they can cope of whatever situation is happening now to them, or whatever the bad things happen to them before; they know”. An associated concern for Richard is the lack of pre-arrival psychological support, “in most cases, somebody who happened to be in the counselling or details from the therapist, the advice that they get there are not helpful because you will be given advice after in Australia, but not after that person has been in that situation”.

We might conclude that the success of counselling and psychological support services offered in Australia are hindered by the lack of early intervention provisions in displacement camps and other countries of migration. For Richard, counsellors and therapists offering insight and advice in Australia would benefit from a greater
understanding of the unique experiences of Sudanese migrants and awareness of culturally appropriate ways of dealing with these issues. From Richard’s perspective, Australian counsellors, “rush into, they say certain things, we tell them, ‘Do you think we are mad?’” He noted, “It’s really hard to explain this, but being in that [civil war] situation always gives you certain understanding of what you should do and how to do it”. Richard proposes that counselling services would be significantly improved if counsellors acknowledged young people’s existing strategies for dealing with mental health issues. He maintained, “So if somebody coming from outside trying to approach this [Sudanese] person, also know that, when they are talking to this person, they [the Sudanese person] will have strategies of what to do if certain things happen”. In Forrest and Richard’s responses there is recognition that counsellors and other support providers are well-intentioned in their desire to help, but concerns exist about their ability to empathise and understand the specific cultural, psychological and embodied effects of prolonged trauma and forced migration on young Sudanese.

**Traumatic baggage**

Part and parcel of promoting good education outcomes for Sudanese students in IECs is an understanding of and sensitivity towards the ongoing effects of trauma and other adversities experienced during migration. As discussed in Chapter 1, traumatic experiences can persist in the memories and bodies of individuals and groups long after the traumatic event or episode(s) has occurred. Often, experiences of trauma can be triggered by seemingly unrelated environmental stimuli. The traumatic baggage young learners carry with them is understood by some IEC staff as a significant impediment to the reception and retention of information. Burgoyne and Hull (2006) have reported a critical need among youth specialists and educators for a deeper understanding of how past torture and trauma combine with an interrupted educational history to impact upon refugee learning and employment. It is important, however, that the adoption of trauma discourse and associated intervention strategies
is not implemented at the expense of academic and vocational capacity building among war-affected IEC students.

The current saturation of trauma discourse and associated vocabularies in IECs is reflected by Heather, who explained that young Sudanese people are “living a different life…you don’t have to go too far before you find that trauma is very much a part of them”. She explained that as a consequence of such trauma, “they [students] almost don’t grow emotionally…they are almost trapped at the age of the trauma”. Heather’s description of trauma survivors as “trapped” in the past reveals a common assumption within discourses of trauma relating to the enduring nature of psychological wounding and causal links between traumatic experience and bad feelings. As Ahmed (2007) wrote, “Bad feelings are seen as orientated towards the past; as a kind of stubbornness that ‘stops’ the subject from embracing the future. Good feelings are associated here with moving up, and getting out” (p. 135). The circulation of historical preconceptions that Sudanese refugees are “fixed”, “at risk” or inherently “disadvantaged” by their particular migration experiences resembles the popular cultural myth that Asian students are predisposed to academic success in maths and the sciences. As Watkins and Noble (2008) observed, these well-intentioned attempts at cultural sensitivity may in fact reinforce harmful cultural pathologies and “end up reproducing reductive cultural stereotypes” (p. 47). In terms of young Sudanese, these cultural stereotypes constrain their ability to redefine themselves in the context of resettlement and their continued efforts to develop capacities of resilience.

In a related example, Heather, an IEC teacher, recounted the particularly distressing case of one of her students, “we had one little girl in particular, who had been incredibly traumatised. As it turned out we’d found she’d been the water carrier, which in the camps meant that she was probably raped on a daily basis, you know”. She continued, “and little…she was twelve, thirteen, so this was a couple of years before. So the trauma would have been incredibly, you know, incredible, and terrible, terrible, terrible for her”. The effects of prolonged, inescapable trauma
manifested in seemingly “frozen” emotional development. According to Heather, “she hadn’t moved emotionally in all the time that we were here”. From her description, the development of “normal” emotional responses had been short-circuited by the girl’s traumatic experiences. In what was believed to be a behavioural consequence of the traumatic events, Heather explained that the girl would not do any schoolwork and “would do the most bizarre things…she would get up and she would walk around the room and she would pick up a pair of scissors and she’d go and cut someone’s hair or she’d walk past someone and she’d throw their books on the ground, or she’d tip a chair over and then she’d go and sit back down”. Following these outbursts of misbehaviour, Heather recounted, “she’d be almost catatonic for hours afterwards”. These “bizarre acts” seem to indicate a need of the young girl for some sort of attention and recognition. Although explored in relation to youth responses to economic and cultural modernisation, Willis (2003) observed that the behaviours of young people often suggest disorganisation and chaos, “but to the best of their abilities and with relevance to the actual possibilities of their lives as they see, live and embody them…but to adult eyes they may seem to be mysterious, troubling and even shocking and anti-social” (p. 391). The same could be said of the young girl’s seemingly disorganised set of coping behaviours and Heather’s assessment of them as “bizarre”.

In her study of the way teachers’ talk about refugee children, Rutter (1999) found that teachers most commonly invoked “humanitarian discourses on trauma” rather than professional and academic discourses. In effect, these findings problematise the notion of care by equating humanitarian discourses with a discourse of pity. Rutter observed that “almost all humanitarian discourses invoked vague, non-academic descriptions of traumatised children” (1999, p. 143). In an effort to explain this phenomenon, she argued that humanitarian discourses fulfill a key need in teachers. In particular, “Faced with little power to develop broad-ranging support for refugees and limited EAL [English as an additional language] staff, trauma discourses induced a sense of being caring” (1999, p. 143). Along similar lines, Bowe and Ball (1992) described this affective outcome as “the feel-good factor” (p. 9). Harrell-Bond (1986) argued that humanitarian assistance governed by compassion can hide the fact of poor quality provisions and services. He maintained, “It is not simply that
compassion overshadows logic and fact, although it often appears to do so, but rather that the assumptions that lie behind compassion are based on a false premise” (1986, p. 26). Although Heather’s encounter with the young girl was undoubtedly a compassionate response, what seems to be missing from her account is an engagement with educational discourse. In other words, she sought to observe and explain the young girl’s behaviour rather than ask what her own response as an educator should be.

Another possible explanation of the young girls emotional non-responsiveness is offered by Craig, a Sudanese university student, who explained, “We [Sudanese] tend to control our emotions”. His statement links back to the previous discussion on Sudanese cultural understandings and approaches to mental health. This strategy of psychological and corporeal governance seems to be a way of maintaining an inward stillness and emotional control in lieu of chaotic and uncertain external events. Outwardly the young girls’ emotional response may have seemed closed off, even catatonic, but it may also be that her non-responsiveness was a learned defense mechanism in response to an overload of external stimuli or perception of threat. In her study of unaccompanied asylum-seeker children in the UK, Chase (2010) found that the reasons for participants’ selective disclosure of the past included efforts to cope with asylum and immigration process, distancing from the “asylum seeker” label and associated stigma, as well as a desire to maintain a degree of agency and control as they sought to navigate the complex demands of immigration, asylum and resettlement (p. 2064). Whatever the reasons for the young girl’s behaviour, they are undoubtedly far more complex than these analyses indicate.

In concluding her story of the young girl, Heather explained that an unexpected chain of events occurred. Outlining the “bizarre set of circumstances”, she reported: “We went on an excursion to the zoo and my daughter and her three little children came”. The young Sudanese girl “just attached herself to them all day long. Just stayed, talked… We hadn’t heard her talk like this, chatted. As she was leaving, ‘Bye Miss, see you Monday’”. According to Heather, the young girl came in on Monday
morning for a spelling test and got 15 out of 15, “The first sentence she wrote was a compound sentence”. She concluded, “She’d obviously been absorbing this, but there was some sort of blockage. And who knows what triggered its removal”. Unable to account for the sudden shift, Heather remarked, “But for some reason she, she just let this go”.

In an optimistic conclusion to the story, Heather remarked that the young girl has moved on to and is coping well in mainstream classes. Following evaluation for possible autism, the young girl’s difficulties were made sense of by appeal to a “trauma block”. While unable to fully account for the dramatic shift in the girl’s responsiveness and re-engagement with the world, Heather believes that the unexpected turn around was in no small part due to a supportive and loving environment in the IEC. Heather felt that the IEC is “like a family here, more than that it is like a school…[students] seem to blossom in that”. From her account of the young Sudanese student, it would appear that Heather has adopted and is working out of an operative “pastoral” paradigm that sees pastoral care as the critical factor in educational outcomes rather than educational intervention and practice. Although well-intentioned, this interpretative framework is an unsustainable basis for education theory and practice. It is more appropriate to suggest that good educational outcomes, like workplace productivity, are enhanced in positive environments where people feel valued, connected and appreciated. From the above example it seems less likely that the young girl magically learned to write compound sentences and more likely that Heather’s effectiveness as a teacher facilitated the academic outcomes that were demonstrated by the young girl on a particular day.

In practice, these “outsider” strategies of rehabilitation may in fact undermine young people’s unique set of individual and communal strategies for dealing with past and present adversity. As discussed in Chapter 1, the “trauma metaphor” has the power to reveal certain supervening effects of extreme violence on suffering, but also has the potential to conceal localised understandings of trauma and healing strategies. Although the young girl, according to Heather, appeared to miraculously “blast
through” her “trauma blockage”, we must be cautious of pathologising assumptions that, having survived the traumatic event or showing signs of recovery, the survivor automatically comes to inhabit a posterior condition removed from the experience of trauma. One hopes that the young girl was able to move past or work through her specific “trauma blockage” as a result of her trip to the zoo. At the same time, IEC staff and other service providers need to be cautious of interpreting early signs of outward recovery to psychological notions of “breaking through” serious sexual, physical or emotional trauma.

Considering Li’s (2004) discussion of forms of silence, one could hypothesise that the young girl might have been exhibiting a different kind of silence, involving a quiet management of a turbulent inner world. As elaborated in Chapter 1, growth in the aftermath of traumatic experiences is quite common. At the same time, Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) maintained that “posttraumatic growth does not necessarily yield less emotional distress” (p. 58). The instance of the young Sudanese girl seems to support their conclusion that “posttraumatic growth and distress coexist, and the growth emerges from the struggle with coping, not from the trauma itself”. Along similar lines, Kohli (2006) suggested that secrets, silence and limited talking among adolescents “allow autonomy to be established as part of the process of growing up and becoming independent” (p. 709). He noted, however, that within the literature on refugee children, these “ordinary developmental trajectories” are more readily attributable to processes of becoming refugees than a simple matter of growing up (2006, p. 709). Similarly, Papadopoulos’ (2002) insights can suggest a reframing of Heather’s description of the young Sudanese girl as “catatonic”, positing that the girl’s response could be a purposeful, protective and beneficial silence or even a functional distrust of IEC staff that allowed healing to take place in its own time.

Although Heather’s extracurricular trip to the zoo seems to have produced a desirable outcome in terms of the young girl’s behaviour, it raises practical concerns regarding the role of IECs as a surrogate family and IEC staff as parents or saviours of victimised and traumatised students. As discussed in the previous chapter, schools
in Sudan often serve an important social function in the lives of their students. In Catholic schools especially, there is a long tradition of schools serving “in place of parents” (*in loco parentis*) as well as being “family-like” places. In support of a “familial” approach, Smith-Hefner (1993) highlighted the importance of cultural and socio-historical influences in the education of Khmer refugees in the United States (p. 138). She wrote that the commitment of Khmer parents to their children’s schooling is based on a “combination of values”, including “traditional respect for educated persons, particularly teachers, and the belief that the educated are in some sense both intellectually and morally superior” (1993, p. 138). She reported that “Khmer parents say they ‘give’ (quoy) their children to the teacher, and they consistently refer to the teacher as a ‘second mother’ or ‘second father’”. Although the responses of Sudanese parents and elders indicate that teaching is left to teachers, community influences relating to the treatment of mental health issues and vocational direction do not extend to IEC staff, a point explored in more detail below.

**English language acquisition**

As evidenced in Chapter 3, the majority of the young Sudanese participants arrived in Australia via refugee camps and Egypt with various experiences of education, in terms of both quantity and quality. Due to limited, interrupted or non-existent prior educational opportunities, it is not uncommon for newly arrived students to begin their IEC education with little to no English proficiency. As English language proficiency is a vital component of integration and a sense of belonging in Australian society, there is a critical urgency attached to Sudanese students’ acquisition of these skills. When asked about her teaching approach for a student with zero English proficiency, Christine, an IEC teacher, explained that in the “early days when the children don’t speak any English at all…we do a lot of dancing and singing, we encourage them to bring the music that they have”. As well as music, she encouraged her students to bring to class photos and personal objects from their childhood. On the one hand, these familiar objects and possessions establish a historical link to the students’ past, which may enable them to work through or manage certain memories
associated with displacement and migration. On the other hand, the familiarity of these objects may also offer students a sense of “ontological security”.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Noble (2004) identified a conceptual connection between the accumulation of objects in our domestic environments and the accumulation of being, which increases “the resources that we have to act in the world” (p. 253). In the case of displaced and dispossessed populations who may arrive in countries of asylum with limited material resources, it is inadequate to assume that these groups arrive with “less being”, so to speak, and fewer resources to act due to an absence or limitation of material things. In his autobiographical account of escape from slavery in southern Sudan, Bok (2003) wrote that non-material objects like personal narratives represent lines of continuity between the past and present as well as resources of ontological security, “My story…was all I had with me, the only remnant of my past” (p. 105). In these cases, it may be that the internalisation of hoped-for objects and outcomes, such as educational skills and capabilities, as well as cultural talents like singing, dancing and story telling, replace material objects as the basis for a sense of ontological and existential security. As Bereiter (2009) wrote, “What matters is that we recognize conceptual artifacts as real things, recognize creating and improving them as real work, and recognize understanding them as real understanding” (p. 397). While recognition of students’ personal objects by Christine is an implicit acknowledgement of their pasts and continuity of the past in and towards the present, it seems that we restrict our understanding of ontological security by emphasising its material foundations in these cases.

**Building on pre-existing skills and artefacts**

Building on pre-existing knowledge as the basis for new understandings is recognised as an essential component of effective teaching and learning (Hattie, 2002). As the best pastoral care is often quality teaching and learning, the acquisition of new skills, knowledges and capabilities built on prior competencies can assist
young Sudanese people to realise their educational and vocational aspirations. When teachers can demonstrate the significance of curriculum inside and outside the classroom context and establish connections to prior knowledge and cultural perspectives, learning is made meaningful and important to students (DET, 2003). On this issue, Hattie (2002, p. 27) contended that an important aspect of education is to recognise cultural artefacts particular to a culture and to teach to those artefacts, without essentialising them. He asserted that a “major focus of schooling is to therefore enable learners to adapt these cultural artifacts as a key part of their own conceptual artifacts” (p. 27). The recognition of past knowledges, pre-existing cultural competencies and identities can augment young people’s social being, increase their “powers of action” and understanding of the world. Conversely, the non-recognition or misrecognition of these unique identity positions and cultural resources can be considered a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a “false, distorted and reduced mode of being” (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). For Christine, the process of recognition starts by “first of all acknowledging that the child is a gift and that they bring things to the classroom with them”. Although the development of positive connections between teachers and students are acknowledged as important factors in learning, perceiving the newly arrived child as a “gift” bestowed on the IEC may inadvertently overshadow the central role of the IEC in equipping students with the relevant academic, social and cultural competencies necessary for integration and progression in Australian society.

According to Christine, “acknowledging that they have those things in their first language is really awesome because quite often, that’s what aids them towards acquiring the second language”. As she noted, this approach to second language tuition was not always the case. In the “old days” you were “not allowed to speak your first language because you have to learn English”. Demonstrating knowledge of relevant bilingualism literature, Christine stated, “we tossed that attitude out mainly because all the research shows that in order to learn your second language you need to be using your first language”. A proponent of this viewpoint, Cummins (1981)

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8 In some cases, it is again important to reiterate the severity and toll of psychological distress on students and its impact on cognitive development, knowledge transfer and information retention.
argued that children’s competency in a second language is enhanced by placing knowledge in a social context, using visual cues and bodily language, assessing first language competency as well as drawing on student’s previous life experiences. Given IECs’ orientation towards the pastoral, it is important that IEC teachers’ compassion for their students does not override the introduction of cognitively demanding tasks and resources that might facilitate young people’s learning.

An example of placing knowledge in a historical context and drawing on students’ previous life experiences is outlined by Christine, who described a classroom activity where young people’s pre-migration skills are drawn upon as a way of learning English. The embodied procedure of making bread is used by Christine as a way of promoting oral communication and improving the spelling ability of her students. As she recounted, the “bread-making activity”,

ended up as a procedure on the board because one of the beautiful girls from Sudan was telling us how her and her grandmother used to make bread and she was going through the actions. And okay, now, that’s called kneading and you know, when you do – put the flour, it’s called dough and we are getting all the words up on the board.

According to Christine, the young girl described the process of making bread using a mixture of English and Arabic. Based on this accumulated skill, the young girl was able to practise English, engage in peer-assisted learning and contextualise a potentially difficult reflection in terms of “how” and “when” this skill was acquired and “whom” it was acquired from. As Christine noted, “She could go through the procedure of making the bread and that was an oral procedure, there and then, but the child then started saying that her grandma did this, and her mother used to do this”. She concluded that practices such as these constitute a kind of classroom therapy. Drawing on Hamilton’s (2007) discussion of the dynamics between past and present in the process of remembering, the traditional procedure of making bread in the IEC classroom is not an unmediated reproduction of past happiness. Rather, in the act of
remembering and making the bread, a dialogue is established between the past and the present, which is “part of an autobiographical structuring of a life through the interplay of history, memory, emotion and practice (2007, p. 75). As Spinoza (1994) wrote, happiness, specifically “consists in the human capacity to preserve itself”. Accordingly, the practised procedure of making bread works to preserve and build upon the young students’ previous capacities in the current schooling context. Ultimately, the recognition of these past proficiencies establishes a line of continuity between “been”, “being” and “becoming”.

Along similar lines, Linda, a MRC Sudanese youth officer, underscores the importance of seeing beyond current academic proficiency to a young person’s capacity and motivation to learn, “for me, it not even the ability – their literacy ability…it’s their ability to learn and soak up information”. She adds, “the critical point is not where their academic ability is right now. It’s about: do they have the mental capacity to sit down and learn and soak up information?” The ability to sit down and soak up information seems to include both a mental capacity to process information and a specific “scholarly habitus” (Watkins, 2011), which may include “productive stillness” (statum generativum) and other strategies of bodily management (Noble & Watkins, 2008). Linda stresses the importance of assessing capacity over current proficiency in the case of a Sudanese student:

I had a girl who, you know, every third word was spelt wrong…She couldn’t even spell “nurse” properly let alone be a nurse. But she had that ability to sit down and concentrate and learn. And she made amazing strides in a two-year period… Right now she’s in year twelve. I think she will be able to proceed further.

We might conclude that the promotion of resilience in young Sudanese people is facilitated by the ability of service providers and teachers to “see beyond” current circumstances and abilities to bodily capacities related to academic achievement (Watkins & Watkins, 2008). These strategies might also be supplemented by
teachers’ recognition and development of pre-arrival competencies and their ability to reinforce specific embodied capacities of learning.

The breakfast club

In the IEC context, the teaching of specific academic capacities, taking into account the cultural and historical effects of forced migration and resettlement as well as prior knowledge, facilitates quality teaching and learning. Among young Sudanese learners, desirable educational outcomes such as the acquisition of English are intimately linked to their physical, emotional and psychological well-being as well as their realisation of educational aspirations. Although students experience a relatively brief amount of contact time in IECs, participant responses highlight the importance of a combined academic and pastoral care approach to IEC learning. Highlighting the significance of a “whole of life” approach to IEC education, Christine described a basic nutritional classroom service, “We’ve actually brought a toaster and we’ve got bread in the freezer and butter in the fridge and we eat breakfast [with the students]”. This is a common practice in schools serving families in low socio-economic areas, with the ritual was established by Christine because a number of her Sudanese students come to class without a proper breakfast. Although young people skipping breakfast is by no means a new phenomenon, establishment of this daily ritual was initiated because a lack of nutritional information among some Sudanese families and other time constraints facing parents. As Christine reiterated, “we take the toaster out and we make bread and I eat a second breakfast with them…. This is all in the context of the classroom and I know it’s quite unique”. With a hint of institutional resistance and pride, she asserted, “It wouldn’t happen in a mainstream classroom but we’re not a mainstream classroom; we’re a centre for new arrivals”. As most schools spend some time providing pastoral care, the “breakfast club” is perhaps better assessed as a nutritional platform that facilitates better academic focus and concentration among students throughout the school day. It is true that the IEC is a centre for new arrivals that may have experienced trauma, but by design, it is an educational service whose official mandate is to prepare young students for transition
into mainstream classrooms that will ultimately equip them with the capacities to realise their educational hopes.

“To be happy!”: negotiating the full range of affects

Schools implementing innovations in teaching and learning often report a decline in behavioural problems previously related to the home environment and previous experiences (Doolittle et al., 2007, George et al., 2007; Luiselli et al., 2005). The DET paper on quality teaching in NSW public schools reported that the facilitation of a “strong, positive and supportive learning environment produce improved student outcomes” (2003, p. 7). However, it is important that teachers recognise that a “positive learning environment” is not an end in itself and should not be privileged at the expense of quality teaching and learning. As Hattie (2002) reported, positive teacher-student relationships can have productive implications for student agency and efficacy (p. 118). Detailing her efforts to establish an innovative and positive teacher-student relationships, Christine discussed a somewhat controversial approach to enhancing teacher-student intimacy as a platform for learning. When Christine first addressed one of her classes, she asked them, “What does Mrs. […] want to happen in this class?” “What is it that I expect?” According to her, the class responded, “We follow the rules”. After some additional prompting by Christine, the class added, “We do good work” and “We do all our homework…”. Christine added, “And they’re giving me all these things that they want me to hear and I, like, put up on the board in big letters, ‘to be happy!’” Describing the students’ reaction, she recounted, “they’re all just looking at each other going, ‘ha-ha, is she crazy or what?’ Cause I suppose, you know, I’m the lady in charge and they’re not expecting I’m going to come in with, well, I want you to be happy and they’re all sort of ‘huh?’” Although well-intentioned, Christine’s exclamation “to be happy!” establishes a potentially unhelpful bifurcation between the pastoral and the academic. On the one hand, it is important to acknowledge past traumas, encourage well-being and establish a supportive learning environment. On the other hand, an awareness of trauma discourse should not detract from equipping young people with competencies for educational and vocational success, which works to extend their well-being and
academic capabilities beyond the relatively short duration of stay in IECs. When the students replied that what was expected was to do good work and all of their homework, Christine dismissed that as them telling her what they wanted her to hear.

As evident in Chapter 3, education is a form of symbolic capital implicated in Sudanese people’s survival and hope for a better future in Sudan and during migration. Another way of interpreting the students’ response is that they are informing Christine of what they expect of her as an educator, as opposed to what she wants to hear. It could be argued that the students’ long-term happiness is better served by a good education in IECs. It should be noted that balancing the pastoral and the academic is a difficult proposition, especially when working with newly arrived and war-affected student populations. According to Butcher and McGrath (2004), finding a balance between the pastoral and academic should involve “caring for the whole person – that is, the student’s integrated experiences, educative, social, spiritual and psychological” (p. 548). If we are to care for the whole person, this requires caring for their future selves, so to speak, which is predicated, first and foremost, on effective teaching and the student’s ability to acquire and retain the relevant knowledge and skills to function as a productive member of Australian society.

From Christine’s perspective, establishing the “rules of the classroom” is beginning the process of rerouting and transforming what she perceives to be students’ negative associations to formal educational settings and teachers encountered in Sudan and en route to Australia. However, the emphasis on creating a happy classroom environment may inadvertently be taking away young people’s hopefulness and hoped-for educational outcomes. As Freire (1998) observed, “One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be” (p. 9). By emphasising the pastoral before the academic – by promoting recovery and rehabilitation before academic capacity building – students’ longer-term happiness and their realisation of hoped-for outcomes may go unrealised. That said, hope is not always prefigured, but
rather unfolds and is supported by positive formal and informal learning environments inside and outside the classroom context.

Based on Christine’s responses, a case could also be made that students’ hopeful disposition aligns with a happy classroom environment. In support of Christine’s accentuation of “happy”, reorientation towards a happy classroom atmosphere does not necessarily exclude a denial of past traumas, oppression or academic capacity building. As Hamilton (2007) wrote, just as the “recounting of happy memories need not involve a denial of oppression, or ‘moving beyond’ or ‘letting go’ of the past”, memories of oppression, displacement and migration need not “preclude the recollection of happiness and hope in ways that may engender strength and signal agency” (p. 67). Along similar lines, Ahmed (2007) argued that the expression of unhappy affects can provide people with an alternative set of imaginings from which to imaginatively construct a better future, adding a greater complexity and richness to the perceived range of hoped-for possibilities. Nevertheless, the IEC’s promotion of happiness as an educational goal assumes that it can be taught. It is a sentiment sympathetic to the notion of “positive education”, which Seligman et al. (2009), defined as “education for both traditional skills and for happiness” (p. 293). They argued that “skills for happiness” can and should be taught to schoolchildren: moreover, that these skills “increase resilience, positive emotion, engagement and meaning” (p. 293). In one sense, the positive education philosophy reflects an underlying assumption of this thesis, that resilience is made up of accumulated and accumulating capacities, which can be transferred, adapted and employed in and across a variety of social fields. In another sense, however, the positive education movement seems to accentuate student happiness and well-being before the acquisition of “traditional” academic skills and capabilities.

Seligman signalled this therapeutic orientation, stating, “I am all for accomplishment, success, literacy, and discipline; but imagine if schools could, without compromising either, teach both the skills of well-being and the skills of achievement” (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 293-294; italics added). There is something quite alluring about the idea that the different skills necessary for well-being and
academic achievement can be taught simultaneously, without compromising the acquisition of either. However, Seligman’s positioning of well-being *before* academic skills raises a number of concerns. In the promotion of a positive education framework, it appears that schools are, to some extent, transformed into motivational and personal power seminars. In many ways, it is not a question, as Seligman has suggested, of whether well-being can be taught in schools, but rather a question of whether a curriculum based on teaching well-being, optimism and resilience detracts from the acquisition of academic and vocational capabilities, which is the basis of hope and resilience for many students. Although supportive school settings can encourage academic participation and achievement, it is important that the accentuation of happiness does not equate with a lowering of teacher expectations for traditional academic proficiencies that are essential to young people’s preservation of hope and longer-term formation of resilience and integration in Australian society.

**Security, trust and meaningful relationships**

Teacher-student relationships characterised by high levels of trust can facilitate “a set of organisational conditions” conducive to improved student learning outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 116). In a study of learning influences among Maori students in New Zealand, Bishop et al. (2002) found that “all but the teachers emphasised the relationship between teachers and the students”. The teacher participants viewed the central influence on student achievement “as a function of the child’s attitudes and dispositions, their home, or the working conditions of the school” (p. 118). As Hattie (2002) noted, trust, respect and positive regard between teachers and students are important factors in promoting good teaching and learning outcomes. The challenge facing educators and students alike concerns the pastoral and/or academic orientation of these relationships. Among IEC staff members, the development of trust, security and meaningful relationships was considered a crucial aspect of academic achievement. Furthermore, IEC staff perceived the establishment of meaningful connections between students and teachers to be an integral strategy for working through students’ past and present adversities. For Heather, the success
of IEC programs is their facilitation of “trust” and a “therapeutic environment” where students can feel secure. With the assistance and continued promotion of trust and security, she observed that students seem to “blast” through their developmental, psychological and emotional “blockages”. It’s “not a gradual growth but a blast through!” For Heather, trust is a key ingredient of teacher-student relationships, enabling young students to overcome their particular traumatic pasts. Indeed, Burnett and Peel (2001) suggested, the “most therapeutic event for a refugee child can be to become part of the local school community” (cited by Cassity & Gow, 2006, p. 4).

