“It’s like there’s a string between us”: Transnationalism and the (Re)Creation of Home among Southern Sudanese Canadians

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Anthropology
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Abstract

This dissertation is an exploration of the creative spaces often opened up by exile and forced migration, where Southern Sudanese negotiate and perform new forms of belonging and affiliation, while simultaneously (re)producing, ‘local’ practices in order to reaffirm and solidify existing relationships and identity categories. Through my examination of the creative spaces opened up by migration and exile, I also raise questions related to broader concerns in the field of forced migration and refugee studies regarding the need to problematize the often binary distinction between forced and voluntary migrants, which often places refugees in a category stripped of agency and choice. Based on 20 months of multi-sited field work in Calgary, Canada and Juba, South Sudan and exploring issues related community organization and shifting forms of affiliation, long distance nation building, transnational marriage and return migration, this dissertation demonstrates how settling-in and place-making involve both material and moral aspects of practice, and that refugees, regardless of the “forced” nature of their migration, are active agents in this process.
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List of Acronyms

CIC - Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CPA - Comprehensive Peace Agreement
ELT - Enhanced Language Training
GoSS - Government of South Sudan
GoS - Government of Sudan
IDP - Internally Displaced Person
IFH - Interim Federal Heath Program
ISAP - Immigrant Settlement Adaptation Program
IOM - International Organization of Migration
LINC - Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
NCP - National Congress Party
OAU - Organization of African Unity
RAP - Resettlement Assistance Program
SPLA - Sudan People’s Liberation Army
SPLA-Nasir Faction - A splinter group from the SPLA that broke away in 1991.
SPLM - Sudan People’s Liberation Movement
SPLM-DC - Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement - Democratic, apolitical party formed by Lam Akol in the summer of 2009.
UN - United Nations
UNHCR - United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNDP - United Nations Development Program
USES - United Sudanese Canadian Enhancement Society
1. Introduction

“Whatever happens there [Southern Sudan] is felt here the same day, or the next day. It is like there is a string between us and if we pull on it, they feel it, and if they pull on it, we feel it.”

(Arop\textsuperscript{1}, Dinka elder, Calgary Alberta)

It was a Sunday afternoon in the early months of my fieldwork when Arop made this comment to me. We were sitting in the Forest Lawn Tim Hortons, and despite the numerous “No loitering, 20 Minute Maximum Stay” signs prominently displayed throughout the coffee shop, the seating area was full of Southern Sudanese men dressed in their Sunday best, many of whom had been there for well over an hour. The small space was abuzz with animated conversation carried on in at least six languages that I could identify (English, Arabic, Dinka, Nuer, Bari, Zande). For men in particular, Tim Hortons coffee shops were an important gathering space in Calgary. Affordable and plentiful, they served as one of the few public spaces men could gather and talk year round. Women, on the other hand, tended to gather and socialize in their homes where it was easier to accommodate large crowds of children. Aside from providing a space to meet, as an iconic Canadian institution, Tim Hortons also played an interesting role in the integration narratives, or “I knew I was Canadian when” stories that many Southern Sudanese told me. Over the course of our conversations during my fieldwork several people made reference to the fact that they knew they had accepted life in Canada “when I ordered my first double-double.”

\textsuperscript{1} All names and identifying information have been changed to protect the privacy of participants and community members.
Due to their popularity, the Tim Hortons coffee shops frequented by Southern Sudanese became an important space in my fieldwork. They were one of the main locations where I was able to participate in a variety of discussions and debates with Southern Sudanese men. It was also a “safe” space where, as a female researcher, I could meet men for interviews in full view of others who were aware of my research, thus limiting the chance of damaging either my, or my informants’, reputations. But the safety afforded by the acceptable public nature of the space also meant that only very public conversations could be held there. I was soon able to tell whether someone wanted to discuss general issues with me, or was planning on veering into more political territory by where they suggested to meet - Tim Hortons was for public conversations, while more private individuals, or those wanting to discuss contentious issues, would suggest meetings at public venues less frequented by Southerners, such as the neighbourhood library, or a common area at the university.