Mainstream schools, MRCs and IECs have been viewed as key spaces where young refugees can develop capacities and resources to deal with stress, anxiety and cultural transition. In the study of Cassity and Gow (2006), teachers acknowledged the importance of meaningful teacher-student relationships “in terms of emotional as well as curricular support” (p. 11). One of the IEC teachers in that study stated, “they [Sudanese students] said also that they felt more comfortable with teachers they like than a new counsellor they don’t really know”. Although IEC teachers would undoubtedly have developed particular and successful strategies for dealing with student’s psychological, emotional and social issues, trained counsellors and psychological support staff do have a role to play when dealing with students suffering from severe and persistent psychological difficulties.

What seems to be missing from the above accounts of trust in classroom contexts is an awareness of the trust students place in their teachers to educate and equip them with what they want and need to know. While the facilitation of emotional connections between teachers and students may facilitate trust and security, the “unofficial” pastoral care mandate of IECs must also take into consideration the longer-term wellbeing of students, equipping them with relevant academic capabilities to navigate and function effectively in Australia. Importantly, the pastoral and academic do not necessarily operate as two distinct realms as the former can inform the latter, and vice versa. Although the ability to manage and overcome
traumatic experiences is a significant aspect of resilience, its development can also emerge from a sense of scholastic achievement.

The ongoing facilitation of trust between IEC staff and Sudanese families and the broader community was recognised by a number of participants as a key ingredient of student learning and achievement. As Irene, an IEC counsellor, suggests, the creation of meaningful teacher-student relationships is “healing in itself”. She adds that “connection” “really happens big time in the IEC”. It is believed that the therapeutic or healing properties of “connection” are activated through IEC teachers’ familiarity with and affirmation of students’ pre-existing cultural knowledge and stories. As Irene noted, “teachers are probably more aware of the [students’] stories, because it will come up in their writing and it’s almost, it’s sort of something they share”. It is through this sharing at an everyday classroom level as well as during the annual refugee week and multicultural days that students’ stories are affirmed and, somewhat problematically, become “more normalised”. The narrative component of school initiatives such as refugee and multicultural days can, as O’Neill and Harindranath (2006) argued, represent sites and strategies of social justice by challenging exclusionary tendencies, promoting resistances as well as transformations by creating spaces for other voices and alternative discourses.

At the same time, these attempts to normalise migrant’s experiences open up the possibility of trivialising and essentialising complex differences and highly subjective experiences. In a study of Somali youth in Canadian and North American schools, Forman (2001) explored how some staff valorised student narratives in ways that the students did not. The study reported that student stories of escape from repressive political systems or dangerous contexts would circulate among staff and be recounted to school visitors with great pride. According to Forman (2001), the teacher-visitor exchange of refugee narratives unintentionally relegated students to fixed, “past” identity positions such as “refugee”, “child soldier” or “immigrant”. An ongoing focus on past hardship and struggle can reproduce traumatic memories and constrain capacities of young refugees to redefine themselves within their new national contexts. Forman (2001) observed that the migration narratives follow an
inevitable “teleological trajectory that points to the ‘here’ of a localized and situated present” (p. 45). Following Forman (2001), the valorisation of refugee narratives to “make it” to countries of asylum like Australia, Canada and the United States establishes an inferior-superior, spatio-temporal polarity between the country of origin, as past and “over-there”, and the country of asylum as a “safe”, “here-and-now”.

The Tree of Life: examining the past through metaphor

In his exploration of the affective economies of co-witnessing in classroom situations, Zembylas (2006) conceptualised the classroom as a site for the co-construction of alternative imaginings of traumatic narratives through processes of bearing witness to individual and social trauma (p. 305). He envisaged the classroom as a site that moves beyond nationalistic responses to trauma and the mere recognition of difference (p. 306). In his discussion of the “affective possibilities of witnessing”, Zembylas illustrated the ways that “classrooms and affect interact to produce a particular politics and ethics, especially in contexts of historical trauma” (p. 307). He argued that progressive classroom pedagogies based on enhancing witnessing skills “educate toward an understanding of affect that may encourage a transformative political response” (p. 307). Highlighting the relational and interpersonal nature of affect, the circulation of affect among affected bodies “has the potential to energize ethics and politics by acknowledging that the affective possibilities of witnessing emerge from the connective multiplicities of bodily forces and intensities”. As Oliver (2001) observed, the relational and connective potential or “latitudes” of affective forces “open up the circulation and flow of affective energy in all our relationships” (p. 20). Accordingly, bearing witness “is the heart of the circulation of energy that connects us, and obligates us, to each other” (p. 20). Following on from the previous critique of progressive classroom techniques, it is of similar importance that the teaching of witnessing skills does not detract from the transmission of more traditional skills and knowledge necessary for academic success.
Irene, an IEC counsellor, recounted a creative classroom activity designed to help young students make sense of their migration and resettlement experiences. Utilising the power of art and metaphor as therapeutic tools, the “Tree of Life” activity is a narrative therapy approach which, according to Irene, “provides an alternative story to the refugee story of loss and grief” by focusing on “strength”. The Tree of Life project epitomises Comet’s (2005) critique of the way trauma is conceptualised and employed as a potential resource: “The common wisdom is that we should get over it [trauma], put it behind us and move on. There is, however, a more profound response; that we should try to USE the trauma by transmuting it into creative energy” (p. 60). Over the years, Irene had collected a large number of students’ Trees of Life designs, which cover her office wall. According to her, the idea behind the Tree of Life activity is that “the roots [of the tree] are the students. The whole tree is a metaphor for living, for persevering through resettlement. The roots are their heritage. The important things from their past, they’re always going to be a part of them, and the next generation and the next generation back. And the trunk is their strength, the strength that they have”.

If we refer to Cwerner’s (2001) theorisation of the “times of migration”, the Tree of Life project highlights the “interplay between ruptures and continuities, old rhythms and new routines” (p. 15). Regarding the tracing of the temporal dimensions of young people’s escape, migration and resettlement through the Tree of Life metaphor, Cwerner might argue that “such experiences can provide a critical anchor for understanding the process, dynamics and possibilities of the migration process” (2001, p. 15). During her explanation, Irene points to various aspects of the students’ designs, “The roots, the branches are their hopes and dreams and the leaves are the significant people in their life that have helped them in the past and in the present”. According to her, “some of these people may have passed away and so those leaves are brown and falling. And the fruit are the gifts that they’ve received in life, which may be real, tangible ones, or they may be ones that they’ve received from…the gifts of religion”. Following Zembylas (2002), the Tree of Life exercise represents a creative way of drawing on students’ past experiences in ways that may assist in their recovery from trauma, while establishing lines of continuity between the past, present and future. In terms of resilience formation, the exercise taps into young
people’s capacity to productively use past experiences as creative resources in the present.

Cassity and Gow (2005) discussed a similar artistic exercise undertaken during a study workshop. In the “river of life” exercise, they described the process of students cutting out fabric to make a textile river with stepping-stones across it. According to them, the stepping-stones “represent their anticipated pathway to the future with steps such as education, work, relationships and family” (2005, p. 54). Crocodiles in the river represent potential challenges, which could “push them off their chosen path” (2005, p. 54). The symbolic nature of the Tree of Life and river of life activities allows students to explore difficult feelings and memories associated with the past in creative and artistic ways. Although both activities may allow young Sudanese students to creatively and metaphorically represent their migration and resettlement journeys, there is a sense in which the refugee artworks could become valorised by teaching staff. The archiving of past Tree of Life designs on Irene’s office wall may unintentionally relegate and fix students to past identity positions such as “refugee” and “trauma survivor” (see Forman, 2001). Furthermore, the ongoing focus on student’s experiences of hardship and struggle and their capacity “as survivors” may constrain their ability to redefine themselves with their new school and social contexts.

While the productive potential of these exercises is acknowledged, the Tree of Life and river of life projects both follow a teleological trajectory that assumes Australia to be the inevitable endpoint of young people’s migration journeys, a point explored in Chapter 5. Bhahba (2004) reflected Forman’s characterisation, suggesting that newly arrived migrant subjects are “graspable only in the passage between telling/told, between ‘here’ and ‘somewhere else’, and in this double scene the very condition of cultural knowledge is the alienation of the subject”’ (p. 150). As Irene added, “all the time when you explore all these things with the kids you go back to, ‘Who taught you this?’ ‘What would that person say about you?’ ‘What would that person think about you now?’” Interestingly, while the question “What would that person think of you now?” could be viewed as a strategy for promoting a sense of
pride and self-esteem in young students, it might also be interpreted as a behavioural management strategy. In other words, the idea of absent or deceased family and/or friends assessing your personal and academic progress could be a covert method of regulating students’ behaviour. This issue is taken up in the next chapter through an exploration of the “transnational village gaze” and its implications in terms of social control, transnational involvement as well as feelings of guilt and care (Velayutham & Wise, 2005, p. 35).

Familial and communal career expectations

As we have seen in the previous chapter, for many young Sudanese men and women education is viewed as the solution to all of life’s challenges. For some, the promise of education is the primary source of hope in Sudan, neighbouring refugee camps and countries of asylum. Although the preservation and realisation of educational ambitions can be a significant source of resilience for some Sudanese young people, at the same time, “failure” to meet both personal and communal expectations around education and future career pathways can severely affect young people’s resettlement and longer-term happiness. Although many new Sudanese migrants arrive in Australia with limited material possessions as a result of forced displacement and dispossession, they carry with them the heavy burden of local and transnational expectations to succeed. Negotiating the gap between expectation and reality is a significant challenge facing Sudanese young people, IEC staff and community service providers alike. For Mark, 23, a university student studying international politics, the “spirit to study” is interpreted as “the way out” and way to a “better future”. Richard, a denominational youth worker, explained that young Sudanese regularly overlook more practical career trades in favour of career vocations such as doctors, lawyers or politicians, “everybody trying be politics, you know, I never seen a Sudanese say trying to study mechanics in my entire life…I never seen anybody want to do drafting…they all want to be politicians, this guy want to be lawyer, this guy want to be criminal something [investigator]”. The idealisation of and tendency towards these career pathways (i.e. doctors, lawyers, politicians) is explained by
reference to young people’s experiences in Southern Sudan, refugee camps and associated communal career expectations.

Cassity and Gow (2005) reported that many of the young African participants in their study expressed a desire to be “doctors, lawyers, judges and magistrates” in addition to more manual and community-focused careers such as “social workers, engineers, and informational technology experts” (p. 53). According to them, participants felt that achievement of these careers would assist them in helping their society, families and communities (Cassity & Gow, 2005). They explained that the ambitiousness of young refugees’ vocational aspirations was inversely related to their traumatic pasts and their perception of new opportunities in Australia (Cassity & Gow, 2005). However, participants’ “ambitious” vocational aspirations were found to “coexist alongside a limited awareness of the difficulties involved in climbing the socioeconomic ladder in Australia” (2005, p. 53). Similarly, Tlhabano and Schweitzer (2007) reported that African participants expressed high short-term and long-term ambitions despite interrupted schooling experiences prior to resettlement and language difficulties post resettlement (p. 2). Of relevance to Sudanese participants’ discussions of their vocational aspirations, Tlhabano and Schweitzer found that their research participants “commonly indicated that growing up in a war ravaged environment did not hinder their future focus” (2007, p. 13), concluding that the participants’ war situation inspired “a future focus in terms of individuals desiring to pursue vocations which will enable them to make a difference in their homeland (i.e. doctors)” (p. 16). Participants’ aspiration to and pursuit of vocations that might make a difference to their homelands is indicative of the future-oriented dimensions of hope. Although hope is conceived as an enabling affect in the present, the ability of members of refugee populations to achieve these educational and transnational goals is nevertheless predicated on quality learning and teaching outcomes.

For many young Sudanese men and women, experiences with humanitarian aid personnel in Sudan and their stays in refugee and displacement camps have contributed to the idealisation of certain high-end careers. As Irene, an IEC school
counsellor noted, “There’ll be the human rights lawyers that come in and the doctors that come in [to the refugee camps]”. For some Sudanese participants, politicians, lawyers and doctors are viewed as people who get things done, who have contributed in a meaningful way to their life and to the betterment of Sudan. According to Irene, when Sudanese young people assert their desire to be a doctor or lawyer, what they are actually saying is “I want a job and I want to be useful, and I want to contribute to society” because that’s the only model they’ve seen’. Tlhabano and Schweitzer (2007) reported that altruism or “the desire to contribute to making the society a better place” could be influenced by refugees’ experiences of hardship prior to resettlement (p. 19). Young Sudanese people’s dispositional assertions that they want to be doctors or lawyers is expressing more than a desire to be useful and contribute to society. It would seem that they are saying, “I want to be useful and contribute in a specific way”. June reported that “you talk to teachers and they’ll say, ‘Oh, they have these incredibly unreal expectations, they want to be doctors’, but when you think about their life in refugee camps, they’re the only jobs they’ve ever seen”’. A number of media reports on the “progress” of Sudanese refugees in Australia indicate that these careers and qualifications are in fact achievable (Jacobson, 2011; Munro, 2009). In the present study, a number of participants were on their way to earning qualifications in the areas of medicine, psychology, finance and engineering.

In Sudan, a moral framework underpins these “idealised” careers. As Peter, a community liaison officer noted, “The thing is because in Sudan, normally, you cannot be a very nice person unless…you cannot be a very respected person unless you are a doctor, you cannot be a good respected person if you are not a high politician”. He adds that prestige and status are linked to “a certain type of work”. Peter recounted a conversation he had with his father about his desire to work in the community welfare sector.

When I first arrived in Australia, I start, I called my Dad and I start, I want to do community welfare. And he said, “What is community welfare?” And I told him, “I want to do community welfare because I can help the whole
Career options in agriculture, accounting or hospitality are considered to be “low” career pathways by some parents and community elders. For Peter, “If you say ‘accountant’, nobody will understand it easily what accountant do. If you say you want to be a ‘gardener’ or you want to study to be an artist or you want to be in hospitality, nobody thinks these are good things”. According to Christine, in the context of the IEC, young people find it difficult to reconcile the limitations of their academic abilities with the high expectations from within their communities to make the most of their opportunities in Australia, “it’s a real challenge for the young person because they very quickly understand that they’re limited, that the pressure comes in from family and community saying, ‘You’re one of the lucky ones. You got to come to Australia. You’ve got to go out and get an education’”. Although she frames this as a pressure coming from within young people’s communities, these comments also provide some insight into the culture of low expectations in IECs, a point discussed in the next section. Although not all students may be able to “live up to” the high academic or vocational expectations from their parents, it is perhaps just as unproductive for them to “live down to” low teacher expectations of what is possible. As Christine explained, “They [Sudanese students] want to do what their parents and families want, but at the same time, they’re not able to” [italics added]. These statements are reminiscent of the findings of Bishop et al. (2002) who reported that teachers of Maori students in New Zealand explained the lack of educational achievement in deficient terms or what Jones described as a “discourse of disadvantage” (cited by Hattie, p. 6).

Clementine, 23, a Sudanese university student, recounted that young Sudanese men in particular have responded to the weight of expectation by spending long periods of time studying: “They are bookworms, most of the Sudanese guys, they’ll just read, read, read, read, and they’re not putting anything in their heads”. According to her, in their dutiful attempts to soak up information, young men are sacrificing the development of critical thinking capacities, “Critical thinking and analysing
it...that’s what they don’t do. It’s sad”. Along similar lines, Lahire (2003) made a
distinction between competence in learning and the propensity to learn. In other
words, it is one thing to be a passionate and competent studier, and quite another to
be able to retain, accumulate and use information. However, as Watkins and Noble
(2008) noted, although homework might not appear to fulfill its academic function in
the early years, embodied practices and routines of study combined with “pedagogic
effort” can establish and “encourage the embodiment of a discipline to learn on
which academic success depends” (p. 62). In contrast to Clementine’s negative
assessment of young Sudanese men’s stoic scholarly habitus, it may in fact be their
way of managing the many and often competing demands of individual and
communal expectations. The struggle to manage their own embodied practices of
self-discipline and communal expectations to achieve is indicative of Gramsci’s
(1973) observation that “studying too is a job, and a very tiring one, with its own
particular apprenticeship – involving muscles and nerves as well as intellect. It is a
process of adaptation, a habit acquired with effort, tedium and even suffering” (p.
42). While the practised ability of young Sudanese men to “read, read, read” suggests
certain embodied capacities for stillness, self-discipline and emotional regulation, the
deliberate regulation of the pedagogic body required for sustained study is
counterbalanced by an urgency to acquire the relevant information, skills and
qualifications necessary for local and transnational involvement.

The alternative pathways debate

Of relevance to the discussion of teacher and communal expectations is Brown’s
(2004) reminder that teachers enter the classroom with preconceptions of teaching,
learning, curricula, assessment and their students generally. As Hattie (2002)
observed, these conceptions are “powerful moderators” of the success of teachers
and students (p. 127). Given the challenges faced by newly arrived Sudanese young
people in terms of English proficiency, alternative educational pathways such as
TAFE and other bridging courses are perceived by service providers as appropriate
for achieving career aspirations. However, the promotion of alternative academic and
vocational pathways by IEC and MRC staff has also produced certain tensions
between service providers, young people and their communities. For a number of Sudanese parents, these alternative academic and career pathways are unacceptable, even disrespectful alternatives for their children. These tensions are fuelled by a belief among some Sudanese parents that IEC staff underestimate and mismanage young people’s ability and drive to attain expected career vocations. As Cassity and Gow (2005) asserted, given the ambitious vocational aspirations of young Sudanese, “it is important to present refugee young people with alternative pathways, such as TAFE and vocational training, which may produce similar outcomes, and help them make up for lost time” (p. 54). Although these recommendations seem reasonable in theory, the encouragement of alternative pathways by IEC and MRC staff suggesting TAFE bridging courses, retail and manual labour jobs has become a point of contention between service providers and Sudanese parents. An important distinction needs to be made here between providing young people with informed vocational guidance and specific vocational promotion.

Young Sudanese men and women arrive in Australia with an obvious enthusiasm and desire to make the most of their educational opportunities. For many of these individuals, Australia is perceived as the land of infinite opportunity. There is a firmly held belief that if they study hard enough, there is nothing that cannot be achieved. The reality is that academic and career achievement requires a degree of strategic decision-making and realistic assessments of present academic skills and abilities. Furthermore, educational and career success is influenced by the level of pre-arrival education, recognition of previous qualifications, availability of positions and other concurrent family and workplace responsibilities. According to Linda, an MRC youth coordinator, a lot of Sudanese young people “have a very narrow view of what jobs are out there. So it’s either a doctor or a lawyer or a pilot”. She maintained that for a number of young people, the narrow view of job possibilities is “linked to their experiences”. She commented, “I think for a lot of young people, they have really fantastic aspirations and aims, especially in their careers, but they don’t know. They want to jump from A to D, and they don’t know the steps A, B, C, D”. Consistent with this claim, Dooley (2007) observed that it is not uncommon for adolescent refugees in Australia with little or interrupted schooling experiences “to fix their hopes on a direct pathway from school to the most competitive university
courses” (pp. 2-3). Similarly, Linda noted, “for that reason they’re almost setting themselves up to fail because they’re thinking in these big jumps and they don’t know there are other pathways through”. While her response may be an accurate reflection of her experiences with Sudanese young people, Craig suggested that young people’s past experiences and a desire to contribute to the rebuilding of Sudan are beginning to coalesce in more “practical” educational and career aspirations, “our background, you know, we had very tough ties back in Sudan and I find it necessary to study particularly engineering because it is more practical”. Craig’s altruistic intentions highlight the broader collective value of education and vocational training for young Sudanese migrants in Australia.

Although educational and career aspirations are an important source of hope for Sudanese young people pre- and post-arrival, IEC staff appear to believe that unrealistically high aspirations can be counterproductive and even harmful to young people’s longer-term integration in Australia. Accordingly, IEC staff and other service providers have encouraged young people to explore alternative pathways to achieving their stated career goals. As June commented, “so it’s a matter of just working through and saying, ‘Yep, okay, you may want to be a doctor and there a lots of different pathways and lots of ways that you can get there, and they take a little while, but you know, there are other options”. Similarly, Christine, an IEC teacher explained, “we try and help them with that pathway as much as possible. Not saying, ‘No, you’ll never make it to university’. We never ever would say that or have said that in the past, but what we do encourage is an alternative pathway for now”. Along similar lines, Linda recounted, “I’ve had a lot of young men and women, they don’t get straight into a nursing degree, they do well at TAFE, and then they do some work experience, earn a bit of money, they do some bridging courses and they transfer into university”.

Rita, 18, explained that on her arrival in a new high school, her classroom teacher raised concerns about her English ability, the appropriateness of her subject choices and prospects of passing the Year 10 School Certificate. Accordingly, she and her year coordinator “made a deal” that if “I study Year 10 and if I pass my School
Certificate then I’ll chose my subjects I want…So I did that and for my School Certificate, I passed it, way more than she [the classroom teacher] could ever imagine”. According to Rita, the teacher could not believe the results and was shocked by them. In no uncertain terms, she exclaimed, “When I got my subjects it killed them… It killed her!”. I asked Rita, “Do you get some satisfaction from showing her you could do it?” She replied, “Yeah, because my coordinator was the best, he was the best; he knew I could do it. He tested me in so many different levels and knew I could do it. I just needed her [the classroom teacher] off my back”.

Rita’s experience demonstrates that capacities of resilience are accumulated in response to both supportive and unsupportive conditions. In other words, the Year Coordinator’s belief in her abilities provided an important impetus for her academic success. Similarly, the classroom teacher’s doubts about Rita’s ability to succeed in the School Certificate evoked a resistant response in her, providing the necessary motivation to achieve and prove her incorrect. From this example we can conclude that resilience was supported not only by positive conditions of support and encouragement but also by competitive and resistant responses to low expectations among teachers concerning educational ability and capacity.

Parental expectations and attitudes around academic and vocational advancement extend to perceptions of appropriate recreational activities and projects. As Peter, a Sudanese community liaison officer, recounted, “Let me tell you, if you a kid that you going to do a painting, the mum will tell him, ‘What painting are you going to do?’ ‘What are you going to do with the painting?’ ‘It’s not going to give you good future’”. For a number of Sudanese parents, education is an outcome that should equip young people with certain capabilities, skills and knowledges that will help in them in their desire to contribute to the future prosperity of Sudan, a point discussed in Chapter 5. According to Peter, “the issue is all the families looking to the kids with the ideas that they have to study and go back to Sudan. So if you painting here, what are you going to the painting in Sudan?”

He adds that Sudanese people have “got a different way of thinking about the study. We think that if you study, it’s to become somebody in the future. We don’t study because of the employment market for example”. Practical considerations like the number of available job positions or candidate competition are not high decision-making priorities within the Sudanese
community. Correspondingly, he explained, “We study in a way that, if they say that there is one [in a] hundred thousand doctors, and there’s no place for a doctor to get a job, then we will study that one…We don’t take it in a way that if they say, ‘No, there’s no more employment for doctors’ now people start shifting to another career’. Interestingly, he recounted, “being a doctor is enough; it’s not getting a job but being a doctor is enough”. These comments offer insight into the cultural motivations and status-producing consequences of specific occupations. Becoming a doctor or lawyer seems to have as much to do with respect and communal status as it does with accompanying notions of transnational involvement and contribution. In other words, it appears to be a sign that those “lucky” enough to escape Sudan have “made it” and “made the most” of their opportunities.

For those “lucky” enough to escape and survive the civil war in Sudan, competition for limited places in universities and competition for employment in medicine and law do not seem to factor into their decision-making. This is understandable given that statistical probabilities, in many cases, would have been against many of these individuals surviving the Sudanese Civil War and resettling in Australia in the first place. The reflections of Lingis (2002) on the idea of hope provide insight into Sudanese participants’ hopeful vocational expectations: “I think hope is always hope against the evidence” (in Zournazi, 2002, p. 23). According to Lingis, hope is more than “simple expectation”, as “expectation is based on the pattern you see in the past” (2002, p. 23). Hope is more like a “spark” that emerges in the present “in spite of what went before” (Zournazi, 2002, p. 24). Along similar lines, Stengers commented on the nature of hope, stating, “I would say that hope is the difference between probability and possibility” (in Zournazi, 2002, p. 245). With these reflections on hope in mind, it would appear that the promotion of alternative pathways by IEC staff and service providers indicates incomplete appreciation of the complex and counter-intuitive motivations that govern Sudanese people’s pursuit of what might be consisted by some to be “unrealistic” career aspirations.

The perception that school staff are undermining student potential and directing young Sudanese men and women away from their “destined” career trajectories is
evident in the response of Ivan, a Sudanese MRC community worker, who claimed that “a group has been started by this school…and they’re saying that since they come from a particular country, they should not go further with their secondary education, but drop out to apprenticeships”. In addition, Ivan asserted that these young people “are very competent boys and girls who want to pursue professional careers and want to become better people in life and all of that, but the teachers are trying to redirect them, ‘So please, go to this, go to mechanics or go to building or go to something else’…and diverting their mind”. Ivan’s comments draw attention to a wider debate regarding the filtering down of Federal immigration policies, especially in relation to refugee provisions. In other words, teachers may be unwittingly directing students to particular careers and industries that are suffering from labour pool shortages.

From a young Sudanese person’s perspective, Jade, 18, a high school student, commented that the perception of low teacher expectations can have a detrimental effect on young people’s self-esteem and in some cases may be linked to Sudanese students dropping out of school. In contrast, in her study of Sudanese children in UK schools, Rutter (1999) found that “high teacher expectations…contributed to children’s achievement, as did escaping the label of traumatised and thus uneducable” (p. 204). Recounting a conversation with a particular high school teacher, Jade commented, “She [the teacher] was like, ‘Oh no, I don’t think you should leave this job because I don’t think you are going to get a good UAI, so you should just stick with this job’”. When asked, “Do you think teachers have lower expectations?” Jade responded that the perception of low teacher expectations could lead to low self-esteem, “It makes us feel like we are dumb and put that in our heads that we are dumb”. As a result, she explained that some Sudanese students “just stop working”. As Jade’s friend, Rita, elaborated, “I guess that’s mostly why we have a lot of guys dropping out of school”. It could be argued that an atmosphere of low teacher expectations has contagion-like effects, undermining young people’s academic ambitions and desire to learn. Accordingly, the perception that teachers are directing students towards basic and, by implication, less respectable occupations has led to conflict between some parents and teachers.
During a conversation with Christine, I attempted to clarify the teacher position by asking, “So there’s in no way guidance towards more manual occupations?” Unexpectedly, Christine responded, “Definitely, the guidance is all there but they’re not receptive to it”. Previously, Christine had promoted the “pathways” argument, but during this conversation thread she contradicted her previous statements, explaining, “I’ll give you an example, there was a barista course and we thought, wow, this’d be great if some of our children get skilled up because we had quite a number of older children a few years ago – like I’m talking 15, 16, 17 year olds – and we thought, great, we’ll get them to do the barista course, then they can get a part-time job somewhere”. These statements represent a Western cultural agenda reflected in her approach to career guidance. Christine continued, “That’s Australian culture, we all had part time jobs when we were studying. I told them, you know, when we were at college and Uni we always had jobs and when we were at school, we all had jobs. Like my daughter finished her HSC last year and she had a part-time job and she still did her HSC”. In Sudan, by contrast, when a young family member is studying, Sudanese families expect and support the student’s total immersion in education and make concessions in order to support their studies. In the absence of family and social support, however, this may not be possible.

Aligning school staff and Sudanese parent expectations is a complex two-way conversation. As participant responses indicated, attempts at negotiation and alignment often led to conflict between parents and service providers. Commenting on accusations she received from Sudanese parents in relation to their perceptions of low expectations and career misdirection, Christine stated, “I get accused of it [career misdirection] too. And I can wear it because I’m thinking of the child and I want them to experience success in learning so that they continue to learn and I try to explain to parents and guardians all the time but they don’t – they don’t want to hear that”. It seems reasonable to suggest, however, that Sudanese parents are also thinking about their children by encouraging them to pursue white-collar, high-paying occupations. According to Christine, she tries to explain to caregivers, “look, we’ve got to take small steps. If your child is happy at school and they’re achieving, then they’ll want to continue to learn, but if they’re at school and they’re experiencing failure, they’re going to drop out”. Although many young people’s
migration journeys would have been marked by unhappiness, it is incorrect to assume that happiness is a new experience for these students. Along similar lines, Malkki (1995a) observed, “We cannot assume psychological disorder or mental illness a priori, as an axiom, nor can we claim to know, from the mere fact of refugeeness, the actual sources of a person’s suffering” (p. 510). In addition, neither can we assume the absence of happiness and wellbeing prior to arrival in Australia.

Conclusion

IECs represent sites of hopefulness for newly arrived Sudanese and other migrant young people. Quality teaching and learning requires more than preservation or conservation of young people’s being through the recognition of past experiences, prior learning and competencies, and should extend young people’s powers to act into the future. As Barcan (2002) wrote, “hopeful teaching occurs when we [teachers] ourselves are able to embody possibility, openness, or a subject position that a student might actually want to occupy” (p. 354). The potential of IECs to establish and enhance a sense of hopefulness is ultimately tied to an ability to equip young people with the basic proficiencies to achieve in mainstream classrooms and beyond. In no uncertain terms, this is a provocative and highly controversial debate. While the emphasis on pastoral care and alternative pathways in IECs and among IEC teachers foregrounds the pragmatic dimensions of hope (i.e. promoting specific skills and competencies), these kinds of psychological support and career guidance have the potential to undermine the symbolic aspects of hope which were so important in young Sudanese people’s ability to cope and survive displacement and migration. As argued throughout this chapter, the challenge is how to align and balance the two in the context of settlement in Australia.

The operative pastoral care paradigm active in IECs is demonstrative of the broader circulation and implementation of trauma discourse and associated “trauma” and “at risk” vocabularies in many Western approaches to mental health. As this chapter has argued, the preservation of hope, formation of resilience as well as academic training
among young Sudanese students are supported by and built upon the recognition of young people’s pre-existing knowledges, skills and embodied capacities to learn, as well as traditional approaches to dealing with adversity. In short, the accumulation of specific talents, skills and experiences of young Sudanese students can function as objects of ontological security, and provide the foundations for new knowledge and capabilities. An important conclusion to be drawn from the responses of young Sudanese participants concerns the way the idea of counselling and psychological support is introduced in the first place. Given the reported communal taboo around Western psychological discourse and language – as being for ‘mad people’ – it is important that youth practitioners explain the benefits and importance of counselling to Sudanese young people in a more informal and relational way.

Embodied capacities such as self-discipline, emotional regulation and silence are often overlooked as reflecting “quieter” and more “measured” dispositions to learning, with the deliberate pace of these embodied practices is counterbalanced by an urgency to achieve educational and vocational skills and qualifications for the purposes of communal and transcommunal contribution. Although the practice of silence is commonly viewed as a ‘passive’ or ‘unproductive’ behaviour, it is perhaps better conceived as adaptive faculty of defence and coping, and productively reframed as an embodied capacity of resilience. As Lahire (2003) argued, “the notions that sociologists use to conceptualise psychological processes occurring at the level of social groups capitalise too strongly on the idea that these processes are general and homogeneous in nature” (p. 329). He commented that social researchers may regard the socialisation and academic successes achieved within educational settings generalisable, durable and transferable, “but what does school transfer to situations outside school?” (2003, p. 342). In Chapter 5, the significance and extra-curricular implications of educational and vocational success are explored in relation to young people’s complex attitudes and practices of transnational involvement and return.
Chapter 5

‘I love Australia, but I also love Sudan’: ambivalence, obligation, and the formation of resilience within and across transnational social fields

Introduction

In the lives of young Sudanese people, the formation of resilience goes beyond local issues of settlement or national debates about refugees to include a focus on their caregiving relationships within transnational social fields. The capacity to care includes both a pragmatic and enduring moral dimension, which can sustain both life and hope within and across these fields. As evidenced in the previous chapter, the ability of IECs and other Australian schools to equip young Sudanese people with desired and relevant academic and career training can impact on their capacity to accumulate resources and capacities of resilience that facilitate their transnational involvement and enable them to attend to multistranded obligations in Australia and elsewhere. It is important to note that the intensity of young people’s connections, altruistic motivations and sense of moral obligation to friends and family overseas is rarely uniform. Accordingly, the notion of ambivalence is introduced in this chapter to explore young people’s mixed feelings towards transnational contribution and communal expectations of return. Academic writers argue that ambivalence is central to modernity (Bauman, 2007), the politics of cultural difference and hybridity, and the migrant condition more generally (Papastergiadis, 2000).

In common usage, ambivalence can imply “laziness” or “lack of interest”, but its Latin origin signifies simultaneous and strong opposing feelings towards certain objects, people or places. Bauman (2007) claimed that the language of ambivalence is one of specific disorder, the main symptom of which is acute discomfort when people are “unable to read the situation properly or choose between alternatives” (p.
1). Young people’s attempts to negotiate dissonant feelings such as joy and shame centre on the indeterminacy they feel in choosing between alternative places of belonging. However, the strategies they employ for negotiating this affective discomfort can be reframed as a sign of their investment in the process of developing a sense of belonging to countries of origin, migration and settlement. It is argued that the management of these simultaneous, often conflicting moral obligations leads to a form of cognitive and affective dissonance, which can produce feelings of shame and guilt. Highlighting the interconnected trajectories of despair and hope, suffering and resilience, this chapter argues that growth and increased powers of action can emerge out of this ambivalent and ambiguous ‘in between ‘space. While young people’s use of information and communication technologies can facilitate the partial resolution of this in-between space by helping them feel ‘more connected’ to people and places inside and outside Australia, these same technologies can also exacerbate a sense of isolation, bringing into uncomfortable focus the geographic and symbolic distance between these locales. Therefore, a central aim of this chapter is to highlight the social resilience-related consequences that emerge from the acquisition of educational and vocational competencies as well as access to information and communication platforms.

The transnational flows of resilience

In the early psychological literature, resilience was theorised as following a developmental trajectory towards a state of invulnerability. Along similar lines, international migration is often characterised as following a unidirectional line of flight towards countries of settlement. Drawing attention to a sometimes under-examined aspect of the literature on transnationalism, this chapter posits that the country of settlement is not necessarily a final destination or endpoint, but rather a transitional axis for multi-directional journeys – be they actual or virtual – through which resources of resilience can be accumulated and exchanged. The concept of “transnationalism” is difficult to define as it covers different diasporic, exilic and migratory processes and practices. Vertovec (1999) argued that the concept of transnationalism “is a notion that has become over-used to describe too wide a range
of phenomena” (p. 576). Transnational involvement can consist of physical or virtual return, monetary remittances or adherence to traditional customs within and between the country of origin, asylum or resettlement (Baldassar, 2008; Gowricharn, 2004; Carling, 2008). Although commonly associated with physical return and monetary remittances, the availability and increased usage of various forms of social media and communication technologies is leading to a redefinition of transnational involvement and what it means to physically and/or virtually “return home” (Baldassar, 2001; Baldassar et al., 2007).

The broad category of transnationalism is classically defined as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch et al., 1993, p. 1). Although that definition articulates a neat form of transnational involvement, the motivations for and modes of maintaining cross-border connections among young Sudanese participants are decidedly more complex and varied. A more appropriate conceptual framework for understanding the constantly evolving nature of Sudanese young people’s transnational involvement is the concept of transnational social fields. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) defined transnational social fields as “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are exchanged, organised and transformed” (p. 1009). McAuliffe (2008) also highlighted the interconnected, intersecting and overlapping nature of these social fields, conceptualising transmigrants as simultaneously located within several fields (transnational, national and local). Glick Schiller (2005) offered a useful insight in terms of the flow of ideas, practices and resources that pass between and through these interlocking transnational networks. The durability of these interlocking networks is maintained by ongoing transnational caregiving practices including emotional support as well as more material exchanges like monetary remittances. As will be discussed, it is through these interlocking channels that capacities and resources of resilience flow and are exchanged.
Intensity and capacity to care

Although explicating the broader relations of transnational networks – namely the linking of societies through multistranded relations – the conceptual framework of Basch et al. (1993) when considering transnational relations among Haitian migrants in New York overlooks the reversibility, multi-levelness and varied intensities of these connections as well as the everyday processes involved in maintaining them. Young Sudanese people’s simultaneous participation within local, translocal, national, and transnational fields adds a further layer of complexity to the construction of home and belonging to a plurality of places. Participation in and across these social fields often manifests in a variety of forms and varies in terms of frequency and intensity. Following Hage (2002a), “intensity” is “primarily affective” and has more to do with the internal effects of events than the physical “hard hitting” effects of the event (p. 193). Along similar lines, Kleinman (1995) observed that despite the universality of suffering, “pain is perceived and expressed differently, even in the same community” (cited by Keinzler, 2008, p. 224). In other words, external events, both past and present, are subjectively experienced, managed and expressed with different intensities by individuals in the same community. As young people in this study respond to transnational obligations with a mixture of conformity and resistance, participation and non-participation, the notion of intensity is useful for making sense of the non-uniformity and non-conformity of the affective attachments of young Sudanese to multiple places and their attitudes towards local and translocal involvement. It follows that the sources of young people’s resilience vary in terms of location and intensity.

Of additional interest is the critical observation that not all migrants participate or have the capacity to participate in transnational practices of remittance or return (O’Flaherty et al., 2007). Guarnizo et al. (2003) argued that ongoing transnational involvement has a significant correlation with the success of migrants to achieve economic assimilation and capital accumulation. It should be noted that transnational involvement involves a variety of trans-border caregiving practices and activities, and is not limited to financial remittances and physical return. Bourdieu (1985)
defined the accumulation of social capital as “the aggregate of actual and potential resources linked to possession of a durable network” [p. 248; italics added]. While the most obvious form of transnational support is monetary contributions and physical return, communication “from a distance” (Baldassar, 2008) via traditional technologies and social media platforms forms part of the aggregate set of resources used by young people to maintain and manage group membership, solidarity and belonging. Transnational participation involves a complex interaction between a sense of connection and reciprocal moral duty to friends and family overseas and the accumulation of educational capacities and material capital acquired in context of resettlement.

**Constructing multiple homes**

The complex relationship between home and homeland is inextricably bound with discussions of transnational involvement and related activities. Rather than a single or homogeneous concept of “home”, it is more appropriate in the case of displaced refugees and asylum seekers to think in terms of a plurality of “homes”. McAuliffe (2008) wrote that “an individual’s contemporary connections to home are often mediated through historical and personal connections to other places”, and not exclusively grounded in a singular or immutable locale (p. 78). Among young Sudanese participants, home is linked to places of origin and/or birthplace, educational and vocational opportunities, and imagined homelands. Although Sudan is considered to be home for some, returning to Sudan is commonly framed in terms of return visits rather than extended stays or repatriation. Although a number of Sudanese research participants expressed a desire to return to Sudan in order to contribute to the country’s rebuilding after the second civil war, the majority explained that these contributions would be fulfilled through return visits or working holidays as opposed to extended stays.

Yasmine, a multicultural centre worker, explained that returning to Sudan to stay is “the expectation rather than the rule”. She observed that “the ones who want to go
back to stay are the ones whose family have all connected and have businesses established where they know that they can get good money”. She added, “some of the children of those families are going back, but most of them who have gone back they go back to visit and that’s it”. From these comments, we might conclude that returning to Sudan to stay is contingent on financial opportunity rather than an enduring, altruistic desire to “rebuild” the country. Along similar lines, Natasha, a Sudanese community leader and parent, commented on the tendency of young people to go back to Sudan, but only for short periods. Natasha maintained that young people convey a desire to return to Sudan to visit, but express a simultaneous desire to return to Australia.

It would appear that young people feel a lingering sense of connection to Sudan, but the intensity of this connection and desire to repatriate seems to be superseded by an eagerness to return to Australia. From the above responses, one might argue that the feeling of being at home in Australia supersedes or wins out over a notional or remembered identification with a place or territory as “homeland”. Warner (1994) contended that refugees involved in voluntary visits or remigration are in fact “not returning home”, but are rather “returning to their country of origin, but no more” (p. 170). While these findings may be true of some returnees’ experiences, the suggestion that all semblance of “home” for returnees is no more is perhaps an over-generalisation. As objects of nostalgia, homelands still inform and influence life in the context of resettlement, even if return is impractical or impossible in the present. Presumably, this point depends on whether young people have family in Sudan, were born there, whether they have any memories of being there, as well as the effectiveness of their settlement in Australia. It might be more appropriate to propose that migrants’ continued perceptions of the homeland as “home” persist, but change over time. Moreover, it is more likely that these perceptions are influenced by a complex of factors including elapsed time away from the homeland, geographic distance, and the ability to form and maintain social networks in the country of resettlement.
As discussed in Chapter 3, traditional understandings of nostalgia are criticised for their reconstruction of a past that never was and will never be. In contrast, Spitzer (1999) argued that nostalgia has the capacity to empower in certain contexts and can be “productive” (p. xi). Thus, nostalgic memories can be productive in terms of their comparative and resilience-related potential, establishing historical continuity between the past and the present, as well as being a means of preserving hope directed at an imagined future to come. In her discussion of productive nostalgia, Blunt (2003) shifted the focus of inquiry away from nostalgia as a device of narration or the imagination to an emphasis on the embodiment and enactment of nostalgia in practice (p. 717). Drawing parallels with Zournazi’s (2002) discussion of hope as a form of future nostalgia, Blunt contended that productive nostalgia is “orientated towards the present and the future as well as towards the past” (2003, p. 717).

According to Blunt, the concept of productive nostalgia “refocuses the desire for both proximate homes and more distant homes” (p. 717; italics added), a point which resonates with young Sudanese participants’ attempts to negotiate multiple places of belonging. In contrast to the retroactive construction of nostalgia, nostalgia as a productive capacity links with young participants’ hopeful disposition towards the future. The concept of productive nostalgia is highly relevant in the everyday lives of diasporic and exilic populations worldwide. In the case of Sudanese participants, the nostalgic desire for Southern Sudanese independence from the North is underpinned by an everyday political activism and “projects of awareness” among many Sudanese young people in the context of resettlement, a point developed in .

The terms “visiting” or “visitation” connote a short duration of stay with a person or a place. In the act of arriving for a visit, leaving and return are already implicated. Correspondingly, the circulatory, back and forth dynamics of visitations are expressed in young people’s stated desires to return to Sudan and the corresponding desire that their stay is short and predicated on the certainty of return to Australia. Horst (2006) observed that the distinct ways in which migrants fashion a return “highlight the importance of understanding the dynamic relationship between transnational social fields and return migration” (p. 63). Furthermore, variations in the way migrants return “demonstrate the salience of categories such as ‘return’ and
‘travelling’ for understanding the meaning and motivation behind different forms of movement” (2006, p. 63).

Constructions of home are dynamic, contextually determined and always evolving. In support of this claim, Jackson (1995) articulated ambivalence towards describing or categorising the notion of “home” as some stable or definable essence. He wrote,

It is not where you’ve come from, where you were born, where you’ve been since, or where you are going. It’s the comfortable combination of all those things that place in the world “where you can come into your own” (cited by Wise, 2006, p. 199).

A similar perspective was presented by Callum, 21, a Sudanese university student, who stated, “It’s not where you start in life that matters; it’s about where you finish the race. I think it’s the finish that matters”. Interestingly, he perceives Australia to be the “finish line” to his migration route, commenting that it is the migration journey that “resembles resilience”. As Curtis and Pajaczkowska (1994) maintained, transnational journeys represent “a passage through symbolic time forwards towards a resolution of conflict and backwards towards a lost aspect of the past” (p. 199). In other words, the destinations of transnational journeys represent more than enclosed “endpoints” or “new starts”. Reflecting on the complex symbolics of time embedded in touristic and migratory travel, Hartley (1953) explained that there is a sense in which arrival in “a foreign country is always a past – involving both alienation and an act of recovery” (cited by Curtis & Pajaczkowska, 1994, p. 199). For economic migrants and political refugees who migrate to First World countries, “their presence disrupts the pattern of ‘home’ and ‘away’, ‘familiar’ and exotic” (1994, p. 203). While touristic travel can be a restorative process of temporarily “being away” from familiar and mundane surroundings, for refugees and other transnational migrants who are forced to travel to unfamiliar foreign countries, their stays are often indefinite, constrained, and marked by an inescapable homesickness. Rather than achieving temporary refuge and respite, the displaced migrant is, in a sense,

Returning practices and activities between Australia and Sudan open up new ways of understanding migration trajectories as dynamic, fluid and non-linear. The non-linear and non-sequential nature of these return practices has parallels with the multi-directional and multi-levelled nature of resilience formation across a number of social scales. In other words, the trajectories of diasporic return and resilience are not headed towards some final or inevitable endpoint. Furthermore, the type of return (visit, extended stay or remigration) is also defined and intimately connected to one’s sense of home and place, a point discussed in relation to domestic “place-making practices” in the next chapter. These attitudes towards practices of return set up interesting temporal and spatial interactions between “past” and “present”, “backwards” and “forwards”. As discussed in Chapter 1, Good (1994) makes a relevant distinction between conventional and refugee stories. The syntax of conventional stories often follows a generic formula, tracing the resolution of predicament, striving and unfolding of time towards finality and conclusion (cited by Eastmond, 2007, p. 251). In refugee stories, narratives are often marked by uncertainty, ambiguity and indefiniteness. As Eastmond (2007) wrote, “Refugees are in the midst of the story they are telling, and uncertainty and liminality, rather than progression and conclusion, are the order of the day” (p. 251). For many Sudanese young people, going back to Sudan is an affective return to the past, which conjures difficult and often traumatic emotions and memories. Conversely, Australia represents their “present” home and is associated with certain expectations of “forward” progression. As will be shown, the formation of resilience is not enacted solely in the context of forward progression and upward mobility in Australia, but is better thought of as a non-linear, non-sequential process which draws on past experiences and mobilises future hopes in the present.
“Our second country”: attitudes towards return journeys

Highlighting the diversity of return motivations and expected outcomes, Louise, an MRC director, reported, “almost all of them [young people] said that they wanted to go back, some of them to visit but others to go back to where their village was or the town that they came from”. Although the majority of young Sudanese participants indicated that they would like to return to Sudan on a temporary basis, a small number expressed a desire to return to Sudan with their academic and vocational qualifications for longer periods, even indefinite stays, to assist in the “rebuilding” of Sudan. According to Louise, “one kid wanted to go to TAFE, do construction, then go on to university and do engineering and then go back to Sudan so he could build and sort of rebuild things”. For Clementine, 23, a Sudanese university student, return to Sudan to contribute is contingent on the existence of peace and freedom in the country. Similarly, Callum, 21, asserted that his return depends on a complex range of local factors and the developing political situation in Sudan.

According to Smith and Guarnizo (1998), these “other” factors are connected with migration routes and destinations, which can influence “the likelihood of generating, maintaining or forsaking transnational ties” as well as “the very nature of the ties that migrants can forge with their place of origin” (p. 13). As Clementine qualified, “we won’t go for living there, no”. She explained, “Maybe I go to Sudan visiting friends and relatives, but I can’t go and live there”. According to Clementine, the reason is connected with a sense of belonging to Australia: “This [Australia] is our country. This is our second country here, so we just like it”. It was at this point in the interview that Clementine realised she has overstepped some imaginary line of propriety or allegiance to Sudan. This caused her to qualify her first statement with, “This is our second country here” [italics added]. The distribution of love for Sudan and Australia is reminiscent of Hage’s (2002b) observation that newly arrived migrants are often reluctant to show “excessive enthusiasm” for their country of settlement as it might be interpreted by their communities as a form of social and cultural treason (p. 290).
Clementine attributed the lack of young people returning to Sudan to the relative ease of life in Australia as well as other hidden reasons, “we went to Australian culture and it’s hard to go back there [to Sudan]”. When prompted, “There’s no chance of going back to stay?” she replied, “No, at all, because I live it here. I just love it”. Interestingly, Clementine framed her desire to live in Australia in bodily terms, “my body still lives in Australia; I don’t want to go back”. From her statements it seems that for her, belonging and connection to place are intimately tied to an embodied feeling of comfort and love. As a feeling of comfort and love accumulates, it builds an affirmative attachment to Australia and strengthens her sense of belonging. As outlined above, Jackson (1995) argued that it is the accumulative and “comfortable combination” of where you’ve come from, where you’ve been and where you are going that creates a place where you can “come into your own”. Similarly, Noble (2004) maintained that comfort “is best seen in terms of an attachment to a place or context that makes acting in that setting possible” (p.114). Building on the discussion of comfort in relation to supportive learning environments in Chapter 4, it would seem that the feeling of comfort is an important although not predetermined condition for the formation of resilience and in resolving feelings of ambivalence.

Rather than diminishing her love of Sudan, Clementine’s attachment seems to undergo a process of affective segmentation between, and accommodation of, life in regional Sudan and Western Sydney, heading towards a new composite of “home”. This process of affective splitting signals an interesting feature of attachment and resilience; namely, that neither capacity is headed towards some limit, endpoint or final state. In a process analogous to the biological process of mitosis, accumulated affective energies are redistributed, albeit unequally, to preserve an ongoing connection to and “double engagement” (Mazzucato, 2008) with multiple homes and social networks. It moves the conventional understanding of refugees and migrants as tormented by fractured identities and in-between cultures, or torn between cultures, towards an emphasis on the situated and resourceful ways these individuals “re-tool” (Wise, 2010) their affective repertoires and redistribute their affective identifications in and between countries of origin and resettlement.
For some participants, the desire and hope of return to Sudan is predicated on the acquisition of educational and vocational qualifications. Unlike the majority of young participants who discussed return to Sudan in terms of short stays and visits, Callum maintained, “I see myself working there as on long-term basis maybe coming out here [Australia] for holidays”. Along similar lines, Sarah, 23, a Sudanese university student explained, “Yes, I would love to go back. I would love to go back today, finish my degree, I think working and studying. I just want to have a good qualification, because I feel like study...then after that I will love to go back to Sudan”. These statements highlight the affective investment of a number of Sudanese participants in the ability of the Australian education system to equip them with their desired skills and qualifications necessary for effective transnational involvement. From Sarah’s comments, however, it remains unclear whether she is seeking these “good qualifications” as tools to return to Sudan to rebuild the country or as evidence of having made the most of her opportunities in Australia. What is clear is that hope is mobilised in the acquisition of academic qualifications. Sarah’s choice of words “I will love to go back to Sudan” is evidence of Pontamianou’s (2006) “psychic strategy” of hope, which introduces fulfilment of the wishful projection/s as probably and [already] sometimes even practically assured. By pre-positing a return to Sudan with educational qualifications as already assured (i.e. “I will”), Sarah creates a state of hopeful being and in so doing, keeps the hopeful outcome of return alive in her mind as a good object to come, able and willing to respond to her demands.

When asked, “Would you live there [in Sudan] temporarily, go back periodically and come back to Australia or, would you like to live there permanently?” Sarah’s answer highlighted a certain internal division around her sense of home and affective allegiance to Australian and Sudan, “I can go for a short stay [to Sudan], just keep coming back to Australia, but I don’t want to stay here forever, but I don’t want to go and stay there forever. I want to make the two my home. I love Australia, but also love Sudan”. Thomas-Hope (2002) found that Jamaican returnees experienced a similar internal conflict in regard to their “place of belonging” and where they thought they “ought to be” (p. 200). Although focusing on the re-integration experiences of returnees to their country of origin, Thomas-Hope’s findings mirror the conflict and subsequent “need to retain a transnational livelihood” expressed by a number of Sudanese participants. Similarly, Christine, an IEC teacher, noted a
switching between a desire to return to Sudan and living permanently in Australia among her Sudanese students. She observed that the duration of time spent in Australia influences young people’s aspiration to return to Sudan or stay in Australia, “If you ask any of our children, ‘Do you want to go back home?’ they all say ‘yes’. They all say, ‘yes’. After a few years when we catch up with them, quite often they say, ‘no’”. When newly arrived children answer in the affirmative about return, these sentiments are common in the early stages of resettlement.

As Christine explained, “so they’re coming to us after 3 or 4 weeks and arriving in Australia. So they all say, ‘Yes, I want to go back home’”. The young IEC students’ responses indicate that home is a fluid concept, which is intrinsically linked to a sense of safety, security and positive affective connection. At the same time, the responses of her students seem to lack an awareness of the travel limitations of their refugee status. This last point highlights the complex ideational space between the pragmatic and symbolic dimensions of hope. In relation to the situated mechanisms of hope, Pontamianou (1997) described a capacity for critical reflexivity or “reality testing” involved in hoping practices. For newly arrived refugees, the reality of return may be unrealistic in the early stages of resettlement, but it would seem that their certitude that they will eventually return preserves their sense of hope.

For many Sudanese children who affirm a desire to return to Sudan, it is a desire that often coincides with an understanding of the Australian educational system as providing the necessary vocational skills and competencies to take back to Sudan. Commenting on this strategic approach to resettlement, Christine observed, “sometimes people are offended when they [young people] say, ‘Look, I’m just here to learn English and get whatever, and I’m going back’. And our children say that quite openly”. Similarly, Linda, an IEC teacher, commented, “I think a lot of young people they have aspirations on coming, on going to university and gaining skills and going back working”. She qualified, “I think [young] people have ideas of going back to work but I don’t think they want to go back to live, just because of the situation”. According to Christine, this outlook commonly changes after an extended stay in Australia, “Having caught up with a few of them lately that have moved on and doing other things with their lives now, they say, ‘No, Australia is a good country’, but they’re the ones that are settled now”. Although the ideal of return
appears to diminish over time, Christine’s observations highlight young people’s success in developing a sense of belonging and positive connection to Australian society.

The evolving nature of young people’s stated desire to return to Sudan is evidence of the evolving nature of transnational participation related to advances in communication technologies, online political forums and social media platforms, a point discussed below. The frequency and intensity of young people’s contribution are by no means uniform, and is influenced by multiple, regularly conflicting motivations, some of which facilitate the formation of transnational connections and the desire to contribute while others detract from it. In their study of home visits among Australian migrants, O’Flaherty et al. (2007) observed significant between-group differences in terms of the desire, frequency and capacity of migrants to visit home. In terms of the impact of transnational connections on processes of hope and resilience, these findings suggest that the locations of resilient and hope-related resources are always changing, non-uniformly experienced, and highly contingent on a developing sense of belonging to one or more places.

The impact of economic expectations on resilience

For a number of the young Sudanese participants, the communally driven expectation to contribute to friends and relatives in Sudan and other African and Middle Eastern countries is an everyday reality. For some, the fulfilment of transnational contributions is an expression of gratitude towards Australia for having provided them asylum and educational opportunities. For others, the ongoing practice of providing financial support or one day returning to Sudan to assist in the nation’s rebuilding is a communal and, more often than not, a generationally enforced expectation. For a number of participants, constant appeals and pressure from relatives overseas to send back money has become a cause of significant daily stress. An expectation commonly cited in the diaspora and transnationalism literatures, the issue is complicated by a belief among friends and relatives in countries of origin that the opportunities available to diasporic communities
automatically place them in a prosperous financial situation (Guarnizo, 2003; Horst, 2007; Shandy, 2003; Vertovec, 1999). However, as participants explained, the multiple financial demands of resettlement (i.e. housing, education, basic subsistence and social orientation) are not fully comprehended by friends and relatives in the homeland, whether it is in Sudan or elsewhere. Accordingly, the willingness to contribute financially is regularly offset by young people’s capacity to do so, which in turn, has led to domestic and transnational tensions between young people, parents and community elders. These competing demands on young people’s available time and money have significant consequences for the development of belonging, realisation of hoped-for outcomes and continued accumulation of resilience in the Australian context.