A few years ago the scene playing out that Sunday afternoon in the Forest Lawn Tim Hortons may have caused many long-term residents of Calgary to do a double-take. The upsurge in immigration\(^2\) to Alberta (Figure 1) over the past ten years, however, has led to a visible increase in the city’s level of cultural diversity, particularly in the northeast and southeast sections of the city. While the Southern Sudanese population in the city is scattered across various

\[\text{______________}\]

\(^2\) Between 2000-2010 the population of Calgary increased from 860,759 to 1,071,515 (2011 Calgary Civic Census). The ethnic diversity of the city greatly increased over this time period as well, with 162,910 individuals identifying as visible minorities on the 2001 Federal Census, rising to 232,465 individuals choosing to identify as visible minorities on the 2006 census. The portion of the city’s population identifying as “black” also increased by over 7000 during that time period.
Figure 1: Map of Alberta showing its location in Canada, and the locations of Calgary, Edmonton, and Brooks.
neighbourhoods - those with more resources choosing to buy houses in the new communities in the south part of the city, some choosing to live in the NW quadrant near the University of Calgary, and many young men in particular choosing the downtown “Beltline” area - the vast majority lived in the area that many refer to as the “East of Deerfoot” area of the city (Figure 2). This area of the city attracts the majority of new immigrants, and while the Southern Sudanese presence there may not be as strong as others, given the ubiquitous Vietnamese, Chinese-Western or shawarma businesses that line the main roads in the area, a growing number of “Juba Markets,” or “Queen of the Nile Hair and Nails” were making their presence felt.

The most recent economic boom in the oil and gas industry, which dominates the economy in Alberta, began in the early 2000s and can be credited with bringing the large number of Southern Sudanese to the province. Estimates currently place the Southern Sudanese population in Calgary at anywhere between 10,000 and 15,000 individuals. While many were resettled directly to Calgary through official Citizenship and Immigration practices or private refugee sponsorship, a large portion of the Southern Sudanese population in the city arrived through “secondary migration.” This refers to a case when a refugee was placed in another community in Canada, but due to various reasons such as family connections and the relative ease of attaining jobs in the service, manual labour and meat packing sectors, decided to move to Alberta. Upon arrival in the province they tended to settle in Edmonton, Brooks, or Calgary (see Figure 1). The potential economic opportunities available in Alberta were so well known by Southern Sudanese resettling to Canada that one Canadian Embassy Official in Cairo recalled how during their resettlement interviews many Southern Sudanese asked to be sent to one of Canada’s two biggest and important cities - Toronto or Brooks. He laughingly went on to describe his confusion as he had
never heard of Brooks before, but upon Googling it realized it was a town in Alberta with a population of 20,000, and home to the largest meat packing plant in Canada, which in the early

Figure 2: Map of the City of Calgary showing the civic quadrant boundaries. Note the location of Deerfoot Trail, the north/south running roadway used by many to conceptually divide the city into east and west halves.
2000s was employing upwards of 1500 Southern Sudanese at a time. Many of the Southern Sudanese in Calgary arrived in Alberta intending to work in the meat packing plant in Brooks, but soon moved to Calgary in search of better educational and employment opportunities.

My interest in working with the Southern Sudanese population in Calgary came out of a previous research project I participated in while attending the American University in Cairo in 2003/4. That project explored the expectations and experiences of Sudanese refugees living in Cairo who had been accepted for resettlement to Canada, the United States or Australia. At the time the research was conducted the civil war in Sudan was still underway. While many refugees from Sudan whom I spoke with in Canada mentioned the desire to return to Sudan and sent remittances home, their ability to engage in transnational activities was severely limited by the ongoing conflict, communication constraints and their struggles to meet their immediate settlement needs in Canada. This earlier project also opened the door to my interest in the interplay between various levels of belonging and affiliation that Southern Sudanese were negotiating as they encountered a resettlement and integration system that recognized groups solely on the basis of their tie to an existing nation state.

It was with the idea of expanding on these two themes that I began my dissertation fieldwork with the Southern Sudanese population in living in Calgary in 2009. My first broad research question was related to the evolving nature of Southerners’ transnational relationships with, and connections to, what is now the country of South Sudan. My second research question, which

had been rather narrowly focused on the interplay between national and ethno-linguistic conceptions of belonging, soon evolved into an exploration of the multiple and intersecting ways through which Southerners express, perform and negotiate various relationships and forms of belonging, often across transnational spaces.