In some respects, the stretching of familial relations over geographic space and consequent “snapback” desire for communal attachment and social belonging has parallels with the resilience-related function characterised by a “bouncing back” from adversity. Fulfilment of these transnational obligations is, according to Sarah, due to the strong “interdependent” nature of familial and communal relations in Sudan, “They expect…I think I should put it this way, in that in Sudan we are more interdependent compared in [to] Australia whereby you would depend on yourself, but it’s more like a extended family cling together”. Perhaps, as interdependent family relations are stretched across borders and over distance, the need to maintain familial cohesion intensifies. Sarah observed that the maintenance of these relations lacks an altruistic or “feel-good” factor. In other words, social compliance with these transnational practices is more obligation than something joyfully entered into by individual community members, “So even if you are not told to do something, people expect it’s an obligation, but not a joy…So when one person is in Australia, the whole of that big family expects you to be doing that, as an obligation, but not a joy”.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Schoch (2006) problematised the movement towards immediate pleasure and pain avoidance and the movement away from the pursuit of happiness as a lifetime project. Along different lines, the striving to “joy” is central to the notion of conatus. Conatus involves the dual movement of the mind moving
towards a greater stage of perfection and destroying what it imagines is contrary to this process. It would seem that in focusing on the “feel-good” component of transnational participation, Sarah is destroying or de-emphasising the less pleasurable obligation component. Although the pursuit of joy and attainment of pleasure is undoubtedly a component of a happy life, a case could be made that true happiness includes an enduring moral dimension to contribute to the lives of others. In striving for a pleasurable payoff for her contributions, Sarah may be missing out on the additional joy to be derived from the knowledge that her friends and family are safe, healthy and cared for.

Although Sarah experiences a “lack of joy” from the communal pressure to contribute, the stark counterpoising of joy and obligation seems to suggest that joy cannot be derived from the fulfilment of certain obligations. An argument could also be made that the fulfilment of difficult obligations can produce rewards of positive feelings associated with altruism and self-sacrifice. Hage’s (2002a) discussion of “gift exchange” and the way a gift is offered is useful in this instance. As Hage maintained, “The gifts that create the greatest moral obligation are the gifts that are offered most gracefully” (p. 204). He further stated, “If the one who offers the gift keeps reminding you of your state of indebtedness or if the gift is given ungracefully, then the moral obligation, while always present, becomes nevertheless less morally obliging” (p. 204). Communal pressure to contribute transnationally functions as a constant reminder for Sarah. Although it reinforces a sense of moral obligation, “being told” to send money back appears to take away from the affective good-will potential implicated in acts of giving. According to Sarah, the constant reminders of the suffering experienced by family in Sudan and Australia reinforce what Hage described as a “guilt-inducing state of indebtedness” to repay the family rather than the nation for the gift of social belonging (p. 203). At the same time, her comments are sympathetic to his claim that “not all migrants feel indebted to their nation…but most will feel indebted to their family” (p. 203).

The accumulation of resilience requires a balancing of more immediate strategies of coping and defence as well as the acquisition of habituated dispositions for achieving
longer-term individual and communal well-being. For some Sudanese participants, the lack of immediate positive affect associated with monetary remittances to friends and family in Sudan may override the longer-term pragmatic and moral consequences of their ongoing participation. At first glance, it would appear that this tendency among younger Sudanese can be explained by Schoch (2006), who stated, “We’ve settled, nowadays, for a much weaker, much thinner, happiness; mere enjoyment of pleasure, more avoidance of pain and suffering” (p. 243). Although this thinner, pleasure-centred version of happiness might go some way to explaining the changing attitudes of young Sudanese towards the observance of diasporic responsibilities, the pressure exerted by parents and elders to observe these transnational caregiving practices may also undermine the “feel-good factor” and sense of personal agency, control and altruism often associated with voluntary or charitable contributions.

From Sarah’s comments, she establishes joy and obligation as the primary motivational forces compelling ongoing transnational participation. Similarities are observed between her construction of a joy/obligation bifurcation and the positive/negative perspectives on hope. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Nietzsche claimed that hope is the worst of all evils as it protracts the torments of man. In contrast, Parse (1990) interpreted the everyday experience of hope as “essential to one’s becoming” (p. 32). Hage (2002b) made the important point that in both these perspectives, hope is understood “as a force that keeps us going in life” (p. 11). The same might be said of “joy” and “obligation”. While “obligation” may be lacking in “feel-good” emotions (i.e. “joy”), both motivational forces keep financial remittances happening. The argument could also be made that obligation and the management of shame and guilt are a more powerful and lasting means of compelling young people to contribute. “Hope on the side of life” is located in the present, in being, and seems to account for the feel-good factor associated with voluntary contributions (Hage, 2003). On the other hand, Hage’s (2003) conceptualisation of hope is founded on an “ethics of joy”, a concept which works to bridge the joy/obligation binarism by emphasising the potential joyful outcomes emerging from the fulfillment of transnational obligation(s). Nevertheless, both joy and obligation have a role to play
in maintaining an ongoing transnational connection through financial contribution and other forms of involvement.

It would seem that feelings of joy, which often accompany charitable contributions, compel young people’s ongoing involvement through a more immediate sense of affective goodwill. However, as a temporary affective state, joy seems less stable and more prone to transitory fluctuations than the more enduring experience of “happiness”. It is important to remember that although requiring varying degrees of self-sacrifice, the fulfillment of transnational obligations such as emotional support, monetary remittances and physical return are important ways of maintaining transnational connections, while also producing real-world, resilience-related outcomes for both recipients and contributors.

**A productive ambivalence**

Although perceived as a set of routine and joyless activities by a number of young participants, the preservation of transnational networks via mutual caregiving practices represents important relational resources considered by participants to be essential for healing and recovery. By reframing young people’s ambivalence or non-participation in transnational activities as a negotiation of simultaneous conflicting feelings – rather than “bad”, “uncaring” or “neglectful” behaviours – the manifestation of dissonance in relation to these practices is repositioned as a form of coping and using productive efforts to develop a sense of belonging within and across multiple social fields. In the consideration of young Sudanese people’s varying degrees of conformity and deviation from cultural expectations to contribute, ambivalence represents an affective conflict emerging from young people’s desire and ability to contribute in a transnational capacity. Rather than ambivalence being seen as a generalised condition of modernity (Bauman, 2007) or a diasporic hybrid condition, an emphasis on its productive aspects draws out the subtle complexities and specificities of the lived experience of ambivalence among Sudanese young people.
Along similar lines, Bottrell (2007) observed that young people’s resistance to dominant communal norms like cultural expectations to contribute should not be thought of as a self-defeating deficiency, but as a counter-intuitive mode of resilience. Furthermore, their ambivalence about these expectations can be a sign of their attempts to negotiate a sense of belonging to multiple places. As discussed in Chapter 1, Probyn (1996) defined belonging as “the desire for some sort of attachment, be it to other people, places, 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 some stable state” [p. 181; italics added]. The phenomenology of ambivalence reflects a similar logic of being “caught” between multiple places, belongings and identity positions, rather than the simple negation of choice. Following Jevne (1994), hope may exist somewhere within this ambivalent space or in-between dichotomous logic of what is and what could be (pp. 134-35). Hope happens in the space between being apart and being connected, between trust and skepticism, between evidence and intuition, between doubt and faith. Therefore, it might not be that young Sudanese people do not care about Sudan or its people, but rather, they are in the midst of negotiating the dichotomous logic of their “been, being and becoming”. It is reasonable to conclude that, like resilience, hope is constructed and moves between temporal points (i.e. past, present, and future) and conceptual limits (i.e. doubt and faith).

Pressures to fulfil commitments and responsibilities across local, national and transnational fields can adversely affect young people’s ability to participate in Australian schools and integrate more generally. As Sarah noted, “So you find it is really hard here, studying, schooling, I mean working and all that other stuff, paying your own rent, transport, food and stuff like that; it’s hard, but you have no choice about it”. Discussing the educational implications of being caught in a perceived diasporic expectation/obligation web, she remarked,

So I think [that is] one of the things that affects us young people in Australia…So you may drop out of uni and say, I have to work this. I have to help the family and not yourself. You don’t even have to save your money,
but to send the money back home…and it makes a lot of difficulties at school.

From her discussions with young Sudanese people at a Western Sydney MRC, Linda explained, “And particularly, don’t underestimate the pressure of having friends and family in a refugee camp ringing up every, every week or every month saying ‘please send us money we don’t have anything to eat’”. She concluded, “So a lot of people here, they’re sending money over and depriving themselves”. Akeui (2005) argued that despite the financial pressures caused by regular financial contributions to friends and family, “remittances are important social gestures that contribute to senders’ well being” (p. 9).

Although that may be the case for some migrants, young Sudanese people reported that the frequency of calls for assistance and regular remittances adversely affected their participation in educational institutions and basic daily subsistence. Although Ben, a Sudanese community leader, acknowledged the importance of sending money back to family in need, he also recognised the significant strain that these expectations place on young people’s ability to become financially stable. He observed that transnational financial obligations are “one of the things that squeeze our pockets very much here”. Carling (2008) explained that the inability or unwillingness of migrants to send back enough money to satisfy the demands of relatives often results in “moral condemnation” and disappointment from relatives, which can add to migrants’ feelings of frustration (pp. 1461-1462). As Baldassar (2008) noted, transnational caregiving practices and processes among Italian migrants in Australia “are mediated by the capacity to exchange care” as well as “cultural notions of obligations and negotiated commitments within families” (p. 248). The notion of “transnational caregiving” was defined by Baldassar et al. (2007), as the “exchange of care and support across distance and national borders”, involving both migrants and “stay behind” or “non-migrants” (p. 14). Thus, the ability to provide material forms of care across transnational networks is predicated on young people’s capacity to acquire educational qualifications and access vocational opportunities.
In her study of resilience mechanisms among Sudanese refugees, Spaulding (2009) found that transnational remittances had less to do with the capacity to contribute and more to do with the principle of self-sacrifice for the welfare and advancement of others. She defined “altruistic resilience” as “the overcoming of personal adversities for the selfless advancement of others, who lack the means, resources, and opportunities to do so for themselves” (p. iv). “Altruistic resilience”, according to Spaulding, is constituted by more than “isolated demonstrations of kindness or charity; rather, it is reflected in an individual’s decision to thoughtfully and intentionally place the well-being of another ahead of his or her own” (p. 185). More specifically, participants who demonstrated “altruistic resilience” were investing time and resources in the education and the general advancement of others, often to the detriment of their own. On one level, Spaulding’s concept of “altruistic resilience” is useful for explaining cases of personal sacrifice and transnational contribution among some participants; it is not sufficient, however, to account for the ambivalent motivations driving transnational contributions (or non-contributions) among young Sudanese participants.

An oversight of Spaulding’s romanticised analysis of “altruistic resilience” concerns the complex, contested and intersecting affective and moral influences compelling Sudanese young people to invest time and resources on an ongoing basis, in particular, the management of shame and guilt by parents and community elders for the purpose of fulfilling transnational obligations and responsibilities. While the majority of participants identified external compulsions as the primary motivational forces towards contribution, it should be noted that the principle of self-sacrifice or “going without” for the benefit of family and friends draws attention to the moral dimension of resilience formation. In a study of mothers in North London, Miller (1997) observed an ambivalent struggle between self-sacrifice and self-realisation. He found that mothers would forgo nights out and other forms of entertainment for the sake of their children. In response to Miller’s findings, Goodwin (1997) suggested that self-sacrifice and self-realisation are not necessarily competing or conflicting interests. In particular, she claimed that women’s desire to have children could in fact meet their needs to be mothers and carers. Along similar lines to the perceptions of some Sudanese participants that obligation is not a joy, participation
in these acts of contribution may fulfil other needs such as being a “good” child or a productive member of the Australian-Sudanese community. It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that an important aspect of resilience is the capacity for self-sacrifice and self-realisation via the accumulation of specific educational and vocational capacities, which enable the preservation of “self” and “other”.

Practices of transnational contributions are not always freely chosen or individually decided. As Sarah commented above, pressure to contribute often comes from parents and within the Sudanese community in Australia. She commented that contribution becomes an obligation and not a joy. While contribution in its many forms can be thoughtful, intentional and self-sacrificing, Spaulding (2009) incorrectly assumed that the implication of such contributions would necessarily lead to resilience. As she postulated, “altruistic resilience is operating when individuals subjugate their own needs and desires to those of another person” (p. 185). Although contribution may be an important diasporic principle for certain members of the Sudanese community in Western Sydney, it could also be argued that the subjugation of young people’s basic needs and educational desires is in fact an impediment to the accumulation of resilience in the context of resettlement. Here, Finch’s (1989) distinction between “normative obligation” and “negotiated commitment” is a useful one. Normative obligation is based on notions of moral duty and responsibility, whereas negotiated commitment is more of a, working-out, of support arrangements and exchanges. Finch argued that the actual support provided to non-migrant family members is more commonly defined by negotiated commitment rather than normative obligation. For Sarah, however, the weight of communal expectations and the joyless affect she associates with obligation suggest that the determinant of actual support is more accurately explained by normative obligations to give care. In some respects, the motivational forces behind transnational contributions are of secondary importance to the resilience-related outcomes for providers and recipients. Nevertheless, when the desire or compulsion to contribute exceeds young people’s capacity to do so, continuation of these practices can impinge on their everyday accumulation of resilience and ability to realise educational and vocational aspirations.
Peter, a denominational youth officer, argued that young Sudanese people in Australia are losing and in some cases have lost their connection to Sudan, “I think for a lot of young people, they are not more connected to Sudan…in that sense of having an obligation of sending money to people in Sudan”. He attributes this disconnection to a loss of original connection to Sudan, the negative effects of internal displacement, and the makeup of Sudanese families on arrival in Australia, “if you take for example a family that came from Sudan, then they have already got the connection of the family, the connection with relatives”. Commenting on the accumulatively adverse impact of migration routes on young people’s sense of connection to Sudan, he remarked, “If they move from camp, from displaced area to Egypt for example, or to the camp, then they lost another connection”. He continued, “So young people are not mostly connected, and I don’t remember there’s a lot of young people who do the same thing sending back money to their relatives; it’s rare”. Accordingly, it is through the maintenance of relationships with friends and family in Sudan that an affective connection and desire to contribute accumulates. Along similar lines, Callum, 21, maintained that it is through the capacities of imagination – prompted by regular calls for assistance from family living in adverse situations in Sudan – that an affective connection to people and place is preserved,

I sort of understand what it’s like – like I can say that but I can’t really completely understanding, I can only imagine because when we do ring them or when they do they sort of complaining a lot about their sort of situation over there and you know we kind of like, we do [feel] obligated because they’re really close family relatives and at the end of the day if you have money in the bank and there’s someone sort of starving or like you’d rather sort of send money overseas even though that’s going to have a big impact on your situation.
Despite the financial impact of regular remittances, the capacity for self-sacrifice seems to reinforce transnational connections and preserve young people’s hope located in the survival and well-being of family and friends overseas. In the above extract, Callum foreshadowed a common concern among the research participants; namely, the theme of guilt. In their study of South Indian transnational migrants, Velayutham and Wise (2005) investigated how Velayutham’s home village “functions as a powerful moral economy reproduced through codes of responsibility and obligation, which in turn is policed translocally through affective structures of shame, guilt and the panopticon-like gaze of fellow caste members”. Power relations within symbolic-moral economies of transnationalism were similarly discussed by Carling (2008), who noted that it is often migrants back home who hold the “upper hand” and possess the “moral capital” to influence compliance across borders. In the case of Surinamese transnational practices, Gowricharn (2004) defined “moral capital” as a set of primordial social obligations and commitments between people, “unevenly distributed across ethnic groups, generations, classes and urban-rural dwellers”. Accordingly, it is migrants who “must repay the gift of communality or risk being labelled ungrateful” (Carling, 2008, p. 1460). In both the south Indian and Sudanese transnational communities, participants’ home villages can act as a moral beacon, reinforcing and reproducing traditional customs and modes of obligation. As the following section highlights, guilt and shame are the affective levers through which transnational codes of responsibility and obligation are managed. Rose, 24, expresses a similar sense of “social control” in the form of the “transnational village gaze” (Velayutham & Wise, 2005, p. 35) from other Sudanese community members. Although Rose is quick to reinforce the “goodness” of Sudanese people, she stated, “when we start staying together, problem start arising…they snoop into your business. They don’t let you be. Your business is my business. They don’t give you space. They can just stop at your house; visit you anytime”. Her comments highlight an ambiguous and indeed ambivalent attitude towards traditional practices of hospitality and reciprocity enacted in the context of resettlement.

It is important to note that while young Sudanese people and their families experience significant stress in relation to regular calls for help from friends and relatives from Sudan and elsewhere, the needs underlying these requests are very
real, and in many cases, dire. However, research participants noted that friends and relatives overseas do not always fully appreciate the particular kind of hardship and adversity experienced during resettlement in Australia. According to Linda, an MRC youth coordinator, “people think once you get to Australia, ‘oh, you’ll be earning, you’re earning $600 a week. That’s heaps’. But they don’t have a concept of all the other expenses that people are going through”. As a result of these expectations to contribute, she observed that these obligations can have a detrimental effect on young people’s ability to achieve academically, “So that’s too why people don’t have a lot of money for extra text books, for extra sporting activities, because $60 either goes to… ‘Surely we can pay for your [sporting] membership for a month, but I’d rather give money to my family, my family back home who are ringing up and need something to eat’”.

Combined with the stress of regular financial contributions, Linda maintained that “there’s a lot of stress too because some young people are here and their mothers or their fathers are missing or their mothers are overseas and they’re trying to bring them over”. According to her, this particular form of stress is manifesting in guilt, “So that’s causing a lot of stress and then there’s also guilt that you’re here and not doing enough over there”. The general perception among family back home that money is easy to come by in Australia was discussed by Callum in more detail: “They think it’s [Australia] like a little sort of heaven. They think that money grows on trees and it’s a safe sort of place; that it’s not, it’s actually a lot tougher when you get out here”. He added, “Yes it is safe but, sort of send money back there and it’s, I mean we do, from personal experience, from time to time we do, but I don’t think they have an understanding of how hard it is to be able to provide to assist them back home and I guess you can’t really blame them for that”. Once again, these observations highlight an ambivalent switching between the stresses of regular contribution and awareness of the hardships facing friends and family in Africa. Although demonstrative of a form of dissonance, these competing viewpoints signal young people’s attempts to attend to communal obligations as well as a conatic hopefulness that includes both the preservation of being and associated efforts to augment their powers and capacities for action in the Australian context.
Mirroring Callum’s response, Sarah stated, “They don’t know. They have no idea. They think Australia is like heaven”. Although hers is an isolated perspective among the research participants, she recounted that community members in Sudan have come to rely on financial contributions from diasporic family members that they have discontinued daily labour and money-making practices,

Ok, when mum went to Boar [region of southern Sudan], she was very angry because people in Boar, like the Dinkas’ have stopped cultivating their own crops. They’ve stopped planting; they’ve stopped doing everything, just waiting for people in Australia or in America, Canada, their children, to send back money to them without doing anything. They don’t work!

As Carling (2008) reported, “since remitters cannot directly observe the efforts of recipients to earn money for themselves, non-migrants have an incentive to work less, take bigger risks with their money, or otherwise shirk and rely on emigrants for subsistence”. Similarly, Azam and Gubert (2002) found that Mali farmers who received regular financial contributions from migrants were in fact less productive than their colleagues who did not. This is not to suggest that remittances are misused or result in decreased labour productivity by all transnational recipients, but cross-study prevalence of remitter concerns suggests that it is a common issue among transnational migrants. Interestingly, the above concerns of monetary misuse provide inverse support for Gowricharn’s (2004) argument that “migration is not a loss in all respects, but sometimes an asset”. This phenomenon challenges the assumption that those who remain in countries of origin are necessarily disadvantaged and “the unlucky few” (p. 609). Further to the discussion on affective and moral consequences of financial contributions, the actual uses of monetary exchange are, in some respects, secondary to the desirable accumulation of positive affect, maintenance of social ties and sense of solidarity associated with voluntary or obligatory acts of reciprocity and transnational caregiving among young Sudanese contributors.
According to Peter, as well as financial expectations, other expectations are transmitted to young people in Australia in regard to their educational and vocational endeavours, “If I go back to Sudan, what most people expected from me is to have higher degree. If I say to them that I’m still study, they’ll say, ‘What are you doing in uni in Australia? You supposed to finish like Master or something’”. He explained, “So all the parents back there, they are pressuring the family here, that the kids have to do better than the kids in Sudan”. For example, this form of pressure is transmitted from the father in Sudan to the mother in Australia, and then on down to children. Given the weighty expectations to perform in a financial and educational capacity, it is little wonder that many young Sudanese people reported managing significant feelings of guilt on a day-to-day basis. The transfer of expectations to contribute in a financial capacity is reminiscent of Brennan’s work on the “transmission of affect”. By moving the conceptual focus away from an “inside-out” to a dialectical “inside-out/inside-in” model of affects, we begin to see the way that the affective carriers of expectations, namely shame and guilt, are transmitted not only in the context of resettlement but within and across translocal and transnational social fields. The weight of these expectations experienced by the affected bodies of young Sudanese also provides an empirical foundation for claims that affects are material things. If affects are conceptualised as material things, they can produce positive or negative effects, which promote or constrain the accumulation of resilience.

The consequences of guilt

In the lives of many diasporic populations the idea of a “guilt trip” takes on new meaning. For many young Sudanese participants, guilt is a daily affective experience in their lives. For the most part, guilt is framed by participants in negative terms, either as “survivor guilt” or as guilt arising from ongoing financial and vocational obligations to friends and family overseas. At a basic level, survivor guilt is constructed around the idea that it was “me” who survived and not “them”. This form of guilt is fuelled by the question “Why me?” and is implicated in existential renegotiations of firmly held beliefs around ontological safety, security and universal/Godly causes. Research participants also expressed another form of guilt.
that relates to unmet or unfulfilled transnational obligations to friends and family in Sudan and neighbouring countries. In this sense, guilt functions as a form of social control, regulating behaviour, or as Velayutham and Wise (2005) maintained, it is “through regimes of affect such as stigma, embarrassment, shame and guilt functions to delimit the boundaries of the translocal village” (pp. 36-37). Although both forms of guilt can conjure painful or unwanted affects, it is important to acknowledge the positive aspects of guilt. The prevalence of guilt can be a sign of investment, care and connection to others. Although shame and guilt are often experienced as unpleasurable emotions, they also signal investment, recognition and desire for connection. In other words, without the initial activation of interest or enjoyment, shame and guilt remain inactivated. In the context of transnational involvement, these dynamics highlight the positive undercurrents of shame and guilt, restructuring them as productive, albeit uncomfortable, affective resources.

Similarly, Watkins (2010) observed that shame has a positive ethical dimension, which forms the basis of connection with others. As discussed by Zarowsky (2004), “Emotion is critical to creating, recognizing, reinforcing, and mobilizing the moral webs on which individual and collective survival depends”. From this perspective, guilt corresponds with a desire to remember, support and make happy constituents within one’s transnational moral network who might not have had similar opportunities. As a result, transnational guilt may be thought of as a multidirectional process of investment between people across distance, with both parties receiving something from the exchange. In the lives of young Sudanese men and women, guilt is implicated in everyday processes of resilience formation. As guilt is an indication of an interest and desire for connection with others, the prevalence of guilt among young Sudanese participants is a means of recognising and reinforcing transnational connections, while also highlighting the ways negative affects are employed and managed as counter-intuitive resources in the production of resilience.

Highlighting the productive aspects and pragmatic consequences of feeling guilt, Christine, an IEC teacher, suggests that it evokes “a sense that you have to give back and make sure that the people who are there [in Sudan] are being looked after”. Interestingly, she frames the impulse to “give back” or contribute as something that
survivors "have to do". In many of the interviews with Sudanese young people, the phrase "have to" emerged as an often-repeated line. In the following extract by Trevor, a high-ranking Sudanese community leader, the expectation of having to contribute is expressed not as a choice but as a given. Of particular note is the recurrence of "have to".

That relationship [to those in Sudan] is obligation. We have young Sudanese here, their parents in Africa; they have to support their mother and their mum, because we don't have system of welfare in Africa. If somebody here, you have to support your family, back. And that one is an obligation; you have to support your parents. You cannot say, "OK, my parents back home". Who will support them? They bring you up, they look after you, now, if God give you a chance, that opportunity, you may look after them too, and support them, and this obligation.

From the above statements it would seem that reciprocal moral obligations emerge from a variety of historical and contemporaneous factors. These include a duty to repay parents for their child-rearing efforts, the lack of social support infrastructures in Sudan, and "making good" on the God-given chance of resettlement, discussed in Chapter 3. The gathering up of these reasons combines to form a strong communal obligation to reciprocate, and is evocative of Mauss’ (1970) findings among the Dayaks, referred to in Chapter 2, particularly that "one gives because one is forced to do so, because the recipient has a sort of propriety right over everything which belongs to the donor" (p. 130). Along similar lines, Hage (2002a) observed, "If migrants leave their original community in a state of debt and with guilt-ridden feelings of having left without repaying the debt, no sooner do they settle in a new country than they incur a new debt" (p. 204). For a number of Sudanese participants, this incurred debt is constructed around their escape from Sudan and subsequent opportunities to receive educational and vocational training in Australia. Their efforts to repay this debt can be considered a demonstration of self-sacrifice assisting the daily survival of overseas kin, but these same financial contributions can adversely affect the everyday capacities of young people to create a comfortable and self-sustaining life for themselves in Australia.
Discussing the interplay between obligation and positive affect, Sarah stated, “You find you got to do it for you to feel you know, good”. It would thus appear that the observance of obligatory acts and activities is a precursor to feeling good. In a sense, the affective link between acts of obligation and the affective consequence of feeling good offers a different take on Sarah’s previous statement that contribution is “an obligation, but not a joy”. From Sarah’s comments, contribution is enacted more out of obligation than from a compassionate response to give back. In other words, good feelings are contingent on ongoing contribution(s). As Sarah remarked, “If you don’t do it you feel like, you feel guilty, you know, you have left something that is more your responsibility”. Her feelings of guilt are contrasted with Callum’s rationalisation of guilt in relation to displacement,

I think that sometimes at the end of the day it’s there, is a bit of guilt but when you sort of think outside the picture about how many millions of displaced refugees, you can’t really complain and unfortunately, some people are lucky enough to get through and some don’t; and that’s just the case. You just, you know, you try and do the best that you can to deal with that.

Variations in the intensity of guilty feelings among participants are further emphasised by Belle who attributed her lack of guilt to the passage of time, “No, no, I’m not feeling guilt because what has happened is now a long time [ago]”. Along similar lines to Callum, Belle, a mother of six, rationalised her survival and resettlement in terms of “chance” and honouring that chance through contribution, “to be here [in Australia] is good for me and for them [in Sudan]. If I can help, I can help, but if I’m there, I can’t help myself and I can’t help them”. These comments highlight the dual imperative of managing accumulated material resources as well as the necessary work of continuing the accumulation of educational and vocational capacities for the purposes of self-subsistence and transnational contribution.

The enforcement of and compliance with traditional obligations function to maintain diasporic and transnational connections, involvement and contribution. From participant responses, it would seem that the widespread and well-intentioned practices of maintaining transnational social networks can undermine the positive,
happy or joyful affective experiences commonly associated with voluntary remittances and other contributions. As Ahmed (2010) commented, “To explore happiness using the language of affect is to consider the slide between affective and moral economies” (p. 29). The transmission of affect between individuals in groups is particularly relevant to the ways diasporic populations create and negotiate shared affective meanings in relation to experiences of displacement, longing, belonging and identity. Emotion is like an adhesive that creates and reinforces the moral webs around which individual and communal life depends (Zarowsky, 2004). Along similar lines, Probyn (2005) acknowledged the individual and collective forms of shame as well as the role of shame in evaluating how it positions people “in relation to the past” and “in proximity to others”. In the collective sense, shame and guilt can be used as means of social control, regulating and reminding individuals of their transnational obligations and promises.

In the lives of young migrants who have accumulated a certain amount of financial capital and stability in the context of resettlement, an atmosphere of shame and guilt is often fostered to enforce compliance with diasporic moral obligations and duties. In other words, shame is not something that inevitably comes after interest or enjoyment. Given the always-incomplete nature of transnational involvement and contributions, shame and guilt may be activated as a means of ongoing parental and communal control. However, the employment of shame and guilt as forms of “negative” compulsions to act must be mediated and counterbalanced against more positive desires or motivations to contribute. Importantly, Probyn (2005) qualified that shame, in and of itself, is not subversive, “Shame just is” (p. xvii). Rather, it is the ways that shame is regulated and employed as a form of moral capital possessed by those in traditional positions of cultural authority to enforce compliance that subverts and undermines the interest/enjoyment side of the shame/interest bifurcation. Accordingly, the employment of guilt and shame as means of enforcing transnational connections and involvement produces a complex array of resistant, conformist and ambivalent responses among young people towards moral obligations and duties. These findings highlight the simultaneous and competing demands facing young Sudanese participants in terms of their ability to create a self-sustaining life
for themselves in Australia, while also attending to and fulfilling communal obligations and responsibilities to support friends and family overseas.

**Reciprocal moral duties to Sudan and Australia**

A sense of belonging to and within groups, communities and nations is affirmed by *feelings* of belongingness. For African refugees and other transmigrants, issues of belonging are often complicated by affective attachments and obligations to multiple communities and diasporic localities or as Suarez-Orozco (2001) described it, “the complexities of belonging both ‘here’ and ‘there’ simultaneously”. Probyn (1996) defined “belonging” as “the desire for some sort of attachment, be it to other people, places, modes of being, and the ways in which individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fueled by yearning rather than the positing of identity as a stable state” (p. 19). She proposed that “belonging” involves an affective dimension, which extends beyond questions of “being in the world” and identity “effects” to include embodied experiences of longing and yearning (to belong). The affective dimension of belonging is an essential component of the feeling of belonging, but is complicated by the complex desire of young Sudanese to belong to several places in particular ways.

Glick Schiller et al. (1992) contended that transnational migrants “take actions, make decisions, feel concerns, and develop identities…that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (pp. 1-2). A number of Sudanese participants indicated a divided sense of belonging to Australia and Sudan, which in turn influenced their attitudes towards, and practices of, national and transnational contribution. Evidence of this divided allegiance or the more positively framed “double engagement” (Mazzucato, 2008) is present in the response of Sarah, 23, “Sudan is my home country…I feel like I have an obligation there, but the whole thing about me [is] in Australia”. Similarly, Ian, 23, a Sudanese university student, stated, “I would say I’ll go back to Sudan, but I think I’ll stay in Australia and explore this gift that I’ve acquired”. He understands the opportunity to migrate to Australia as a gift that is freely given. Accordingly, he feels a need to reciprocate this gift by giving back to
Australia: “It’s good to work here in Australia because you kind of pay it back. You got the knowledge here, so you have to use the knowledge where you get it”. Ian’s desire to “pay back” Australia for the “gift” of resettlement is closely aligned with the Tamil notion of nandri-kaadan or “thankful indebtedness” (Velayutham & Wise, 2005, p. 37). According to Velayutham and Wise, nandri-kaadan connotes “a deep moral duty” or “indebtedness” to return favours and demonstrate gratitude and obligation.

Perceiving comparisons with participants’ experience of constant phone calls requiring remittances and calls for return, Velayutham and Wise maintained that “the exchange relations implied in nandri-kaadan form a never-ending set of relations continually cycling through notions of receipt and repayment, whereby the ‘debt’ incurred through the ‘gift of social life’ (Hage, 2002a) is never repaid” (p. 37). Interestingly, the moral duty to reciprocate the gift of migration extends not only to the homeland but also to the country of resettlement. Hage maintained that the gift of social belongingness from the host country “creates a complex situation where, while participation in the host community can be seen as repayment of the debt of belonging to it, this same participation can accentuate feelings of guilt towards the original community” (2002a, p. 204). The double indebtedness to original and host countries is commented on by Ian, who phrases the gift repayment as “paying back to the Australia people for what they have done to you”. Unintentionally, his expression “what they have done to you” addresses Sudanese young people’s less favourable engagements with segments of Australian society, as well as Mauss’s emphasis on the burdens of social obligation. For young migrants who have experienced racism and discrimination, physical assault, alcohol and drug addiction in Australia, resettlement would seem less like a gift and more like an unsupportive set of circumstances imposed on them.

Although Richard, 23, a university student, is grateful for the educational opportunities he has received in Australia, stating “it is good to do something to give back to Australia”, he believes that educational skills and qualifications are needed more in Sudan than in Australia. Richard commented that “they” (parents and elders)
are more inclined to go back to Sudan to use their newly acquired skills, but that their children “will stay in Australia…to live as Australia and just live Australian”. He observed that the older generation desire to “be in Sudan rather than Australia” because they have lived in Sudan and understand the challenges facing those who remain. However, as their children are considered “pure Australians”, these same responsibilities to return are not imposed on the second-generation. Richard’s comments point to a divided allegiance to Australia and Sudan, which appears to be contingent on past experience in Sudan, patriotism to Australia, and generational influences. Neil, 23, a university student and youth leader, explained that by finishing his studies in Australia and practising medicine in Australia he can act as a local role model to other young Sudanese people: “If I practise it [medicine] here, other people or my friend of other young people will know that there are still existing black doctors or Sudanese doctors”.

Neil is of the belief that by practising medicine in Australia he can act as a transnational representative for other young Sudanese in Australia. These aspirations are underpinned by a belief in the interconnectivity of need at a global scale: “Change has to be brought everywhere, not only to Sudan, but Australia”. Interestingly, Neil concluded the conversation thread by stating, “everywhere the same”. This statement points to a sophisticated, albeit despondent, awareness of the relativity of need and suffering worldwide. His comments draw attention to a feature of hoping practices involving a negotiation of what is, and what could be, between what is possible and what is probable. Farran et al. (1995) observed that hope is fluid in its expectations, and in the event of unrealised hoped-for objects or outcomes, “hope can still be present” (p. 6). The adjustment of aspirations and expectations based on the probability of success is also synonymous with Pontamianou’s discussion of hope. As referred to in Chapter 1, he identified a self-reflexive feature or “psychic strategy” of hope, which facilitates a “reality check” of “realistic” and “unrealistic” hoped-for objects or outcomes. Pontamianou argued that the emotional process of hope and trusting expectation “remains attached to reality testing, because it acknowledges when our hopes are but lures and illusions, whereas, on the other hand, it tends to short-circuit the reality principle, which, of course, hands down the verdict that our internal wishes do not necessarily correspond to what can be found in
the external world” (1997, p. 120). In both instances, the experience of objective limits and accordant adjustment of expectations can be considered specific capacities of coping, emotional management and, by extension, resilience. The accumulation of resilience requires an accurate assessment and endurance of current adverse circumstances as well as a future-oriented capacity for imagining what could be. In an important sense, hope necessarily transcends the “unrealistic” and “causality of the probable”. For those participants who spent protracted periods of time in civil war zones, refugee camps and inhospitable countries of residence, the causal probabilities of making it to Australia in the first place were demonstrably improbable and unrealistic.

Given that Neil grew up in Sudan and is actively involved in the “New Sudan” political movement, his aspirations to practise medicine in Australia were unexpected. Another way of interpreting his career aims would be to view his concluding remarks “everywhere the same” as signalling an overwhelmed despondency at the scale of global suffering. However, as Neil explained, if “they” (i.e. people in Sudan) need his skills and knowledge, he would return. It would seem that his desire to reciprocate the gift of an Australian education in Sudan is motivated less by altruism and more by the demands of felt obligations. In discussing his hypothetical return, he qualified that his return would be conditional on Australian governmental support and approval: “If they let me go there, they know that I’m their property because I’ve been a citizen here, and it will be the help of Australia that will help me get there”. From these comments, it is almost as if his return would require not only the approval of the Australian government to leave Australia, but also safety assurances while in Sudan and guarantees relating to his ability to return to Australia. A cynical analysis of Neil’s statements might conclude that he suffers from an inflated sense of self-importance to Australia and Sudan, but it is more likely that he has bought into the promise of citizenship rights in Australia and has established an important sense of connection and belonging to Australia.

9 The “New Sudan” vision is a diasporic political movement, which seeks to raise awareness among young Sudanese people and the wider community concerning the domestic and international political issues influencing the establishment of ‘Southern Sudan’ as an independent nation-state.
The construction of home and an associated sense of belonging involves a complex interplay between the accumulation of positive affect and facilities of imagination. From participant responses, a sense of belonging is constructed around an embodied presence in place as well as through the capacities of memory and imagination. When asked, “When you think of where home is, where do you think?” Mark, 23, replied that Sudan “is an imaginary home”. Although he feels an affective sense of belonging to Sudan, Mark explained that it is “imaginary” because “I don’t know anything good about it”. While he still imagines Sudan as home, he believes that if he were to return he would “not recognise the place…the place would be new to me”. Although he carries an idealised boyhood image of home with him, Mark admitted, with a hint of melancholy, that the image he holds in his mind is likely to be different from the current reality of everyday Sudan. At the same time, he maintained a sense of connection to Sudan through his regular phone calls with friends and family:

I feel connected because there are people back home there who always call me and they feel [I’m] their son or the brother, so they are always telling me that this is your home, and you have to come back. That is their message always that I’m here for education, then after education, I have to go back. So I feel like there is that connection.

Although Mark expresses a feeling of connection to friends and relatives in Sudan as a result of these conversations, it would seem that a positive connection is counterbalanced by a sense of guilt and obligation to return. The obligatory as opposed to voluntary nature of this connection is evident in his use of “that” (“there is that connection”). These comments highlight the push-and-pull forces affecting not only the diasporic Sudanese community in Australia, but also many diasporic communities worldwide. Constant reminders of “purpose” in coming to Australia and regular reminders of obligations to Sudan may affect the development of young people’s sense of belonging to Australia and Sudan. Mark’s efforts to reconcile these ambivalent forces were obvious in his flat vocal intonation during the interview. In
no uncertain terms, he appeared overwhelmed and even defeated by the weight of these competing reminders and responsibilities. The regularity of reminders and calls for assistance reflect Anderson’s (1991) critical discussion of the transnational imaginary, claiming that there is very little which is imaginative about transnational communities, as connection is maintained by tangible, primordial loyalties.

In contrast to Anderson’s claim, an imagined connection and sense of belonging to Sudan can be an important identity resource in the everyday lives of second-generation Sudanese young people. In an account of her young children’s attempts to feel connected to Sudanese-born family members in Australia, Natalie, a Sudanese outreach worker, told the story of her Egyptian-born son’s attempts to assert his credibility and authenticity “as Sudanese”. She recounted,

When people were talking about Sudan…my son, he was eleven years – he knew a bit about Sudan – and they talk about the aunties there, and the uncles, the dad, he say, “yeah, I know them. I know this and I know that”. And people will tell us, “No, you are not there, you were born in Egypt”, and then he will cry badly. And he will say, “I know my father!”

An analysis of the son’s behaviour is aided by Glick Schiller’s (2004) distinction between transnational ways of being and belonging. Wessendorf (2007) summarised “ways of being” as the co-present, everyday practices and social relations individuals engage in, while “ways of belonging” relate to “emotional connections to persons and localities that are elsewhere, and practices that signal a conscious connection to, or identification with, a particular group”, (p. 1090). It is argued that during childhood and adolescence, second-generation young people engage in transnational ways of being through exposure to their parents’ ways of being (and belonging) and the formation of relationships with other “co-ethnics”. Accordingly, Natalie son’s emotional declaration “I know my father!” might be framed as an attempt to engage with his Sudanese relatives and their nostalgic reflective practices (ways of being)
and assert his, albeit imagined, connection to and identification with his father in Sudan (ways of belonging).

According to Natalie, her son later reluctantly admitted, “Mum, I don’t know my father. I just made it up. I don’t know him”. It could be argued that for Natalie’s son, belief in the imagined relationship with his father helped to position and legitimise himself as Sudanese when interacting with individuals born in Sudan. Displaying an awareness of the importance of this connection for her son, Natalie replied, “And I say, ‘Yes, you don’t know him because when I left Sudan I was pregnant and you were born in Cairo, but one day you will see him’”. Natalie added that she worked to save money to send him back to meet his father at the age of fourteen. In terms of her son’s interaction with other Sudanese-born children in Australia, she observed that when her son would talk about Sudan with his friends, “he put himself like he already know everything about Sudan”. She added, “He told me, ‘I don’t want to be an Egyptian. No one call me an Egyptian. I’m Sudanese and I’m Australian’”. His desire to be identified as either Australian or Sudanese could be due to a number of complex and simultaneous motivations, which seem to include adverse experiences in Egypt, a need to feel connected to his Sudanese-born peer group, a need to retain an imagined connection to his father as well as a positive sense of belonging in Australia.

Natalie’s son’s juggling of multiple affective identifications reflects the discussion by Tabar et al. (2010, p. 40) of Lebanese Australians’ simultaneous negotiation of the “logic of cultural maintenance” and competing demands compelling their expedient integration in Australian society. The young boy’s desire to be recognised as Sudanese and Australian assumes a history of undesirable experiences involving his Egyptian heritage. His impassioned exclamation, “I don’t want to be Egyptian!” suggests an enduring, almost inescapable residue attached to his place of birth. In contrast, his fervent desire to be recognised as Sudanese and Australian might be considered his attempt to re-tool his cultural identity to better fit within his community and broader social network.
Staying in touch, keeping up-to-date

Young people’s access to and proficiency in utilising emergent communication technologies and social media outlets is an important means of mobilising and distributing hope within and across transnational social fields. Keeping in touch and up-to-date with political, social and familial developments in countries of origin and temporary countries of stay can be a means of preserving a sense of belonging and connection to place, people, and the past for these groups. Reflecting on his work among Sydney’s Lebanese community, Hage (2002a) observed that people engage with news of “the homeland” and are affected by it in a variety of ways and with varying intensity (p. 193). As Hage noted, “Intensity has more to do with the extent to which a reality is involving and affecting” (p. 193). In a general sense, advances in online interactive technologies are making it easier for diasporic, exilic and other transmigrant populations to keep up-to-date with evolving national developments as well as more everyday events in the lives of family and friends. These new forms of online media include social networking sites, political and social forums, as well as satellite and online news services. Utilisation of these communication technologies represents a new form of virtual transnationalism, broadening customary understandings of and approaches to transnational involvement such as monetary remittances and physical return, as well as the construction and mediation of actual and virtual forms of co-presence (Baldassar, 2008), not to mention the flow of caregiving resources linked to the broader accumulation of resilience.

Baldassar (2008) proposed four main ways of maintaining a sense of shared presence between Italian migrants and their parents, namely, virtual, by proxy, physically and through imagination (p. 251). The most common and frequent way of constructing shared presence across time and geographical distance is through virtual co-presence. According to Baldassar, the commonest forms of virtual co-presence are direct verbal exchanges via telephone or webcam, or indirectly through emails and text messages. Baldassar argued that feelings of missing, longing and nostalgia for people and place are “best resolved through physical co-presence” (i.e. return visits). More specifically, there is a special quality to being face to face and “bodily present” with
the person or place of longing, which cannot be enacted from a distance (Baldassar, 2001). In an important sense, notions of “keeping in touch” or “staying in contact” “betray the central purpose of such practices as “standing in for” physical presence, touch and contact” (Baldassar, 2008, p. 252). Following Baldassar, Skrbis (2008) contended that while transnational communication practices are an important aspect of maintaining contact, it is physical reunion or “embodied co-presence” that remains the ultimate hope and aspiration for migrants (p. 238). Although discussed in relation to the experience of exile among exilic populations, Sorenson’s (1992) notion of the “myth of return” is useful for exploring the non-uniform desire among Sudanese young people to return to Sudan. He stated,

A fundamental aspect of exile is the remembrance of one’s homeland and the idea of return; indeed, the existence of a powerful myth of return can be identified as one of the defining tendencies of diasporic populations. This myth maintains that at some future point refugee and immigrant groups will repatriate to that homeland from which they were expelled or migrated. (p. 205)

In the case of young Sudanese people who may have experienced extreme violence and significant loss in Sudan and en route to Australia, the “myth of return” and the claim that embodied co-presence with family and significant others is the ultimate goal of all transmigrants overlooks examples of tremendous familial loss, forced displacement and loss of homeland and their impact on people’s memory and imagination of and affective connection to a common place of origin. Accordingly, Safran (1991) argued that the desire to return home is not a universal phenomenon among diasporic communities and should not be interpreted as the general condition of all exilic or diasporic populations. Although the desire to return is rarely uniform among diasporic community members, the objectivity and realisation of return is in some respects of secondary importance to the hope of return and hopefulness for those left behind. As evidenced by young IEC students’ changing attitudes towards return described earlier in this chapter, hope is a fluid concept that can exist and persist even in the absence of the hope-for outcome (Farran et al., 1995, p. 6).
Advances in the speed and availability of communication technologies and social media platforms in many Western countries also mean that the mobilisation of hope can extend beyond the narrow view of transnational involvement involving physical return and monetary remittances. The increasing use of these communication strategies seems to challenge Baldassar’s and Skrbis’s assertion that “embodied co-presence” is the most desired form of transnational involvement.

Given the ongoing nature of conflict in a number of countries and its impact on local populations, the immediate dissemination of news and information from “back home” combined with the impersonal and virtual nature of these communication technologies is not always a welcome aspect of these services. Interestingly, while these relatively new technologies were used by a number of participants in this study to keep up-to-date with broader national developments, “older” forms of trans-border communication, like telephone exchanges and written letters, remained among the most common forms of communication exchange. Although a number of young Sudanese participants utilised technological platforms as online social spheres for staying connected with Sudan, a number of young people explained that they did not keep up-to-date with local or national developments in Sudan. The reasons for occasional or non-existent monitoring habits among young participants included laziness, ambivalence, disconnection from Sudan, and more pressing resettlement responsibilities. Highlighting the different senses of belonging to Australia and Sudan, Forrest, a Sudanese MRC community worker, noted that very few Sudanese young people are “monitoring” what is happening in Sudan. Forrest estimated that in the 25 years and under age group, less than 10 percent regularly monitor events in Sudan, noting that it is the “old ones” between 25 and 40 who are keeping up-to-date with the developments through the acquisition of greater technical proficiencies. In contrast, Linda, an MRC youth worker, commented that her young Sudanese clientele “definitely” keep up-to-date: “They’re always…I’m always seeing people print articles on what’s happening in Sudan”. Whereas historically, the primary responsibility of “emotional labour”, “kin-work” (di Leonardo, 1987) and communicative practices of staying in touch with friends and family has belonged to role mothers and daughters, Baldassar (2008) observed that, “today, men,
particularly the younger generations, are just as likely to be communicating with overseas kin by email and SMS text messaging as women” (p. 248).

Highlighting the variability of monitoring practices among young people, Rose, 24, explained that she “sometimes” keeps tabs on current developments, “but not really”. However, she does exhibit a more general knowledge of the challenges facing the Sudanese people and the associated sociopolitical climate: “There’s a lot happening in Sudan. I feel like this president thing, political stuff about Darfur and Sudanese government…so there’s a lot of problem going on, but I don’t keep on date with that now”. Similarly, Callum, 21, expresses a degree of shame about not keeping up-to-date, reflecting, “No, it’s a shame. I’d like to. I guess I’m a bit lazy. I haven’t had many chances to do so but it’s something I want to do…keep in full minds what’s happening back home I guess”. It would seem that Callum is experiencing a degree of dissonance between what he “should be” doing and what he is doing. The emotional byproduct of this state of dissonance appears to be shame. Highlighting the moral exchange relations that often exist between transmigrants and “stay behind migrants”, Akesson (2004) observed that migrants are supposed to remember those who remain behind and through different forms of substantive and relational offerings provide evidence of their gratitude. Evidence of the perceived failure to observe transnational obligations and “repay the gift of communality” (Hage, 2002b) appears in the submissive disclaimers of migrants who equate infrequent phone calls and remittances with ingratitude (Carling, 2008) or, in Callum’s case, feelings of shame.

As a consequence of instantaneous, 24-hour global news coverage, Sudanese individuals in Australia are made aware of “on the ground” developments in Sudan almost as they occur. As Forrest maintained, “you can even get the information before someone down there [in Sudan] gets it”. The worldwide dissemination of news, online and otherwise, offers people an informational lifeline to people and events in other countries. Richard explained that it is common for Sudanese people in Australia to receive news updates from Sudan before friends and relatives living in Sudan. For the most part, this is due to the rural geography in many southern parts of
Sudan, but is also a consequence of lack of telecommunications infrastructure and alleged censoring of information by the Khartoum government. While there are certain benefits to regular news updates via online services, Linda cites an example where the impersonal nature of online functions caused significant upset for a young Sudanese girl, “I had a young girl, seventeen, she got sent…there was an email going around with people who’d recently been killed in it and that…so just to inform everybody”. Although she does not disclose which of the young girl’s family or friendship network passed away, the presumption is that it was a significant person in her life. She maintained, “So they’re a difficult thing to print that out and get that message on the email”. Bernal (2006) considered that the non-physical location of cyberspace mirrors the displacement of diasporic populations; with the “networked sociality of cyberspace” resonating with the population’s dispersed social networks (p. 168). Contrary to Linda’s example, Bernal argued that what cyberspace offered her diasporic Eritrean population “is also a mending of ruptures in the social body and in individual subjectivity, through the ability of the Internet to bridge distance or at least render it invisible, making physical location irrelevant” (p. 168). Although the Internet provides a means of communication between refugees and their overseas kin, the claim that it renders physical location irrelevant is an extreme one.

A more balanced assessment might be that social media and the Internet provide a virtual means of exchanging emotional support and relevant information. In the above example of the young girl’s reception of what was essentially an electronic death notice, the assumption that Internet access and other online services mend individual and social subjectivities or contribute to the “death of distance” (Carincross, 1997) is problematic and could have adverse consequences in terms of young people’s preservation of hope and continued accumulation of resilience. Contrary to Anderson’s (1994) discussion of the feeling of connection from a distance, receiving this type of information may in fact intensify the perceptual and symbolic distance between Australia-Sudan. In other words, the reception of personal information electronically makes physical location highly relevant, bringing into focus the gaping geographic space between Sudan and Australia in what is a high-usage and very public MRC computer room.
Although news from home can be unwelcome, even distressing at times, young people’s communication with relatives overseas can preserve important multidirectional connections within extended transnational networks. Advances in communication technologies can make it easier to keep in touch and stay up-to-date, but Baldassar et al. (2007) observed that “new technologies do not automatically replace older, less useful forms of communication”, with new technologies often “incorporated into long histories of families using all available means to keep in touch with their kin overseas” (p. 109; italics added). Carling (2008) argued that transnational practices such as phone calls can have both a substantive and/or “relativising” function. He suggested that phone calls can have a substantive purpose, as they can be utilised to discuss remittance transfer, usage and the facilitation of return visits and migration. In a relativising sense, “calling or not calling is of tremendous importance in itself, regardless of the information being exchanged” (p. 1459). He added, “Even remittances, which have an obvious material function, can also play an important role in reinforcing interpersonal relations” p. 1459). As Velayutham and Wise (2005) observed, the multi-directionality and multi-locality of these exchanges is often under-emphasised, with academic literature focusing on the exiled or diasporic groups as opposed to those “back home” (Bernal, 2006).

**Conclusion**

In contrast to some of the transnational literature which assumes that monetary remittances and physical return are universal features of diasporic groups, the responses of Sudanese participants suggest that the intensity, frequency and type of transnational involvement is not uniformly experienced and is influenced by a complex of family, communal and societal factors. Further, this chapter has sought to highlight to the material and emotional forms of transnational caregiving practices. In so doing, it emphasised the multi-sourced and multi-locational nature of potential resources of resilience as well as the complex moral and emotional interaction in its ongoing formation. Moving beyond the joy/obligation binarism in relation to
communal obligations to contribute, it could be said that ongoing contribution includes a “feel-good” factor as well as an enduring moral dimension resulting from the fulfilment of obligations. Given the multiple pressures facing young Sudanese people during resettlement, their ability to attend to and fulfil financial obligations and responsibilities is predicated on their ability to acquire and accumulate the relevant educational and vocational competencies and qualifications. A number of Sudanese participants re-considered their desire to return or repatriate to Sudan, favouring short visits and caregiving practices from a distance. Interestingly, these assertions were counterbalanced by a ‘belief’ that they would assist in the rebuilding of Sudan following the civil war; arguably a difficult process to be involved in from Australia or during short visits.

Although shame and guilt can represent forms of social control, these “negative” affects signal interest and care in the local Sudanese community and their diasporic traditions and aspirations. While hope directs actions to expected outcomes or goals, young people’s changing attitudes towards return and contribution indicate an inherent flexibility and adaptability in their construction of hope. This attitudinal flexibility appeared to be contingent on their developing sense of belonging to Australia, and ability to ‘re-tool’ their existing set of social, educational and economic resources. While young people’s divergent attitudes towards transnational involvement seem at first glance to indicate laziness of lack of interest, on closer inspection, their responses reflect sophisticated strategies of coping in the case of past adversity and hardship and the negotiation of simultaneous, often conflicting allegiances to multiple locations.

While participation in traditional modes of transnational involvement seems to be diminishing, communication technologies and social media platforms represent the new digital face of transnational caregiving and exchanges, an issue that is further explored in the next chapter. Rather than producing a time-space compression effect, the appropriation and phenomenological outcomes of these technologies exacerbated the perceptual distances between geographic and symbolic spaces. Simply put, while communication technologies helped some participants feel more connected with
friends and kin overseas, for others, the use of these technologies produced the opposite effect, bringing into uncomfortable focus the geographic and symbolic distance between Sudan, Australia and other countries of migration. With these observations in mind, Chapter 6 expands upon the insights developed in this chapter via an exploration of the ways a Sudanese hip-hop group in Western Sydney is using domestic space as a material platform for local and translocal involvement and seeks to demonstrate the ways hope, resilience and situated practices of resourcefulness are drawn upon and extended in and through the construction of a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) bedroom recording studio.
Chapter 6

‘I think something different’: space, place, and distributed capacities of resourcefulness

Introduction

Previous chapters have detailed the various ways in which resilience is accumulated and exchanged on the transnational scale. The formation of resilience is also augmented by localised practices of material and symbolic resourcefulness in domestic spaces. The extradomestic consequences of these domestic practices contain a life-supporting function, which is transportable and adaptable within and across a number of geographical and social scales. Domestic spaces are often more than places of habitation. In the lives of refugees and other migrants, domestic spaces can provide a sense of stability, comfort and communion, all of which are implicated in the broader formation of resilience. Building on Probyn’s (2003) notion of the “spatial imperative” of subjectivities, this chapter posits a spatial imperative of resilience, demonstrating its external and relational dimensions. This sociocultural approach to resilience contrasts with early psychological definitions of the phenomenon as an enclosed individual trait or set of behaviours.

Drawing on key concepts of space, appropriation, emplacement and “place-making”, I explore the transnational reproduction of spatial and material resourcefulness among a group of the project participants who formed a hip-hop group, and their construction of a multipurpose, DIY bedroom recording studio (Wilson, 2012). The accumulated capacity of resourcefulness is an important feature of resilience and is demonstrated by young Sudanese people’s ability to make the most out of limited or less than ideal material and spatial circumstances. This is indicative of the observed capacity among young Sudanese people to re-imagine and transform negative or adverse circumstances to productive cultural assets. Moreover, the unique form of hip-hop music produced by the group in the bedroom studio is an important resource
for the release and “rechannelling” of negative affect as well as a means of countering the negative implications of idle time. Focusing on one particular group of young people, it is argued that these practices of spatial and material resourcefulness are emblematic of the resourcefulness displayed by other Sudanese young people in Australia and represent important conceptual and empirical building blocks in the broader accumulation of resilience.