To this end, the dissertation is an exploration of the creative spaces often opened up by exile and forced migration (Malkki 1995a, Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001), where Southern Sudanese negotiate and perform new forms of belonging and affiliation, while simultaneously (re)producing, ‘local’ practices in order to reaffirm and solidify existing relationships and identity categories. The term local is used here to represent those particular acts, traditions and norms Southern Sudanese linked with their home villages, regions or even Southern Sudan as a whole. Drawing on Lambek’s (2011) discussion of the local in anthropology I approach the local as relative, “not fixed in space or time and… invoked and inhabited at many levels of inclusion” (Lambek 2011: 200).

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4 A brief overview of the distinction between space and place is useful when conceptualizing the local unbound from a specific location. Perhaps the simplest distinction is to define space as a location, while place is the occupying of that location (Agnew 2005). Space then, is most often conceptualized as a bounded container, or a measurable and generalizable location (Mercer et. al. 2010, Wheatley and Gillings 2000). Place on the other hand, is a locale invested with layers of meaning - the “local, the unique, the particular….the locations that matter to people because they return to them, build memories around them, write their histories and call them home” (Mercer et. Al 2010: 6). Therefore, as place is constituted through memories, feelings and actions, it does not have to remain bound by to a particular location, but can be re-imagined and re-created across space.
The remainder of the introduction sets out the methodological approach used, provides a brief overview of the Southern Sudanese historical context as well as United Nations and Canadian refugee policies and services, and gives a brief overview of the literature related to three key concepts: refugeeness, transnationalism and belonging. A summary of the chapters and the topics they cover is also provided.

1.1. Methodological Approach

My field research was conducted over a 20 month period between January 2009 and September 2011, with 13 months conducted in Calgary and 6 months in what was at the time the semi-autonomous region of South Sudan (Figure 3), the majority of which were spent in the capital city, Juba.

Along with participant observation and informal conversations conducted in numerous settings over the 20 months, I also conducted 30 sit down, semi-structured interviews with Southern Sudanese living in Calgary. Interviews were also conducted with service providers, educators and civil servants, and I attended meetings between Southern Sudanese and representatives of those institutions whenever possible. Due to time constraints, my fieldwork conducted in Juba was slightly more focused than in Calgary. I focused solely on Southern Sudanese Canadians who were living in Calgary as of the date of my fieldwork.

The portion of my fieldwork conducted in South Sudan was done after the ninth month of my Calgary research. I then returned to Calgary for 4 additional months of fieldwork.

All 30 interviews, as well as the 20 conducted in Juba, were recorded and transcribed. Meetings I attended were also recorded whenever possible. The large narrative sections presented in many of the chapters are from these recordings.
who had returned to South Sudan since the end of the war, mainly from the Calary area, many of whom I had known in Calgary before they repatriated back to South Sudan. I spent time following them on their daily activities (social visits, settling land claims, job hunting etc.) and also conducted 20 recorded interviews on their experiences of return.

Figure 3: Showing South Sudan (at the time of my fieldwork still a semi-autonomous part of Sudan) with major towns.

The earliest methodological difficulty I encountered was the diversity and complexity of the Southern Sudanese population in Calgary, which is by no means a unified community. Rather, it
consists of a number of groups based on regional, tribal, sub-tribal, and village affiliations. While Chapter 2 unpacks the notion of a Southern Sudanese community in further detail, it is important to note that while it would be wrong to suggest there is a cohesive, unified Southern Sudanese community in Calgary, many Southern Sudanese refer to themselves as such. In particular when they feel it is necessary to provide a unified front in order to gain access to services or promote a cause to the public. The variety of terms used throughout this dissertation to describe, or refer to, my informants also reflects the shifting and layered nature of belonging. The terms informants used to refer to themselves varied depending on the context and conversation - Southerner, Sudanese, Southern Sudanese, Dinka, Ruweng Dinka (or other tribal affiliation) etc. Therefore in my own description of events I tend to use the term which was provided to me at the time.

As I was interested in exploring how various levels of belonging are performed and negotiated, I decided to work with a variety of groups, such as the Nuer, Dinka or Zande community. This posed difficulties in terms of drawing out generalizations related to shifting practices related to life events such as marriage, childrearing and death. In an attempt to deal with the diversity of practices, I make every effort to specify which group I am referring to when discussing particular practices such as bridewealth. The decision to work across such boundaries also made gaining the trust of some groups and individuals more difficult due to the often contentious nature of inter-community politics. As this was one of my main concerns going in to my fieldwork, I spent several months of pre-fieldwork building relationships with various groups, and always attempted to maintain open and honest communication regarding which other groups I was meeting with. I also avoided becoming too deeply involved in any one community’s activities in terms of assisting with funding applications, or advocacy initiatives, limiting that level of
involvement to groups that were generally accepted as representing Southern Sudanese interests as a whole.