In contrast to much of the gender-oriented literature on bedroom cultures, home decoration, and DIY television programming, this chapter explores the pragmatic production of an everyday domestic space by a group of Sudanese youth. It examines how the Sudanese research participants make the most out of the numerous challenges associated with forced displacement and dispossession, transnational migration and resettlement in Australia. More specifically it is proposed that the participants’ experiences of refugee camps and the limited available space and material resources they offered have facilitated situated practices of spatial and material resourcefulness. As explored in the previous chapters, the acquisition of formal educational and vocational skills, knowledges and proficiencies is highly valued among many Sudanese participants and useful for their social, cultural and economic integration in Australian society and capacity for transnational involvement. However, the realisation of these ambitions and aspirations is significantly influenced by the intensity and intensification of these desires. The participants’ identification with, and appropriation of, the principles and practices of the underground hip-hop subgenre complement and build upon these pre-arrival practices of resourcefulness. The shared DIY project described in this chapter has also solidified a common purpose amongst the group and opened up new opportunities for them to engage with Sudanese and other migrant youth. While the home recording studio represents a novel use of domestic space, its construction is underpinned by a number of more serious concerns for Sudanese young people, related to inadequate settlement opportunities and the potentially negative effects of idle time (Wilson, 2012).
An analysis of the popular cultural form of hip-hop displays thematic overlaps with the broader resilience-related themes of this thesis; in particular, notions of resilience vis-à-vis the transcendence of socioeconomic adversity and hardship, experiences of marginalisation and relative deprivation, educational and vocational aspirations and opportunities (Gunter, 2008; Pieterse, 2010; Zillman et al., 2002). The complex set of factors described within the literature on rap and hip-hop (Mitchell, 2003; Maxwell, 2003; Forman, 2004) is useful for exploring the Sudanese hip-hop group’s productive and, at times, contradictory attempts to “make opportunities” for themselves in the domestic context of their Western Sydney apartment and to achieve musical recognition within the Australian music industry

McRobbie (2000) explored the bedroom practices and cultures of young working-class girls in the United Kingdom. She conceptualised the bedroom as a personalised safe space, where young girls could imagine and construct alternative realities to those of the male-dominated street culture. Her insights into bedroom culture have remained largely uncontested, with insufficient research addressing the specific bedroom practices of adolescent males. According to Pink (2004), however, the increase and diversity of male engagement within the home challenges “traditional and gendered uses of space and artefacts” (p. 135). She also claimed that “much of the existing literature on home creativity has focused on home decoration, which it has gendered as a feminine activity concerned almost exclusively with the creation of visual and atmospheric ‘homely’ aspects of the domestic environment” (p. 43). While acknowledging the gender-based literature on home decoration (Cieraad, 2006; Gullestad, 1993; Pink, 2004), adolescent girls’ bedroom cultures (Baker, 2004; James, 2001; Kearney, 2007; McRobbie & Garber, 1976; Steele & Brown, 1995) gay domesticity (Carrington, 1999; Dines, 2005; Gorman-Murray, 2006) and DIY home-renovation television programming (Holliday, 2005; Lewis, 2007; Rosenberg, 2008), the present chapter explores the resourceful and functional appropriation of a seemingly banal, everyday domestic space.

10 It should be noted, however, that McRobbie’s research was a critique of the public space focus dominating subcultural studies at the time.
As discussed in the thesis introduction, the Australian news media and certain high-ranking politicians have both reported on and exacerbated tensions between the Sudanese community, police and other migrants. Accordingly, the “private” everyday domestic lives of young Sudanese men in Australia have been consistently overshadowed by “public” media representations of Sudanese male youth, which have tended to highlight isolated acts of public misconduct. With public attention focused on the aimless, destructive behaviour of Sudanese male youth, and a supposed tendency to form gangs, the more private, creative and community-based projects have, for the most part, gone unnoticed. These less spectacular, everyday activities are made sense of using Willis’ (1990) concept of “symbolic creativity”. He proposed that symbolic creativity is a necessary part of our everyday lives, and forms an essential part of what he termed “necessary work”. Importantly, symbolic creativity is the practical or active vehicle through which human capacities are made realities: “It transforms what is provided and helps to produce specific forms of human identity and capacity” (p. 11). Willis argued that necessary symbolic work is “that which has to be done every day, that which is not extra but essential to ensure the daily production and reproduction of human existence” (p. 9). For the young Sudanese participants, the symbolic work of producing and reproducing their bedroom-recording studio reaffirms their “powers of the self” (see Willis, p. 12), and provides a material platform from which to effect cultural change among Sudanese and other migrant youth. As discussed in the following section, the creative production and ongoing renovation of the wardrobe studio is a grounded example of symbolic creativity enacted in the limited spatial environment of the participants’ apartment in the western suburbs of Sydney.

The studio space

The group All 4 One was formed in 2006, and consists of “Andrew” (aged 27), “Deon” (aged 23), “William” (aged 20) and “Avon” (aged 20).11 The individual members arrived in Australia as refugees via Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya, and Cairo, Egypt, separately between 2000 and 2005. At the time of the interviews,

11 Avon was unavailable to participate at the time of our interviews.
Andrew was involved in building construction, and Deon, William and Avon were enrolled in different university and TAFE courses. During our first interview, Andrew told me about his home recording studio – grandly referred to as “the room studio” – and how any spare money he earns from his full-time employment goes straight into it. Andrew’s ongoing financial investment in the studio coupled with his technical and musical knowledge reflects Portes’s (2000) observation that social capital cannot be accumulated “without an investment of some material resources and the possession of some cultural knowledge, enabling the individual to establish relations with others” (p. 2). The relational, extradomestic implications of the bedroom studio are discussed in a later section.

After our interview concluded, I was taken on a tour of the recording studio, more colloquially referred to as “the studio”. Doubling as Andrew’s bedroom, the room studio was nothing short of a feat of do-it-yourself engineering. Complete with earphones, microphone and noise-cancelling foam, the “sound booth” was outfitted in one side of Andrew’s wardrobe. An umbilical tangle of audio and computer cables allowed communication between the sound booth and a nearby laptop. Given the uncertainty of settlement in an unfamiliar foreign country, the interlocking cables might be thought of as providing a symbolic lifeline between the group members, and connection to their local and international, predominately Sudanese fan base. As Silverstone et al. (1992) maintained,

The life of an object can be traced in all its glorious certainty and uncertainty, from invention to production to marketing to use and disuse, and the uniqueness of that life can be used as a tracer of the social and cultural contexts of its continuous creation and recreation. (p. 18)

As shown in Figure 2 below, the studio cables represent symbolic lines of transnational and historical connection, tracing the group members’ personal biographies back to Sudan, through various refugee camps, temporary countries of asylum, and leading to the recreation of their lives in Australia. In an effort to maintain a sense of transnational connection with their overseas fans, the group members also upload sample music created in the bedroom studio, photographs and biographical information onto social networking sites such as MySpace and
Facebook. By participating in these online social spaces, the group members have been able to construct a transnational virtual network and a sense of virtual co-presence with other hip-hop artists in Australia, Canada and the United States as well as maintaining a sense of connection with their fans in Sudan, Kenya and other parts of Africa.

Figure 2: The wardrobe recording studio setup

The enactment of symbolic creativity in the domestic space of the bedroom studio is demonstrative of a localised “place-making” practice. Given the common refugee
experience of displacement, practices of domestic “place-making” might be thought of as symbolically “re-territorialising” or “re-spatialising” the home as a local sphere of belonging. As Apparduari (1991) observed, the effects of globalisation have contributed to the emergence of a world that is increasingly de-territorialised. The result has been the loosening of bonds between people and territories. Building on Apparduari’s insights, I argue that the bedroom studio acts as material and symbolic scaffolding for the reconstruction of these multilocal bonds through the necessary work of symbolic creativity. Importantly, the creation of the bedroom studio should not be viewed simply as a spatial project, but as a territorial one. At one level, its construction is about the resourceful use of material objects and available domestic space. At another, it involves the symbolic reclamation of a space “to call one’s own”, in which to belong. Following Malkki (1992), rather than thinking of the group’s displacement and place-making practices in rhizomorphous terms (i.e. uprootedness and transplantation), it seems more appropriate to conceive the bedroom studio as a stem or filament graft on a pre-existing trunk, which stretches back to their countries of origin and along their migration routes.

As a result of Andrew’s ongoing improvements and maintenance, an ensemble of independent recording components has been incorporated, personalised and redefined to become “the studio”. This ongoing maintenance is made sense of using the theory and practice of “appropriation”. Noble (2008) defined “appropriation” as “those material and symbolic transactions whereby a commodity becomes a personal possession, where it leaves the public world of exchange and becomes an object in our own worlds, fulfilling the purpose of self-creation in our private lives” (p. 104). The self-creative aspect of appropriation is also analogous to Willis’ (1990) concept of “necessary work” and Giddens’ (1990) notion of “ontological security”. Willis (1990) maintained that the necessary work of symbolic creativity is an essential part of our daily lives, which, like appropriation, can provide us with a sense of ontological and, by implication, existential security. Drawing valuable parallels to future-oriented dimensions of hope, Willis wrote “it is the expectation of being able to apply power to the world to change it…It is how, in the future, there is some human confidence that unities may be formed out of confusion, patterns of irregularity” (p. 285). Meanwhile, Giddens (1990) defined ontological security as an
everyday feeling of trust, constancy and reliability that human beings have in their self-identity as well as their social and material worlds. Noble (2004) established a conceptual connection between the accumulation of objects in domestic material environments and the accumulation of being or “cumulative self” (pp. 234-235). He claimed that as we accumulate objects we accumulate being, with accumulation of being increasing “the resources that we have to act in the world” (2004, p. 253). Ontological security is closely tied to our confidence and future-oriented hope in the “ongoingness” of our physical environment and is particularly relevant to refugees and new migrants whose experiences may include uncertain durations of stay in ill-equipped encampments and rental properties.

According to Noble (2002), the construction of “home” “is understood as a kind of project of ontological security, an ongoing accomplishment” (p. 57). The group’s efforts to move the status of the bedroom studio from “incomplete” to “complete” and to improve the functionality of the space represent an ongoing source of hope and a sense of everyday accomplishment in their lives. As Noble wrote, the project of ontological security is a “dynamic, contingent and processual phenomenon, not a finished state, nor to be confused with ‘happiness’ – but seen as practices requiring ongoing maintenance” (2002, p. 57). These observations are also applicable to the processual and accumulative dynamics involved in the formation of resilience. As discussed throughout this thesis, resilience is not an inherent trait or fixed state of being, but rather, through individual and communal investments, accumulated resources of resilience are in a constant state of evolution. Noble’s insights also address the critical observation arising in Chapter 5 that countries of resettlement are not necessarily final destination or endpoints; rather, they may come to represent material and symbolic sites for return visits and other forms of transnational involvement.

For Andrew, Deon and William, the ongoing or incomplete status of the wardrobe studio serves a number of life-supporting, resilience-related functions related to the management of idle time, shared aspirations and accumulation of positive affect among the friendship group. Putnam proposed that sewers, cables, and utility mains
structure the home into a “life-support system” (cited by Cieraad, 2006, p. 144). For the Sudanese participants, the transformation of an ordinary bedroom into a bedroom recording studio has quite literally provided them with a material and symbolic life-supporting project. The ongoing status of the studio preserves and extends the participants’ sense of object and situational permanency, while offering the young Sudanese men a certain level of control over their physical environment. The incomplete status of the wardrobe studio has productive parallels with resilience as an accumulating capacity – as opposed to an ultimate state – and ties in nicely with a conceptualisation of hope as a future-oriented ideal, propelling individuals and groups into and towards hoped-for objects and outcomes. The ongoing, accumulative nature of the wardrobe studio project preserves the participants’ sense of situational permanency, but also increases the group’s powers of action in terms of technical and musical proficiencies.

Of relevance to processes of hoping, the hopeful promise of the studio’s completion echoes Ahmed’s (2010) claim that the hopeful promise of happiness “is what sends happiness forth” (p. 35). In other words, by establishing happiness as a future ideal, the promise compels action and propels people towards its attainment. Andrew, the group leader, maintained that despite not being able to “break into” the local Western Sydney hip-hop scene, hope remains, “It’s been like three years now… But we still haven’t lost hope, we actually managing ourselves to do it until we get it to that point”. According to Andrew, hope is maintained through a combination of motivations within the group to achieve musical recognition, financial reward, and provide financial support to friends and family in Africa. As discussed in later sections, the life-supporting dimension of the studio project also provides the participants with a means of avoiding the potentially negative effects of idle time as well as a musical platform from which to disseminate a message of peace to local Sudanese and other migrant youth.

In contrast to the more usual display of home objects and domestic spatial planning, the bedroom recording studio has been built into one half of Andrew’s sliding-door wardrobe. Presence of the space is marked by what I call “chameleonesque”
moments of visibility and invisibility. Specifically, the action of sliding the floor-to-
ceiling mirror shut camouflages the sound booth, and in effect, dematerialises the
studio by returning the place to a conventional bedroom. In his study of the spatial
history of Hong Kong’s underground bandrooms, Kit-wai Ma (2002) claimed that
“underground space sets up hard spatial and emotive barriers between the inside and
the outside” (p. 138). He described the remaking of his participants’ band room,
called *a.room* – a former private gambling and heroin den – as “a representational
space, which simultaneously triggers closing and opening, invisibility and visibility,
rendering access difficult for outsiders but easy penetration for insiders” (p. 139).
Although there are obvious similarities between *All 4 One’s* bedroom recording
studio and the underground bandroom described by Kit-wai Ma, the barriers between
inside and outside are considerably softer in Andrew’s wardrobe studio. As Kit-wai
Ma explained, *a.room* is “in a secretive corner of a stabilized exterior: *a.room* is
invisible from the outside, it is harmonically and invisibly embedded in its
immediate spatial content” (p. 137). In contrast, Andrew’s bedroom studio does not
have fixed visibility, and can be opened at particular times to selected audiences.
Unlike the underground bandroom, the wardrobe recording studio lacks harmonic
embeddedness in the spatial context of the apartment. Although the noise-cancelling
foam goes some way to limiting extraneous, undesirable noises at the time of
recording, heavy bass frequencies permeate the apartment during playback. As
argued below, the domestic world has extradomestic implications. The diffusion of
hard spatial binaries by the group (i.e. inside/outside, public/private) reflect Rose’s
concept of “paradoxical space”. According to Rose (1993), paradoxical spaces are
“spaces that would be mutually exclusive if charted on two-dimensional map –
centre and margin, inside and outside”, but through everyday activities, encounters
and arrangements come to be “occupied simultaneously”. The simultaneous nature of
these engagements is exemplified below through an exploration of the extradomestic
implications of Andrew’s domestic practices of spatial and material resourcefulness
in relation to his return musical pilgrimage to Africa.

Reflective of Kit-wai Ma’s (2002) study of spatial dynamics in Hong-Kong’s
underground band rooms, the wardrobe recording studio space might also be thought
of as a “container of power” through which the participants’ often-traumatic
migration experiences and personal biographies are creatively expressed and re-imagined. Ma conceptualised space as “a social construct that anchors and fosters solidarity, oppression, liberation or disintegration” (p. 131). Conceptualising space as a social construct, endowed with the energetic potential for productive or destructive manifestations, we are provided with a useful framework for analysing the oppressive and corrosive constructions of space in refugee camps and the negotiation of these limitations and restrictions by the Sudanese participants. Moreover, by theorising space as a fluid, social construction, we can make sense of the young Sudanese men’s productive approach to space in their rental apartment. Along similar lines, Rouse (1991) observed that migration “highlights the social nature of space as something created and reproduced through collective human agency” (p. 11). Furthermore, the resourceful use of limited spatial and material resources by the young participants seems to indicate that the resilience-related potential of space is only loosely proportional to the amount of available space. In other words, the creative, resourceful capacity of the young participants to see potential in the bedroom space is shaped but not determined by the amount of available physical space.

**Something out of nothing**

The productive, inventive and resourceful use of domestic space by Andrew, Deon, William and Avon has been facilitated by certain spatial and material engagements in refugee camps and other temporary living arrangements during migration. Within the encampment context, material objects such as clothes, sheltering, and containers are commonly exchanged and/or recycled to prolong their usefulness. These everyday objects exist in a temporary state of readiness due to their adaptive functionality, but also because of the temporary and uncertain nature of forced displacement and associated “conditions of stay” in refugee and displacement camps. These practices of material preservation are related to the future-oriented dimensions of hope and resilience discussed in Chapter 1. While the re-use of certain prefabricated materials fulfils inhabitants’ more immediate needs for warmth and shelter, the improvised practice of converting “old” materials to “new” structures and appliances reflects the commitment and drive of individuals to create a future life for themselves outside the
encampment context. Resourceful practices of giving used objects a “second life” are reminiscent of Sudanese families’ hopeful investment in the “second chance” promise of migration and resettlement. Along similar lines to the life-support technologies available in hospital environments, the recycling of everyday materials supports young people’s being and future becoming. In so doing, it supports a central idea of this thesis that the formation and distribution of resilience extends beyond an individual, psychological trait out into our physical environments and within our social networks.

First-person accounts of camp life in Sudan and neighbouring refugee camps (Bilkeui, 2008; Jal & Davies, 2009; Yousif, 1998) describe a gross lack of material resources such as housing, clothing, food, and sporting/leisure equipment. To better conceptualise the creative adaptation of All 4 One’s wardrobe studio and the material component of resilience accumulation, it is important to explore possible linkages between habituated practices of resourcefulness, spatial organisation in refugee camps, and the reproduction of these practices. In his ethnographic investigation of three refugee camps around the village of Dadaab, Kenya, Agier (2002) analysed the inhabitants’ strategic re-appropriation of available camp space and materials. He noted that the Ethiopian “neighborhood” at the Ifo camp was made up of high-density dwellings as well as makeshift stores such as “coffee shops”, “video shops”, “hairdressers’ salons” and “photo studios” (p. 326). For example, the local “video store” was a shed made out of planks and branches where locals could watch daily Indian films and the occasional soccer match (p. 329). Another example of material resourcefulness on the part of camp inhabitants was the recycling of materials used to transport international aid. Agier explained that the sheet metal of food canisters and drums was flattened out “to make tiles, windows, tables and hen coops” (p. 326).

Similarly, the group members of All 4 One have transformed the usual, everyday vision of the domestic wardrobe (as a place for hanging clothes) into “the studio”. In terms of production quality and technical capabilities, there are few comparisons to be made between most commercially operated recording studios and Andrew’s humble wardrobe studio. However, when Andrew refers to the “grandness” of “the
studio” with unencumbered enthusiasm and pride, an outside observer would never know it is run by a second-hand laptop and soundproofed by a few lengths of noise-cancelling foam. Perhaps, the practice of endowing substandard structures with names like “coffee shop”, “video shop”, or “the studio” is a way of maintaining a sense of normality, dignity and connectedness in substandard circumstances.

According to Agier (2002), the attributions of meaning to certain anonymous spaces “presuppose uses that transform the everyday vision that the refugees have of space in their daily lives” (p. 329). In other words, the naming of certain “non-places” heralds the beginnings of what Agier calls a “symbolics of place” (p. 329). The concept of “non-places”, as first used by Augé (1995), refers to ordinary, everyday places that “do not integrate other places, meanings, traditions and sacrificial, ritual moments but remain, due to a lack of characterization, non-symbolized and abstract spaces” (Diken, 2004, p. 82). Although the existential conditions of rental occupants and refugee inhabitants are in many ways incommensurable, both are, to varying degrees, subject to what Diken called “the permanency of transience” (p. 94).

For refugees, there is an official expectation that their stay in camps is transitory; that they stay in camps only the necessary amount of time to ensure a safe return to their country of origin or for settlement in a “third country” to be negotiated. Similarly, for many leaseholders in Australian rental properties, there is a socially imposed expectation that they reside in rental arrangements until they can afford to become homeowners. As Diken (2004) reminded us, refugee camps “have become a ‘permanent’ location and the transient condition of the refugee extends indefinitely, becoming an irrevocable and permanent situation, freezing into non-negotiable, rigid structures” (p. 93). In situations of permanent transience like refugee encampments and some rental housing arrangements, the praxis of “place-naming” is one way in which inhabitants create a sense of permanence in temporary living environments and actualise the material capital component implicated in processes of economic integration.
Like the Dadaab inhabitants’ practice of making place through the naming of ramshackle edifices, Andrew’s re-naming of his outwardly unexceptional wardrobe space as “the studio” is a place-making practice. By superimposing gentrified labels on the prosaic wardrobe space, Andrew confers this space with a sense of stability, constancy and wholeness. Simultaneously, Andrew seems to acquire a sense of stability, constancy and wholeness in his temporary rental situation. This transformative process of imbuing ordinary space with new meaning resembles the resilience-related process of “emplacement”. Blunt and Dowling (2006) defined emplacement as “the interworking of place, identity, and practice in such a way as to generate a relationship of belonging between person and place” (p. 228). As Hammond explained, emplacement involves “the gradual expansion of places that people considered to be familiar and safe from the raw material of a space that was unfamiliar and dangerous” (cited by Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 228). The practice of “place-naming” by Andrew and the Dadaab refugees is a situation-specific method of creating a sense of connection and familiarity with impermanent space(s) and object(s). Therefore, it can be argued that emplacement practices play a particularly important role for individuals living in substandard and/or temporary circumstances like refugee camps and rental properties. By refurbishing everyday spaces with a certain syntactic lustre (i.e. wardrobe-to-studio, ramshackle shed-to-video shop), individuals proactively re-humanise their impermanent living environments, if only in name. Building on Blunt and Dowling’s concept of “homemaking practices”, what I describe as “place-naming practices” form part of the reconstructive process most commonly described as “turning a house into a home”. In the processes of making a home, feelings of belonging, security, and comfort are accumulated, providing the physical, affective and symbolic building blocks for the everyday formation of resilience. According to Noble (2002), this sense of comfort in the ongoingness of domestic objects and spaces “weaves together relations between physical, affective and symbolic states, made manifest in a multiplicity of objects and the spaces in which they are located” (p. 56).

While it is not intended to establish too strong a relation between the comparatively comfortable rental properties of Western Sydney and refugee camps in Africa, there are obvious similarities to be drawn between the two housing environments. In terms
of duration of stay, inhabitants of rental properties and displacement camps may be required to “move on” with little or no warning, with both sets of inhabitants subject to strict “conditions of stay”. In the case of Andrew’s rental apartment, habitation is subject to a non-permanent contract, regular inspections and review by real estate agents, and an agreement to refrain from making any permanent, structural renovations. For refugee camp inhabitants, camp administrators monitor the distribution of basic housing materials, food supply, engagement with local populations, and the exchange of goods and services. Despite varying levels of uncertainty associated with these multiple conditions of existence, camp residents and the Sudanese participants have reclaimed a certain degree of personal agency over their physical environments. In both instances, persons have developed a common capacity to confer permanency on the “incomplete” status of certain objects and spaces by re-imagining those objects and spaces as more than they are. These examples highlight an important dimension of resilience; namely, the practised ability of imagining oneself “outside” undesirable or inadequate circumstances. Gupta and Ferguson (1997) identified a common capacity among immigrants to use their memories of place to imaginatively construct a sense of place in their new environments (cited by McMichael & Manderson, p. 11). The ability of the young Sudanese men to “see more” in their surrounding objects and spaces is synonymous with Wu’s (1972) notion of “imagineering”. The mobilisation of hope facilitates the construction of alternative futures, enabling young people to “see beyond” their current adverse circumstances. This resilience-related process involves a double action of providing a means of coping with present adversity as well as a future-oriented resource of hope.

**Do-it-yourself**

As a consequence of forced displacement and time spent in internment camps, refugees must out of necessity, develop capacities of material and spatial resourcefulness. While these experiences go some way to explaining the novel use of bedroom space in Andrew’s apartment, the participants’ identification with principles and practices of the underground hip-hop movement cannot be
overlooked. As Mitchell (2003) claimed, an important feature of underground hip-hop’s ‘subaltern’ status is its strong DIY aspect in producing recordings, concerts, media and public events” (p. 4). Hern et al. (2004) found that as a consequence of superior and more affordable digital recording equipment, more and more independent artists are turning to home recording setups as a viable alternative to established studios. They noted that “DIY technology has reduced the gap between the production capacities of independent artists and labels with that of major labels” (p. 16). In the case of *All 4 One*, the affordability factor of the DIY approach is particularly relevant as Andrew is the only group member with full-time employment, and the sole financier of the recording studio equipment. As Andrew can only record after work and on weekends, the immediacy and efficiency of the home recording environment is considered a major advantage. Andrew highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of commercial studios versus the home-recording environment:

And you do it to record, because the studio’s very expensive. Every time we go it’s sixty dollars an hour...You put the beats on [Adobe recording software], while you’ve done some sorta’ instrumental with. We sit right here for half an hour, and the whole song will be done.

As Andrew explained, the DIY recording studio offers a cheap and efficient alternative to commercial studios. However, his expedient 30-minute production of a song might be attributable to spatial more than temporal factors. As Kit-wai Ma (2002) stated, “Inside a band room, time gives way to space. Band rooms are saturated with excessive spatial markers such as windowless walls, overcrowded musical instruments, dim lighting, DIY partitions and so on’ (p. 147). Like the Hong Kong band room, the bedroom studio is characterised by a noticeable absence of temporal markers, but in a different way. In contrast to the windowless, overcrowded and dimly lit bandroom, Andrew’s bedroom studio space is marked by a clinical minimalism. The absence of band posters, layabout musical instruments or any

12 To date, more than AUD $5000 has gone into its installation, improvement and maintenance.
noticeable decorative aspect to the room is an analogous yet divergent mode of understanding the way time gives way to space in the bedroom studio.

As shown in Figure 3, the confined sound booth space requires group members to be within 10-20cm of the wardrobe’s partitioning wall when they lay down their lyrics. In the limited spatial context of the wardrobe booth, performative gestures and accentuations, unique to the recording performances of hip-hop artists, become restricted. These bodily movements include rhythmical and emotive hand movements reminiscent of the tomahawk chopping action, head fakes, simulated sex,
and bobbing. Unperturbed, the group members of *All 4 One* produce high-intensity, powerful music in a less than ideal recording environment. As Butcher and Thomas (2003) claimed, “Much of youth culture is about display: being heard and being seen. Public space has become the theatre for this performance; the site of gatherings that produce, carve out, and channel this energy” (p. 124) The “private” recording performances of *All 4 One* challenge Butcher’s claim that public space is the predominant site or stage for youth performance, production and creative display. In contrast, it is in the confines of half a wardrobe in a Western Sydney apartment that four Sudanese young people have gathered to display, see and hear each other’s performances. These “public” performances in the “private” confines of Andrew’s bedroom blur established boundaries between public and private, demonstrating that they cannot be easily separated. In some respects, the spirit of resourcefulness and innovation displayed by the Sudanese youth is a nostalgic return to the genesis of hip-hop. The participants’ practices of resourcefulness are discussed in relation to the innovative hip-hop vanguard that helped to define the genre. In both instances, resilience and the DIY ethos are inextricably linked, with both groups “seeing more in” and making the most of available material and spatial resources.

**More with less**

In the foundational days of the hip-hop genre, disc jockeys such as DJ Kool Herc, Grand Wizard Theodore and Grandmaster Flash pioneered new ways of creating hip-hop music by enhancing existing technologies to create revolutionary DJing techniques. Grandmaster Flash was arguably the first hip-hop DJ to mix beats between two vinyl turntables, also known as “beat mixing” or “beat matching”. He is also known for perfecting the now widespread, and instantly recognisable, practice of scratching. Kit-wai Ma (2002) defined scratching as “the manipulation of discs on one or more turn-tables to produce ‘scratchy’ sounds; it also involves the mixing and blending of these scratchy sounds from tracks from existing albums” (p. 144). Sudanese-born Cola Bilkeui (2008) reflected on the productive role that hip-hop music had played in his life since his arrival to Australia and the opportunities hip-hop DJing offered him in terms of invention and creative control:
When I was living in Adelaide I went to a club and saw a DJ called Samurai and another called DJ Kronic. Their DJing involved scratching and I fell in love with this sound. You could manipulate the record to make a new sound. You weren’t just playing; you were creating. Thus music on the record wasn’t just something pre-packaged for me to sit down and accept: it was a raw material for me to convert into something else, something new that I invented on my own. (p. 225)

The manipulation of the DJ turntables or “decks” to create something new by Cola Bilkeui (a.k.a. DJ Cola) and Andrew’s adaptation of his bedroom to create a bedroom recording studio are both examples of creative adaptation that reinscribe modes of normative use. In both instances, the individuals are making the most out of the raw materials at hand and converting them into something inventive, functional and unique. In the above quote, Bilkeui juxtaposes the passive and active gestures of “playing” and “creating”, “acceptance” and “invention”. In so doing, he highlights a common feature of both resilience and “refugeeness”; specifically, the coming to terms with circumstantial limitations, awareness of the creative present, and management of idle time experienced by newly arrived refugees in the initial stages of resettlement.

Among the group members of All 4 One, there is agreement that a major cause of misconduct and suicide among Sudanese youth in Australia relates to the incapacitating effects of “doing nothing”. In contrast to the culturally determined, reductionist accounts of Sudanese misbehaviour by former Immigration Minister, Kevin Andrews, and ex-counsellor, Peter Day, cited in the introduction to this thesis, incidents of Sudanese group violence, youth suicide and other mental health issues are more likely explained by the associated effects of idleness and inadequate, customised mid- to long-term settlement opportunities. It seems reasonable to suggest that the less productive consequences of idle time would be better monitored and moderated by the redistribution and reconceptualising of “secondary settlement”

13 I am not proposing here that home-based projects such as the wardrobe recording studio will necessarily circumvent the potentially destructive effects of idle time or dramatically curb suicide rates among Sudanese young people. Undoubtedly, there are many complex, often traumatic, historical and current lifestyle factors involved in these unfortunate cases.
services to include customised, ongoing community-based activities and opportunities for young people. Following Willis (1990), these secondary settlement services and opportunities should not be thought of as extra concession generously bestowed on refugee and humanitarian entrants, but rather, as essential to facilitating the “necessary work” which reaffirms their powers of self and sense of belonging in and to Australia. Despite the influx of young migrant people from war-torn countries and the range of traumatic baggage, Australia still lacks “a cohesive and well-coordinated national approach which embraces a whole-of-life concept of recovery” (cited in Olliff & Mohamed, 2007, p. 4). Olliff and Mohamed (2007) identified significant gaps in services for refugee young people. These gaps include lack of individual assessment and support, ineligibility of young people to access some government programs, and a lack of focus on longer-term community harmony.

During our first group interview, Andrew and Deon spoke about the lack of opportunities in Western Sydney and the need for individualised, longer-term settlement assistance to help Sudanese young people progress in Australia.14

Like, what I’m looking at is, I don’t think there’s a lot of support for young people around here, because most of them they struggling, and when people help our people like a small thing, like kinda’ fun thing, taking them to camping and all of that. It show dem [them] how Australia look like and all of that, but like we need more than that.

As Andrew explained, infrequent community-based camping trips cannot solve the unique set of medium- to long-term challenges facing young Sudanese men and women. It is understandable that a significant percentage of government and community resources are directed to the cultural orientation of newly arrived migrants. However, there is an obvious deficiency in the support offered families and specifically, youth, who have made the transition from “newly arrived” to “recently settled”. Although the Sudanese group members exemplify the common capacity for

14 A total of three formal interviews were conducted with All 4 One, with several informal meetings arranged at local cafes and an inner city nightclub. Although the informal and ethnographic approach was not initially analysed alongside the formal interview transcripts, they offered insights into the everyday social worlds of individual group members.
resourcefulness among other refugee young people, it is important to note that resourcefulness is predicated, to some extent, on the identification of and access to appropriate resources in the first place. This suggests a reciprocal relationship between government and community resources and young people’s ability to resourcefully extract the resilience-related potential of these external support services, material or otherwise.

Under the Federal Government’s Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS), services were usually offered to refugee and humanitarian arrivals for the first 6 months of settlement (Olliff, 2007, p. 45). As noted by Olliff, the stated aim of the IHSS was to provide “intensive settlement assistance” for the initial period of resettlement (p. 46). His major criticism of the IHSS concerns the “limited financial, material and social support available in the early settlement period” (p. 32). A similar concern was voiced by representatives from a Western Sydney MRC, who argue that short-term accommodation assistance of 4 weeks does not take into account the expense of private rental and the many other necessary and immediate settlement needs (2007, p. 48). Although information and financial assistance in the early stages of resettlement help newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants get settled, longer-term settlement strategies need to be put in place, which address the challenges of long-term monitoring and needs assessment, as well as customised financial support for self-funded projects such as the wardrobe recording studio. As discussed throughout this thesis, resilience involves not only accumulated capacities for dealing with contemporaneous adversity, but also a future-oriented dimension of hope that enables individuals to see beyond current adverse events and circumstances towards a better future. As with the pastoral orientation of IEC schooling, the disproportionate focus on the short-term rehabilitation and settlement of new arrivals may undermine the future realisation of hoped-for objects and outcomes more likely to be achieved through a longer-term vision of educational and vocational capacity building.

An example of this assistance gap arises when clients exit the IHSS and enter the secondary settlement phase. After this transition community service providers find it particularly difficult to maintain contact, assess needs and provide support on an ongoing basis. Along similar lines, Andrew questions settlement agencies’ initial
resettlement focus, outlining a requirement for ongoing customised support for young adults in the mid- to long-term stages of resettlement. He commented,

And they [community service providers] sitting there for mainly help you out, to help young kids out and stuff. But if we go to them, right now, we like, “we need some type of help”. So what they actually offer? I think that’s where we all go wrong in the beginning, because it doesn’t work together, because they focused on more people like who they survived, you trying to get them used to the country, just trying to get them to have the ways around so they depend on themselves, and us, living around here, they can’t really help us that much.

As Andrew suggests, refugee and humanitarian entrants are “weaned off” government-administered settlement programs and asked to fend for themselves before they have had time to acquire the necessary cultural competencies and alternative means of life support. This premature rupturing of occupational, social and psychological settlement support may adversely affect the formation of resilience and a strong community-oriented mindset, which is generally recognised as a unique attribute of Sudanese communities. On the other hand, it may activate habituated practices of resourcefulness, hope and resilience experienced during times of relative deprivation. From a different perspective, William foreshadows the possible linkages between lack of activities, boredom and occasions of Sudanese youth suicide in Western Sydney:

we need more activities; more activities that we can actually tryin’ to practise things and tryin’ to do something that will make us busy all the time… If I’m staying down everyday and I’m not going anywhere, I be bored. I be like, I think something different.

Agier (2002) identified a comparison between the absence of occupational activity, moral suffering and psychological pathologies in daily camp life. Camp participants referred to themselves as “physically and mentally imprisoned, homeless and hopeless”. “Pushing time” is an expression used by Sudanese young people who spend their days confined to their “block”. Notions of pushing time on the block
evoke images of imprisoned young people serving an indefinite jail sentence. The
description “pushing time” also suggests that time is imposed on camp inhabitants;
that they are “on the clock” of an invisible temporal warden. Bauman (2002)
described this indefinite temporariness of refugee camps as “frozen transience”,
defining it as an “ongoing, lasting state of temporariness, a duration patched together
of moments none of which is lived through as an element of, and a contribution to,
perpetuity” (p. 114-5). In other words, the way time is experienced has a significant
effect on the young people’s preservation of hope and resilience.

In order to survive, refugees necessarily “exist from day to day in the immediacy of
the moment, bathing in…the despair brewing inside the walls” (Bauman, 2002, p.
114-5). The dateless, sempiternal nature of time in camps has implications for
inmates’ sense of life purpose and preservation of hope. As Agier (2002) noted,
idleness and absence of life purpose lead refugees to regularly talk about suicide and
above all, “express feelings of powerlessness and uselessness” (p. 329). In the
following conversation, Andrew makes an explicit connection between meaningful
daily activity and youth suicide.

M I guess when you have a lot of idle time, like sitting around doing
nothing, that’s when you get into trouble.
A You get bored. Two months ago, two Sudanese guys actually jumped
a train and they all passed away.
M Suicide.
A One of the guy in Werrington said, “I’ve been defeated by
life.”…That’s what he wrote…as soon as a train came, he jumped in,
you know? It’s really hard luck, but what can you do? If you sitting
here and nobody talk to you, and you don’t know what’s going on,
and you’re not having fun, and you bored, you think something
selfish.

Participation in the bedroom studio project may thus perform a more crucial function
in the lives of the young Sudanese men than simply enabling the recording of hip-
hop music. As an ongoing project, the studio provides a sense of purpose outside (or
inside, as it were) the group’s repetitive workweek and busy university schedules. The studio also provides a symbolic means of maintaining a sense of connection with Sudanese and other migrant youth. As Deon stated, “So this [the music project] is like, a good opportunity for us tell the youth. We have something else to do, instead of just doing nothing”.

The negative connotations of Deon’s description of “doing nothing” can adversely affect refugees’ preservation of hope and accumulation of resilience in displacement camps and in the context of resettlement. On the other hand, young people’s accumulated capacities to deal with doing nothing and their ability to extract productive value from these times highlights a resourceful dimension of resilience. As Ehn and Lofgren (2010) maintained, “Doing nothing is not only a state of mind but also an ordered and communicated behaviour that people have to learn and develop over a lifetime” (p. 78). Although the indefinite temporariness of time spent in refugee camps would most likely be laden with significant anxiety and discomfort, there is a sense in which being inactive, relaxing and resting are meaningful activities. The ability to relax involves an accumulated capacity for psychological and bodily management. As Noble (2002) maintained, “the task of relaxing becomes a series of techniques designed to induce a state of shared calm” (p. 56). Establishing productive parallels with the communal distribution of resilience, the shared experience of creating calm could be considered a transpersonal resource of resilience, working to traverse the divide between self and other, individual and social. These comments call attention to young people’s resilience-related capacity to transform environmental limitations and other negative resettlement experiences in positive and productive ways.

Extradomestic implications

Analysing the wardrobe recording studio as a purely private and enclosed domestic object takes away from the studio’s important resilience-related social function. The social function of the wardrobe studio is linked to successful resettlement outcomes by providing the group members a means of countering idleness as well as a material and symbolic headquarters from which to disseminate a message of peace to migrant youth. As Andrew explained, the message is intended to raise awareness among
young people of the political situation in Sudan, address incidents of violence that have occurred in and around local Western Sydney train stations, and remind all young people of their “golden opportunity in Australia”. Money (2007) explained that by exploring the social qualities or “socialness” of objects, we may come to understand how they become integrated in the “social fabric of everyday life” (Riggins cited by Money, 2007). Similarly, Pink (2004) maintained that the domestic world has inevitable “extradomestic implications” (p. 132). Moss (1997), for instance, argued that the home flows or stretches beyond the domestic locationality of “the house” as the “relations that constitute the household are not spatially confined to the physical, material dwelling” (p. 24). Although constructed within the domestic space of Andrew’s rental apartment, the group’s musical achievements are situated and recognised within a larger set of social and cultural relations and across the local and translocal social spheres. The group’s production and consumption of hip-hop music during migration and resettlement represents an important vehicle of hope and resilience in their lives. The hopefulness and resilience-related potential of hip-hop music are found not only in the lyrics but also in personal stories of resilience and upward mobility experienced by recognised North American rap and hip-hop performers. A growing awareness and recognition of All 4 One’s musical output also represents an important source of accumulated social capital for the group among their local and international, predominantly Sudanese, fan base. For Andrew, the “extradomestic implications” or social consequences of the home recording studio are associated with the release of their first, self-produced album and the group’s efforts to break into the mainstream hip-hop market.15

The idea of an album “release” is particularly pertinent in the case of All 4 One as it connotes a working through and letting go of traumatic memories as well as a breaching of the metaphorical boundaries between often-conflated private (underground) and public (mainstream) precincts. Solomon (2005) explored the re-definition of hip-hop authenticity in relation to an underground group’s release of a mainstream album in Istanbul, Turkey. According to him, “Groups known in the underground community who have an album released by a commercial record company are spoken of as having ‘come to the surface’ (veyiüzüne çıkmak)” (2005,

15 To preserve the confidentiality of the group members, the title of the album is withheld.
Within this community, coming to the surface is seen as something positive, a reflection of hard work and desire. Contrast this with the English-language concept of “selling out”, connoting abandonment of one’s musical integrity and underground status.

Clay (2003) noted that the ongoing definition of and identification with “authentic” and “sellout” is used within black cultures, and by tentative extension, hip-hop cultures, to “construct a cohesive identity, which in turn, defines the community” (p. 1348). However, by focusing too closely on who is authentic and who is a sellout, we lose sight of what Solomon (2002) described as the “embeddedness of the debate in local practices of place-making-practices that make these ideas meaningful for people who use them to emplace themselves in an imagined underground geography” (p. 18). Accordingly, All 4 One have re-appropriated and emplaced ideas of “authenticity” and “selling out” by adopting the most useful aspects of each concept. Like Solomon’s participants, the members of All 4 One have no reservations about a contradictory ambition to break into the “pop-lite”, mainstream market and their self-identification as underground artists. By positioning themselves as underground artists (with mainstream ambitions), the members of All 4 One can transition between the two symbolic geographies, as the situation requires. The practice of self-identification and investing their affective energies within and between these music categories highlights a distributed feature of resilience explored in Chapter 5, namely, the resourceful strategy of distributing one’s sense of allegiance in and across several spheres of belonging and sites of cultural membership.

An inherent malleability within the hip-hop cultural form provides practitioners with a certain amount of artistic licence to generate a multitude of original and hybridised manifestations. Commenting on the shifting and pliable nature of hip-hop, Irene, an IEC counsellor noted:

Hip-hop, hip-hop in itself is an evolving musical form. It’s like folk music and so, I image that our Sudanese people are going to create a distinctive Afro-Sudanese-Australian genre, and it’s going to be really exciting, you wait and see.
In terms of influences and styling, *All 4 One*s musical production fuses mainstream hip-hop samples (e.g. 50cent, G-Unit, NAS, and Akon), traditional Sudanese instrumentals, East African rhythms, and RnB harmonies. For the most part, these divergent compositional elements are combined effectively to create a hip-hop/world music, multidirectional crosshatching. Andrew described the group’s musical style:

You know on the mixtape...there is some sort of Sudanese style but it also has some sort of rap about like, most of all lyrically, based on our life story and where we came from and all of that. So that’s what the mixtape, all of that, there’s a little bit of the style RnB, a bit of rap put on it together like that.

At the harmonic level, there is at times a forced and haphazard quality to *All 4 One*s mixing of musical influences. Although hip-hop is a medium that allows seemingly endless manifestations, the linguistic structure and distinctly African intonations of the group’s native Dinka language do not always harmonically fit within hip-hop’s adaptable compositional framework. An at times heavy-handed juxtaposition of stereotypical “mainstream” rap sampling with “traditional” Sudanese influences may be attributable to *All 4 One*s limited exposure to hip-hop’s internal diversity in Sudan and during migration, the ongoing negotiation of local and global identity markers, and/or an acute search for cultural belonging. It is interesting to note that these compositional tensions were not recognised by the group.

**The cultural candy shop**

As a consequence of the first and second civil wars in Sudan, the associated effects of displacement and dispossession, and general lack of telecommunications and media infrastructure in Sudan’s southern states, many young Sudanese migrants have had a limited range of role models and templates from which to fashion their identities. As Jeremy, an MRC Sudanese caseworker, explained,
Say in Sudan, especially in southern Sudan, we don’t have a celebrity culture, you know, the only celebrities we know, they only role models are these mad dictators or militant warlords.

Growing up in a country where violence pervades daily life – where families and communities are ruptured by army recruitment and regular government-sponsored attacks – traditional role models have, in many cases, been erased. Given the erosion of traditional identity sources and sites, it is no wonder that young Sudanese men and women have had to look elsewhere for viable identity models and spheres for belonging.

The process of selectively appropriating key musical and identity features from the underground and mainstream hip-hop traditions is reminiscent of Hartley’s (1999) term, “DIY citizenship” (p. 177). Borrowing from the home improvement usage of DIY, Hartley described the Do-It-Yourself Citizen as someone who constructs “an identity from the available choices, patterns and opportunities on offer in the semiosphere and the mediasphere” (p. 178). Hartley made the point that DIY citizenship is a self-determined choice that people make for themselves. Much like the self-creation of the DIY citizen, the group members of All 4 One have creatively appropriated a variety of commercial and underground identity templates to customise and manage their individual hip-hop personas and sub-cultural membership. It is important to note, however, that the ability of refugees to construct an identity is constrained by a number of factors, not least of which are the ongoing effects of civil war and displacement, the experience of trauma or torture and the breakdown of traditional support networks. Nevertheless, the notion of DIY citizenship aligns with the sociocultural aspects of resilience due to the fact that resilience, like DIY citizenship, is not some predetermined or fixed state. Rather, it is an accumulated and accumulating process appropriated from experiences of adversity and hardship in productive, self-determined and hopeful ways.

By engaging in the production and performance aspects of hip-hop, All 4 One are adding to their accumulated set of technical and cultural skills, knowledge and proficiencies. As Mitchell (2001) argued, “Hip-hop and rap cannot be viewed simply as an expression of African-American culture; it has become a vehicle for global
youth affiliations and a tool for reworking local identity all over the world” (pp. 1-2). As a tool for the construction of identity, hip-hop provides a cultural resource for young Sudanese to define themselves in the context of resettlement and developing a sense of belonging within Australia.

As a result of protracted periods of time in refugee and displacement camps, as well as neighbouring countries of asylum, young Sudanese men and women have pieced together an eclectic appropriation of multi-local identity markers. As Christine, an Intensive English Centre staff member commented,

A lot of them don’t know the Sudanese culture and their lives were spent either in a camp or in Egypt of somewhere else. So they’re not in tune with the Sudanese identity. They’ve picked up things along the way, so when they come to Australia, they’re in search of fitting in somewhere…finding an identity.

Her idea of being “out of tune” with a traditionally defined and practised identity score is a poignant and contextually relevant description in the lives of All 4 One. While being out of tune with traditional identity markers may lead to the dying out of “old” tried and tested cultural practices, the notion of being out of tune also connotes an opportunity for young people to explore non-traditional identity trajectories, offering Sudanese young people a newfound manoeuvrability from which to construct a new life progression in lieu of displacement and dispossession. The necessary work of surveying, collecting and incorporating identity choices, patterns and opportunities from a variety of cultural sites is evidence of the broader capacity of resourcefulness as well as of Willis’ “symbolic creativity”. While the production and reproduction of the bedroom studio represents an outward, material manifestation of symbolic creativity, the group members’ creative construction and renovation of their inner worlds, so to speak, reaffirm their powers of self through the ongoing process of necessary identity work. Along similar lines to the accumulative, open-ended nature of resilience, identity is always “under construction”. In parallel with the many sources of resilience, identities are selectively appropriated from a variety of available resources, distributed within and across a variety of social and cultural fields.
On the one hand, the group members reproduce practices that are synonymous with underground values of inventiveness and resourcefulness. These practices include the innovative creation of the wardrobe studio, the makeshift practice of writing lyrics on used meat pie wrappers when at work, and a more general “hustle” to promote themselves at state and interstate multicultural festivals. Among the three group members interviewed, Andrew’s observance of underground principles and practices was the most obvious. In reference to the wardrobe studio’s production quality, Andrew had realistic expectations for the production aesthetics and usability of the home-recorded output, commenting, “The quality [of the recordings] is good enough to get the message out there”. At the time of our interview, Andrew was more concerned with the ability of the DIY home studio to get his music “out there”, in some form, than with high quality recordings. On the other hand, Deon and William are quite adamant about their MTV (Music Television) pipedreams and simultaneous desire to “get paid”. For example, William pronounced, “Some of us doin’ it for the gggooolllddd…!”. As Deon exclaimed:

The money part is the key, trust me. All of this stuff we’ve been talking about, the money part is the key. If we got money now we can do video clips, we can do shows, you know? We do a book. We can go anywhere.

From these quotes it appears that Deon and William have been swept up in the promise of quick success currently saturating the popular cultural production of mainstream hip-hop. If taken at face value, the group members are undermining their “undergroundness” by aspiring to the glittering attractions of the material-driven marketplace. On closer inspection, however, the hedging of identity trajectories in both the mainstream and underground camps can be explained as a distributive feature of resourcefulness and, by extension, the concept of resilience. By distributing their creative energies across the heterogeneous hip-hop traditions, the group members are, to varying extents, attempting to improve their chances at musical recognition and material success.\(^{16}\) The multi-locality of identity investments

\(^{16}\) It is interesting to note that more realistic vocational pathways like construction work and university courses rebalance the groups’ less realistic trajectory to hip-hip stardom. It should also be noted that the issue of selling out and “keepin’ it real” is a consistent theme within the music industry more
within and across a number of cultural geographies has parallels with the broader formation and distribution of resilience in relation to past, present and future influences as well as within and across local, translocal, national, and transnational social scales. Furthermore, Deon’s comments above demonstrate a necessarily self-interested dimension of survival, coping and overall resilience. While there is a sense in which resilience extends out and is supported within social networks, there is also a distinctly personal quality to resilience related to basic survival and daily subsistence.

**Urban resilience**

Far from inciting aggressive, antisocial behaviours, participation in the hip-hop cultural form and its related activities provides young Sudanese practitioners and audiences with a vehicle for creative expression, emotional release and hope. Although mainstream North American rappers like 50cent, G-Unit, Ice-Cube, Two-Pac Shakur and Jay-Z are routinely vilified for their explicit lyrics, these performers also act as examples of urban resilience for young Sudanese migrants en route to and within Australia. Recounting his experiences of hunger, affective distress and primary lack of support in Sudan and Egypt, Jeremy, a Sudanese MRC worker, reflected on the therapeutic qualities of hip-hop (and music generally) prior to his arrival in Australia.

> The only thing I listen to Bob Marley or Tupac Shakur. When we in pain, when we were hungry, when we listen to those songs, we really calm down because there was no one to give us food, no one either to tie the shoelace.

For young migrants whose first language is other than English and who may be suffering from traumatic, psychological or affective blockages, the adaptability and malleability of the hip-hop form provide the opportunity to express the seemingly inexpressible. For Andrew, the practice of lyric writing, recording and performance has offered him a tool for affective release, “My wisdom is…I don’t like it, I don’t generally, and in hip-hop in particular. It could be argued that the authenticity debate is related to the resilience of all bands.
keep it with me. I say it. I spit it out”. Equating his accumulated affective build-up with a petrol tank ready to explode, Andrew employed an interesting metaphor to articulate the dangers and benefits of releasing the emotional build-up of uncomfortable and distressing feelings,

But if you open it up, petrol, if you open it, it will like gone. But if you lock it, it will stay there, otherwise the guilting [guilt] maybe explode and go big, because it want to come out because it’s locked in. But if you open it up, it will release, come out. You know when you release something, when you share, it will set you free.

As Andrew explained, hip-hop provides him with the key for releasing feelings of guilt, frustration and anger associated with displacement and migration. For him, the release and mobilisation of this affective build-up through the practice of hip-hop “will set you free”. As participant responses in Chapter 3 suggested, within Sudanese culture, public disclosure of psychological issues is uncommon, with mental health issues dealt with through more private communal channels. From Andrew’s comments we might conclude that the fracturing of these traditional modes of counselling combined with the multifarious challenges of resettlement position hip-hop as a useful resource for expressing and managing the build-up of these feelings.

In contrast, Avon believes that the promise of material and financial gain is hip-hop’s real contribution to personal freedom, wellbeing and success. According to Avon, the North American hip-hop crew, G-Unit, have become exemplars of urban resilience and more specifically, of what can be achieved from impoverished beginnings. Growing up in Queens, New York, the founding members of G-Unit, 50cent, Lloyd Banks and Tony Yayo, have climbed the U.S. hip-hop ladder to become an internationally renowned rap act. In 2003, the G-Unit crew established the G-Unity Foundation Inc, which supports non-profit organisations working with low-income and under-resourced communities. It should be noted, however, that Avon’s identification with the group centres on G-Unit’s rise out of the ghetto and subsequent material success rather than their charitable efforts.
As for me, I look to G-Unit, you know. G-Unit is the best example, you know, because they started as normal young people, try to hustle for life, and then, now, look at them. They have the greatest shirt, they have great shoes, they have music, you know.

Within the underground hip-hop tradition, the recognition of authenticity rests heavily on the ability to make it out of challenging, usually impoverished, places of origin. As a barometer for making it “in the right way”, one must first experience a certain level of material deprivation, impoverishment and/or artistic non-recognition. As Deon explained, “With underground, it’s all underestimated”. Deon’s belief that to be underground is to be underestimated has become a self-fulfilling prophecy, colouring his perceptions of the Australian music industry and what is achievable in the context of resettlement more generally. He stated, “Underground hip-hop…it’s been around for a while. It’s been out here for ages. The whole genre doesn’t work here. Well, hip-hop doesn’t work here [in Australia]”. Similarly, Andrew suggested, “Australian hip-hop, at the same time, is no going anywhere”. With Australian hip-hop acts “Bliss n Eso”, “Hilltop Hoods”, “The Herd”, and “Resin Dogs” achieving an unprecedented level of industry success, perhaps the participants’ perceptions of the Australian hip-hop industry as going nowhere have more to do with the transfer of habituated responses originating in pre-arrival conditions of deprivation, dispossession and voicelessness, and not the actual state of the Australian hip-hop scene.

While there is little doubt that these young Sudanese men have gone through very real experiences of deprivation during their migration journeys, their statements seem to be learned responses to prior experiences of non-recognition, and the transfer of this way of seeing and being-in-the-world onto the Australian hip-hop music industry. Interestingly, however, Andrew’s firmly held belief that, “you have a stop sign on you. There’s nowhere you can go”, is counterbalanced by a single-minded ambition to “progress” in Australia. As Andrew noted, “So what I’m trying to do now is go forward, promote me or get a record deal to sign me up and do some more like that, so you can progress ahead”. As hope is a matter of “been”, “being” and “becoming”, in order to progress and become the person you want to be, sometimes it is important to return to the past and reflect on how you have been.
A visit home

According to Pink (2004), material production and engagements within the domestic world have “extradomestic implications”. The extradomestic implications of the wardrobe studio and the group’s musical production are characterised by their multi-scaled and “stretchy” qualities in and across a number of social fields. The notion of extradomestic implications is associated with Blunt and Dowling’s understanding of home as a “spatial imaginary”, which involves “a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales and connects places”. This links with the fluid concept of home developed in the previous chapter and with young people’s ambivalent feelings to Australia and Sudan. Following Goffman (1959) and Giddens (1991), the bedroom studio might also be conceived of as a private, “backstage” realm where the group’s sense of ontological security is restored and musical talents refined, thus facilitating their “front stage” public performances.

In April 2010, Andrew embarked on a 7-week pilgrimage which took him to Nairobi, Kenya, and Juba, South Sudan. The aim of the trip was to introduce his music, via live performances at local city halls, community centres and radio stations, to audiences in Nairobi and Southern Sudan. The return visit was his first since leaving Sudan in the 1990s. After a performance in Nairobi, Andrew travelled across the Kenyan border to Juba, the regional capital of Southern Sudan, and then on to his village in Marial-Baai, in the province of Northern Bahr-El-Ghazal. In a personal communication, Andrew informed me that he was fortunate to meet an army general who provided him with lorry transportation to Northern Bahr-El-Ghazal, thus circumventing his original plan to walk for three days through the bush to Marial-Baai. Although discussed in relation to practices of spatial and material resourcefulness in his Western Sydney apartment, Andrew’s ability to arrange a lift with an outgoing army convoy highlights a more general capacity of resourcefulness and ingenuity enacted during his return visit.

While in Juba, Andrew filmed a music video with a local television producer, which he stated, “drive the country crazy right now, am like big superstar”. The video clip is set against a green screen and interweaves an assortment of news footage from the
second Sudanese civil conflict, training drills featuring the SPLA, press conferences with Dr John Garang, and the South Sudan flag as a backdrop. The video begins with the overpowering sound of helicopter rotors and machine gun fire. Andrew is featured with a wide-eyed, panicked expression, fearfully ducking these invisible sonic threats. The visual and auditory representation of the second civil conflict then transitions to archive footage of the peace talks prior to the signing of the CPA in 2005. During the 7-minute track, Andrew repeatedly affirms the New Sudan Movement and shouts the name of the mythic, Southern Sudanese political figure, Dr John Garang.

The strategic use of key Southern Sudanese political personalities, SPLA recruits and the flag of the now autonomous Southern Sudan effectively plays on southern sympathies organised around the division of Sudan into two separate countries; what was, at the time, widespread anticipation of an independence referendum in January 2011. According to Andrew, the track was played throughout Sudan’s south on the United Nations radio station, Miraya fm, to an audience of 4.5 million. An Al Jazeera (2008) special report estimated that 80 percent of Southern Sudan’s 12 million people listen to Miraya fm at least once a week. Significantly, the sound of the distinctly Sudanese, East African track marks a tangential shift away from Andrew’s previous underground hip-hop sound. The lyrics on the track are performed in the traditional Dinka dialect, interspersed with English-language phrases such as “New Sudan”, “Dr John Garang”, and “May 16” (also known as the date of the 1983 SPLA/M uprising against the Khartoum regime).

While in Sudan, Andrew experienced a level of recognition and temporary celebrity largely absent from his experience in Western Sydney. To date, Andrew’s efforts to achieve musical recognition in Australia have necessitated numerous unpaid live performances and relied on the goodwill of individual service providers, local studio producers and other community stakeholders. To secure this support, the group members of All 4 One have strategically employed, managed and disclosed their refugee narratives as a method of gaining sympathetic assistance. For Andrew especially, the practice of managing capital is evident in the way he selectively portions out the amount and detail of his pre-arrival migration story. The strategic management of refugee or what might be termed “survivor” capital among the young
Sudanese hip-hop performers can also be seen in their promotional poster self-representations.

As Baldassar (2001) noted, “Migrants who are permanently settled abroad and who have thus failed to fulfill their obligation to return, need to prove that their migration was successful” (p. 29). Although she was referring to Italian migrants whose reason for leaving Italy was predominantly economic advancement, a common thread runs through the Italian and Sudanese cases. For both sets of migrant groups, the “proof” of their migration success is assessed “in economic terms” (p. 209). Prior to his arrival in Nairobi, Andrew designed a promotional flyer to be disseminated in and around key performance sites. On the poster, Andrew is interposed in front of an electric blue Sydney cityscape, with his body magnified to almost the size of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. He is dressed in fashionable hip-hop apparel and holds a weighty piece of silver jewellery away from his body. Insertion of the seemingly expensive jewellery and disproportionately large self-image symbolises to his prospective African audience that he has “made it big” in his country of asylum, Australia. The poster’s promotional blurb reads, “Sudanese Australian has become the face of SMH (The Sydney Morning Herald) and ABC radio through his positive lyrics is now coming to Kenya”. In 2010, Andrew featured in a follow-up piece on the progress of the Sudanese community in the aftermath of political and media-inspired moral panic between 2003-05, and was also interviewed for a local ABC radio segment “Neighbourhood Stories”. While the exaggeration of Andrew’s status as the “face of SMH” demonstrates a certain manufacturing of celebrity and success, his exaggerated body size relative to the Harbour Bridge and corresponding promotional message within the poster represents a less cynical intention; namely, a hopeful, future-oriented construction of self and a representation of his ability to “grow” and “make it” in Australia.

Interestingly, among other Sudanese Australian hip-hop artists, there is a similar overrepresentation of status and success, as well as a strategic use of their “refugee” label. In the promotional poster for Melbourne-based Mijok Lang (a.k.a. Hot Dogg), the Sydney cityscape and designer hip-hop clothing are employed as material signifiers of having “made it” since leaving Sudan (see Figure 4). The creators of the poster utilise Mijok’s migration history as a member of the “Lost Boys” to convey
his authentic hip-hop status. In the process, they endow him with a certain “hardcore” survivor credibility.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{poster.png}
\caption{Poster promoting Sudanese Australian rapper, Hot Dogg\textsuperscript{18}}
\end{figure}

In July 2010, Andrew returned to his village in Marial-Baai, Southern Sudan. Andrew hoped to surprise his mother, father and relatives on his return. Accordingly, he did not notify them of his impending arrival. As Andrew recounted, he casually walked into the village and to his parents’ home, but was surprised to find that only his mother recognised him. His experience of returning to Marial-Baai without widespread recognition and community celebration is reminiscent of Warner’s (1994) claim that “refugees involved in voluntary repatriation are not returning

\textsuperscript{17} The “Lost Boys” are a cohort of young Sudanese men who represented the first wave of southern Sudanese “youth” migration to and resettlement in the United States, Canada and Australia.

\textsuperscript{18} Mijok Lang is a widely known Sudanese hip-hop artist in Australia and was not a participant in this study.
home. They are, in fact, returning to their country of origin, but no more” (p. 170). Similarly, Barton (1986) suggested that on return refugees may “find themselves isolated once more – almost like foreigners – in a world which is familiar but where they practically know no one anymore” (p. 20). For Andrew, it was his family and relatives who did not recognise him. Although Andrew did not talk about how his family’s non-responsiveness made him feel, it would in all likelihood have been a painful emotional experience.

Apart from the positive emotional dimensions of maintaining transnational familial ties, cultural obligations between family and friends also establish a reciprocal “moral community”:

The migration process must be located within this moral community – an ethnoscape played out on a transnational social field...The migrants are obligated to return to honour their ties to family and community. The townspeople and relatives who did not migrate are obliged to welcome the return of their emigrant relatives and to keep a place for them. (Baldassar, 2001, p. 323)

The honouring of this reciprocal obligation to welcome the returnee was challenged by the temporal and spatial gaps that existed between Andrew’s departure from Sudan as a young boy, the distant location of Australia relative to Sudan, and the geographic and technological isolation of his provincial village in Marial-Baai. Correspondingly, Andrew’s experience of displacement and dislocation from his childhood village is an opposite, but not oppositional, experience to that of his family and community in Marial-Baai. His arrival as a visitor also call into question the existence of a quintessential “Marial-Baai” ethnic or village identity, organised around an unbroken, parochial connection to place (Baldassar, 2001). According to Baldassar, although the individual’s migration may be necessary, it is likely to cause a “fractious family history, which underlies the problematic reciprocal relations that exist between the people who have stayed in town and their kin who have settled abroad” (p. 324). While the opportunities of resettlement contain certain domestic benefits and implications for transmigrants, they also carry certain extradomestic obligations to reciprocate. Andrew’s return visit to Sudan highlights the ongoing and
multi-directional nature of resilience and migration trajectories. Furthermore, it demonstrates the transpersonal and trans-situational nature of resilience, negotiated within and across a plurality of social and spatial fields.

Conclusion

From a modest corner of a wardrobe in Sydney’s west, the hip-hop group All 4 One are attempting to navigate and, in their own way, to reconcile issues that are far bigger than their diminutive bedroom space signifies. When Andrew, William, Deon and Avon looked at the conventional wardrobe space, they saw more than a place to hang their clothes. As de Certeau (1988) stated, “space is a practiced place” (p. 117). Accordingly, the seemingly banal wardrobe space has been transformed into studio space by the practice of recording and through the application of their musical and technical capabilities. In this way, it has focused the group’s creative energies and represents a novel way of mitigating the potentially harmful effects of idle time and lack of mid- to long-term resettlement services and opportunities. Through the functions of “necessary work”, the wardrobe space represents a symbolic locus of the group’s shared commitment to making opportunities for themselves in the context of resettlement and acts as a material headquarters from which to disseminate a positive message to Sudanese and other migrant youth. In the case of All 4 One, the ongoing status of the studio preserves and extends the participants’ sense of object and situational permanency. It also offers the young Sudanese men a certain level of control over their physical environment as well as a material, life-supporting tool which can facilitate the ongoing formation of resilience.

Contextualised practices of spatial and material resourcefulness by refugees are often forged in unimaginably difficult circumstances, with these acts of everyday inventiveness providing creative examples of the various ways individuals negotiate and re-inhabit existing spaces. Using the bedroom-recording studio as a starting point, I explored the social and extradomestic implications related to its construction across several social scales. An investigation of the extra-domestic implications of the studio and Andrew’s return visit to Sudan worked to emphasise the social dimensions of resilience, in particular, the way in which individual resources of
resilience can be extended into our social worlds and be shaped by and accumulated through interactions with others. The example Andrew’s return visit and his unmet expectations demonstrated an important point about resilience, namely, that resilience is not an enclosed individual phenomenon, but rather is promoted or constrained by positive and negative experiences with family, friends and our social worlds.
Conclusion

The concepts that researchers use are often treated as though they are universal categories when in fact they, like all ideas, emerge from culturally specific contexts. This is as true of “resilience” as of any term, and it becomes a particular challenge when the participants in our research come from backgrounds quite different from our own. When I asked young Sudanese people about their understanding of resilience, I was often met with confused looks or requests for clarification. On initial reflection, the Sudanese interviewees’ unfamiliarity with the term seemed attributable to their developing English proficiency and the complexity of the term generally. However, given the pervasive experiences of adversity in Sudan, en route to Australia and within Australia, it may be that developing capacities for coping, recovery and growth are so “normal” that they do not need a bounded concept to name such a taken-for-granted aspect of their lives. For a number who had a working understanding of the concept, through their encounters with community workers, psychologists or IEC staff, they could elaborate it in sophisticated ways. At the same time, there was a second-hand and wonderfully staccato quality to their reflections.

In contrast to the young people’s enthusiastic yet faltering cadence, other community stakeholders were all too aware of the buzzword and eager to demonstrate their rhetorical mastery of the concept. In these instances, resilience was often defined as an individual capacity to “bounce back” from adversity and “overcome” trauma in its many forms. When it was aired for contemplation by Sudanese interviewees, it was mostly spoken of as a distributed community resource, accumulated “in community”. It was not a feature of especially “resilient” individuals, it simply was. In contrast to early discourse, it became increasingly clear that resilience was not a psychological construct heading towards some state of invulnerability to adversity. Rather, resilience is an everyday phenomenon that is accumulated and accumulative, but also reversible. As if responding to its common and unspoken quality, Sudanese participants were signalling its situated and transpersonal dimensions. As one participant explained, “resilience is a journey”, and like most journeys it rarely follows an unbroken line towards some predetermined destination or endpoint.
Aims and objectives

The primary aim of this thesis was to rebalance the individual and sociocultural dimensions of resilience formation among these young people, highlighting the unique ways in which resilience is accumulated, preserved and transferable within and across local, translocal, national and transnational social fields. In order to achieve this aim, I expanded upon the early psychological framing of resilience as an innate trait or set of behaviours. In doing so, I adopted a critical interdisciplinary perspective, drawing on relevant debates and concepts from within cultural studies, sociology, cultural anthropology and philosophy. An interdisciplinary perspective was employed to critique and develop ideas concerning the cumulative nature of resilience, universalising classifications of trauma and Western interventionist strategies, the affective basis of social belonging and its importance to resettlement and transnational participation. In terms of hope and hoping practices, I sought to rebalance the present and future dimensions of hope, which preserves the hoping subject in the present through the feeling of hopefulness while enabling them to imagine and aspire to a better future to come.

Resilience exists, of course, to varying degrees in all peoples and communities, but is an especially critical issue for those of refugee backgrounds. At the same time, to suggest that resilience is a special quality of Sudanese people would be to fall back to the reductionist tendencies of early psychological research, but there is also something specific to the ways these processes play out in specific circumstances. An aim of the thesis was to demonstrate the unique ways Sudanese young people accumulate and utilise these capacities in pre-arrival and post-arrival in Australia. In expanding upon the standard psychological definition of resilience as ‘positive adaptation despite adversity’, I defined resilience as a broad meta-capacity, which includes a complex array of ‘sub-components’ including positive affects such as hope, belonging, comfort and care as well as counter-intuitive ‘negative’ affects, capacities and experiences such as resistance, shame and guilt.
An important objective of the thesis was to demonstrate, with the aid of empirical examples, the multi-directional, multi-locational and multi-sourced nature of potential resources of resilience. The idea of multi-directionality is tied to an idea of resilience as accumulative but also reversible and changing in the sense that it is limited, constrained and de-accumulated by particular kinds of adversity. As exemplified by the Sudanese participants, the experience of these adversities can also be reframed and utilised as productive resources in the promotion of understanding, social justice and shared solidarity. On the point of multi-locationality, an aim of the thesis was to highlight the multiple locations where resources and capacities of resilience are drawn from, defined and shaped. These included countries of origin, temporary countries of migration and countries of resettlement like Australia, and involve both positive and negative encounters and experiences with the respective populations and spatial environments. Closely tied to the multi-locationality of resilience is the multi-sourced aspect of its formation. In making the point that resilience is both an individual and communal phenomenon, young people displayed an observed capacity to utilise available past, present and future temporal sources in their construction of who they were, who they are, and who they would like to become.

Summary of the thesis

Empirical analysis of young Sudanese people’s situated practices led to a reconceptualisation of resilience as an accumulated and accumulating set of individual and communal capacities for survival, coping, recovery and growth in relation to trauma and other adversities. In the lives of refugees and other displaced populations, resilience is influenced by a complex array of factors encountered during migration and in countries of resettlement. Nevertheless, these challenges can also be thought of as opportunities, in particular, the individual and communal capacity to transform and draw upon “negative” or “unproductive” experiences as “positive” or “productive” assets and resources. While acknowledging the useful contribution of psychological discourse on resilience, this thesis has critiqued the view of resilience as an enclosed individual trait or set of behaviours, inherent within
“resilient” individuals (Garmezy, 1991; Rutter, 1999; Werner, 1993). Following on from this critique of early resilience research, the generalising tendencies of Western models of trauma were problematised in making the point that pain and suffering are not uniformly experienced among individuals or communities. The various manifestations of trauma among Sudanese participants and their unique ways of dealing with these experiences demonstrated this. The problematisation and unpacking of taken-for-granted concepts within resilience and trauma theory cleared the way for the development of key sociocultural concepts. The foundation for this “thicker” description of resilience is the theory and practice of accumulation. Building on existing sociocultural literature on accumulation, it was argued that as we accumulate embodied capacities for hope and positive affect, we accumulate capacities for self-preservation and increased powers of action.

The accumulation of positive affect and reinterpretation of negative affect as potentially productive resources are important building blocks in the broader formation of resilience. The circulation and build-up of positive affects such as happiness and belonging are implicated in processes of coping, integration, group solidarity, and the preservation of resilience. Although traditional mental hygiene models have tended to pathologise pain and suffering as obstacles to individual happiness and successful therapeutic outcomes, “negative” affective experiences such as shame, guilt and suffering can in fact form the basis of shared solidarity practices and an expanded understanding of the interaction between self and other.

Drawing on Brennan’s (2004) elaboration of the “transmission of affect” and Ahmed’s (2007) foregrounding of the “sociality of emotion”, it is preferable to conceive of the accumulation of positive affect, which forms the emotional basis of a sociocultural approach to resilience, as involving a dialogical inside-out/outside-in relationship. Although there is a distinctly personal quality to the feelings associated with resilience, the accumulation of affects such as hope, comfort and belonging is facilitated by social and material engagements between individuals and their worlds, which sediment over time to become capacities of resilience.
An important affective experience related to the formation and preservation of resilience is hope. In the sections on hope and hoping practices, the feeling of hopefulness in the present is argued to be just as important as the realisation of deferred hoped-for outcomes. As with the evolving concept of resilience, early studies of hope viewed the phenomenon primarily as an individual mechanism and set of coping behaviours. Although the concepts of affect, hope and resilience contain a social dimension, it was also important in this thesis to avoid conceptualising these phenomena as autonomous or self-reproducing “things”, by highlighting the individual and the social dimensions of these concepts and situated interactions between them.

These concepts were exemplified in the theoretical and empirical chapters to explore the situated ways in which refugees and in particular young Sudanese participants enact a future-oriented capacity to hope in the midst of adverse or supportive migration contexts. Chapter 1 established the basis for this exploration by highlighting the dialogical relationship between the mobilisation of hope in the lived present and the future-oriented dimensions of hope (Hage, 2002b; Parse, 1999; Zournazi, 2002). In the lives of young people and their communities, resilience is mobilised around the hopeful promise of educational and vocational opportunities, with the actualisation of these hoped-for objects and outcomes influenced by pre-arrival and post-arrival factors. It was also argued that aspiring to the symbolic or imaginative dimensions of education, as an ideal, was an important source of resilience for young Sudanese and their communities.

It was argued that there is a material quality to educational skills and competencies, which allows for their transfer- and transportability. These findings displayed functional similarities to the theorised transmission and transferability of resilience and hope across geographic and symbolic spaces. It was interesting to note that some Sudanese participants conveyed an uncritical belief in the supervening and omnipotent powers of a Judeo-Christian God to liberate them from hardship. As one participant explained, it is through hardship that one comes to know God. The deferral of personal agency to God highlighted the interaction between hardship, struggle and knowledge of God and paralleled the intermingled affective forces of despair and hope, suffering and resilience.
The hope of receiving an education in Sudan, and in temporary countries of residence and resettlement, is a future-oriented means of coping with and enduring adverse circumstances as well as a way to a better future. It was argued that educational and vocational aspirations remain ideals unless they become operationalised through the acquisition of specific educational skills, knowledges and capabilities. Refugee and migrant populations arrive in countries of settlement with a pre-existing set of experiences and resources from which to build new knowledge. It was therefore argued that the accumulation of specific talents, skills and experiences of young Sudanese students could function as ‘objects’ of ontological security, providing the basis for new knowledge and capabilities.

The pastoral ‘versus’ academic debate is a provocative, highly controversial and largely unresolved set of issues concerning how to best educate newly arrived migrant and refugee students. While the emphasis on pastoral care and alternative pathways in IECs and among IEC teachers foregrounded the pragmatic dimensions of hope, namely, the promotion of specific skills and competencies; the kind of psychological support and the way it is explained to Sudanese students has the potential to undermine their pre-existing strategies and sources of hope, so important in their ability to cope and survive displacement, migration and resettlement. Emphasising the importance of academic skills training should not be seen as a devaluation of the critical role of pastoral care services, as some academics have pointed out. Undoubtedly, both have a role to play. Although the short-term pastoral care of young people who have experienced trauma and other adversities is a significant and ongoing concern for IEC staff, a delicate balance needs to be struck between the IEC as a service for counselling and rehabilitation and the official mandate of IECS, which is equip newly arrived young people with the necessary academic capacities for mainstream classes and beyond.

It is debatable whether or not a curriculum of resilience and hope can be directly taught to students, refugee or otherwise, as Seligman (2002) and the positive psychology movement have suggested. It seems more likely that resilience is built among students from a refugee or migrant background through the realising of
existing strategies, resources and capacities of resilience and scholarly habits for lifelong learning. With these observations in mind, an important consideration for practitioners working with newly arrived groups is the scaffolding of new learning on existing skills, knowledges and capabilities. The transmission of traditional community dynamics among Sudanese groups in Australia makes it all the more important that the education of Sudanese students involves their families and communities. As a number of IEC staff members explained, career guidance towards more “realistic” occupational pathways has been the source of major tension between IEC staff, Sudanese parents and community members. Although well-intentioned, low teacher expectations of their students’ capabilities to achieve and succeed may undermine and adversely affect young people’s resources and capacities for hope that formed the basis of their coping, endurance and overall resilience in their countries of origin and migration.

The education of students from a refugee background should extend beyond the provision of pastoral care to a more enduring transfer of academic skills. These proficiencies ultimately assist young people in realising their longer-term aspirations and affect their capacity to engage in transnational caregiving relations. Participant responses indicated differential desires to maintain transborder connections. Furthermore, participant responses demonstrated varying intensity, frequency and underlying motivations in relation to transnational involvement. The notion of “ambivalence” proved useful for analysing young people’s mixed feelings towards transnational contribution and expectations of return. Young people’s negotiation of these dissonant feelings was reframed as their attempts to develop a sense of belonging and connection to several localities. Although young people’s management of these conflicting feelings produced the affective experiences of shame and guilt, these “negative” affects were also indications of interest, investment and care. This understanding of the productive dimensions of negative affects highlighted a vital strategy of resilience, namely, the capacity to reinterpret and draw on adverse experiences as productive resources in the present. In so doing, these findings highlight the multi-sourced and locational sites of potential resources resilience. They also demonstrated the complex moral and emotional interaction in its ongoing formation.
It became clear that while traditional forms of co-present return practices were perceived to be on the decline, changing forms and use of communication technologies and social media platforms offered individuals the opportunity to experience the feeling of virtual co-presence. For some participants, however, the appropriation and phenomenological outcomes of ICT use exacerbated the perception of geographic and symbolic distance. While online communication technologies helped some participants feel more connected with friends and kin overseas, for others, the use of these technologies produced an undesirable effect, bringing into uncomfortable focus the geographic and symbolic distance between Sudan, Australia and other countries of migration.

The case study undertaken in Chapter 6 applied these ideas to an examination of a Sudanese hip-hop group’s creation of a bedroom recording studio in their Western Sydney apartment. As a result of accumulated capacities for spatial and material resourcefulness acquired during migration, these habituated practices have been reproduced, to some extent, in the context of resettlement. The learned abilities formed in refugee camps and temporary countries of residence were assisting the group to realise their musical ambitions and their desire to engage with Sudanese and other young migrant people in a positive way. As an ongoing project, the bedroom studio represents an important source of hope and resilience among the group members. Whereas the previous chapters focused on the importance of skills training inside educational contexts like IECs, the example of the wardrobe studio foregrounded the value of competencies developed outside schooling contexts.

The example of Andrew’s return journey to Africa demonstrated the open-ended nature of migration, and ran counter to the commonly held assumption that countries of settlement necessarily represent successful end-points in the lives of refugees and transmigrants. The decentralisation and diffusion of hip-hop production in local contexts has parallels with the decentralisation of resilience away from psychological interpretations of resilience as a special trait of particularly “resilient” individuals. The responses of the group highlighted internal variations in terms of hip-hop’s value and expected outcomes. For Deon and William, hip-hop was seen as a means of
material success and recognition. Andrew, on the other hand, perceived it more as a vehicle for the release of harmful or counterproductive emotions and a mouthpiece for social justice and change among Sudanese and other migrant young people. Analysis of Andrew’s return visit to Sudan worked to emphasise the social dimensions of resilience, highlighting the way in which individual resources of resilience can extended beyond oneself to interact in our social worlds. The example Andrew’s return visit and his unmet expectations when meeting his family after a protracted absence demonstrated an important point about resilience, namely, that it is not an enclosed individual phenomenon, but rather is a relational and socially interactive one; a capacity that is promoted or constrained by positive or negative experiences with friends and friends as well as our material and social environment.

The insights of the empirical study demonstrate that the accumulation of resilience and the realisation of hope are located in many different sources and localities. Ultimately, the realisation of hoped-for objects and outcomes manifests in resilience. In other words, hope remains a symbolic ideal unless it is supplemented by capacities for determination, creativity, pedagogic effort, and the challenging of limiting expectations, assumptions and stereotypes. Resilience includes the ability to transform and creatively draw upon experiences of adversity and hardship in creative and life-affirming ways. While there is a decidedly personal component to the accumulation of resilience, its formation is affected in significant ways by the existence of supportive social networks in number of domestic and international locales.

**Future Research**

The interview component of the thesis was undertaken at a time of momentous geopolitical change in Sudan. During the final stages of writing this thesis, South Sudan became Africa’s newest nation-state. The domestic and international ramifications of the independence referendum will be an important topic for further research in the years to come. In particular, these developments in the former Sudan will almost
certainly affect the frequency and type of young Sudanese people’s return practices and other forms of transnational political involvement. Although the CPA in 2005 resulted in an “official” end to the Second Sudanese Civil War, the black African population of the Nuba Mountains and Darfur region continues to be brutally targeted by government-sponsored militia groups. What can only be described as an exercise in ethnic cleansing has far-reaching consequences and will be of significant public and academic interest in the coming decades. Potential for academic research in this area is located not only in quantitative studies of displacement and migration patterns but also in the context-specific experiences of trauma and situated demonstrations of resilience among these groups. Furthermore, these insights may benefit the policy and practice of humanitarian discourse and the allocation of resettlement services in very specific ways.

It is important to remember that only a small percentage of all UNHCR applications are approved for resettlement in countries like Australia, Canada and the United States. For the countless majority who do not receive approval for resettlement, qualitative research that explores the ways they and their communities develop capacities and resources of resilience and hope in lieu of rejected or suspended application claims for resettlement will augment the current study’s investigation of resilience among resettled Sudanese refugees in Australia. While post-arrival services and initiatives are integral to achieving successful resettlement outcomes, this thesis has argued that resettlement is processual and in some respects, a continuation of migration. To better assist Sudanese young people’s educational, cultural and social transition into Australian society, additional research is needed that explores existing intervention initiatives in countries of origin and temporary countries of residence in order to inform settlement policy and practice in host countries like Australia. In particular, given the general lack of quantitative and qualitative studies focusing on refugees’ pre-arrival experiences, urgent academic attention is required in the areas of pre-arrival educational preparedness and psychological support provisions for these groups. In some respects, the uncertainty of daily existence and official status in African displacement and refugee camps has parallels with the current experience of asylum seekers in Australian and offshore mandatory detention centres. Given the increasing numbers of asylum seekers in
Australia, there is a greater need for research informing practice of the ways in which asylum seekers preserve hope and accumulate resilience in these contexts.

The majority of young Sudanese participants in this study were considered to be in the early stages of resettlement. The academic literature on the lived experiences of young Sudanese in Australia would therefore benefit from longitudinal studies tracking and analysing their progress beyond high school and university and in the job market. It is also important to consider whether young people’s career trajectories deviate from expected “traditional” career pathways and if these departures affect their capacities of resilience and ongoing transnational involvement. Although the strength of the current study has been its in-depth focus on the qualitative migration and resettlement experiences of a relatively small sample group of Sudanese young people and other community stakeholders, further research would profit from a broader sample, with greater emphasis on gender-based nuances as well as a comparative Australian state or national perspective on the issues facing Sudanese and other African young people.

Humankind is an infinitely complex and paradoxical species. At times, we display an impregnable robustness, at others, an uncertain fragility. As Brison (1999) wrote, the experience of trauma “undoes the self by breaking ongoing narrative, severing the connections among remembered past, lived present, and anticipated future” (p. 40). At the same time, he asserted that the study of trauma “provides support for a view of the self as fundamentally relational – vulnerable enough to be undone by violence and yet resilient enough to be reconstructed with the help of others” (p. 40). The propensity to recover or “bounce back” from adversity is a defining and common characteristic of all people. As resilience emerges out of adversity and is loosely proportional to the degree of adversity, the uniqueness of Sudanese young people’s accumulated capacities of resilience says as much about their exposure to trauma and other adversities as it does about their capacities to survive, endure and thrive in relation to them.
As we enter the 21st century, humankind will be faced with a whole new series of traumas, many of which are as yet unimagined. To meet these challenges we, as a global collective, will need to develop specific capacities and resources for coping, endurance, innovation, and hope, all of which are involved in the formation of resilience. Although the accumulation of resilience at an individual level is important, our continued existence, survival, and prosperity lie in the strength and collective will of many. As Wittgenstein (2009) wrote, the strength of a thread “resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres” (p. xcv). As demonstrated by the Sudanese participants, it is the ability to re-see the productive potential in, and collectively overcome, “obstacles”, “problems” and “limitations” that will largely determine our effectiveness in confronting and overcoming these issues into the future.
REFERENCES


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development in the Caribbean: The unexplored connection (pp. 157-177).


*Educational Theory, 56*(3), 305-324.


**APPENDIX A**

A-1: List of participant details
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<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Migration Route</th>
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<th>Participant Group</th>
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