The idea of becoming involved in fundraising or advocacy initiatives raises issues surrounding reciprocity, power relations and position in ethnographic fieldwork. As Lambek (2007: 34), in his discussion of the changing nature of the field and power relations, states - in order to conduct good ethnographic research, ethnographers must adopt a “situated modesty” because “in their homes informants were the master” (original emphasis). Conducting fieldwork in my present home city of Calgary however, with a displaced population that had resettled to Canada with little to no knowledge of the receiving country, I was often placed in the position of both student and expert. While Southern Sudanese were the experts in the topics I was hoping to explore, as a long term Calgary resident, and someone who had worked in the immigration NGO sector, I was often considered an expert in all things “Canadian.” I found myself reciprocating Southerner’s willingness to open up their homes and communities to me by providing assistance to individuals and groups as they navigated bureaucratic systems to access services or funding, filling out forms, completing income tax forms, offering advice on schooling or extracurricular activities for children, providing tutoring help or editing essays etc. With some groups, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, my involvement went deeper and I worked closely with them in their attempts to independently access government funding and official state recognition.

Conducting multi-sited fieldwork, however, allowed me to contrast the experience of doing fieldwork at home, with that of researching away, where I was no longer in the expert’s position. The contrast was especially interesting in terms of my relationships with people whom I had known in Calgary, but who had since returned to live in Juba. Chapter 6 details Michael’s
account of return to Juba after over ten years living in Canada. In my description of his return, I refer to how changed he seemed when we first reconnected in Juba - more confident, even walking and talking to me differently. I originally attributed his new-found self-assurance and the change in how we interacted to his happiness at being “home.” I began to wonder however, if there was also a shift in how he and I perceived our relationship - in Calgary he had relied on me for assistance running the after-school program he managed (transportation, gathering resources, organizing paper work etc.) while in Juba I was now the one who needed guidance and it was Michael who was taking me around the city, helping me negotiate the complex bureaucracy, offering me advice and providing me with meals.

It is also important to be aware of the nuances entailed in conducting anthropological fieldwork in urban areas such as Calgary. As mentioned above, while there were concentrations of Southern Sudanese living in low income, immigrant neighbourhoods in the city’s north and south east neighbourhoods, I did not have a specific, bounded geographic site to focus on. Instead I adopted a methodological approach similar to that used by Passaro (1996) in her study of homelessness in New York City. While conducting her fieldwork, Passaro “chose sites that afforded a variety of perspectives along the participant/observer continuum”. She saw these sites as the “scaffolding” around which she organized other activities such as interviews. In a similar vein, my fieldwork was scaffolded around a variety of sites, such as a local afterschool program, language classes, churches and coffee shops, as well as “sites” not limited to specific physical spaces - meetings for various community groups, social events such as weddings, baby and wedding showers, parties, and political meetings. Access to men in the community was relatively easy to gain, as they were often present at community and political meetings, frequented coffee
shops, were often free to socialize in the evenings and on weekends and appeared to take great enjoyment in discussing their experiences, communities and the situation in Sudan. Women however, were slightly more difficult to access, and it took substantially more time to build relationships with them. They were often not as present at community meetings, being preoccupied at social events with cooking and childcare and, when not working outside of the home, they were very busy with household responsibilities. While time and language constraints made my relationships with women more difficult to foster, and interviews were often conducted while peeling vegetables in the kitchen in preparation for a community event or ironing clothes while dealing with children in the background, they resulted in some of the most rewarding and open relationships established during my fieldwork.

1.2. Historical and Current Context

As Arop’s comment at the beginning of the introduction demonstrates, the shifting political landscape in South Sudan has far reaching effects on the Southern population living in Calgary. In order to grasp some of the meaning behind the decisions Southerners make on a daily basis in Calgary it is therefore imperative to have an understanding of the current complex situation in South Sudan, past events which led to their forced migration, as well as the policies and services refugees encountered when they resettled to Canada. While the following section is by no means a complete account of complex history and current situation in South Sudan, it provides a brief overview in order to ground the discussion that follows in South Sudan’s recent context of conflict and forced migration. The second section provides a brief overview of the United Nation

7 While I speak a limited amount of Arabic, all interviews were conducted in English.
High Commission’s (UNHCR) resettlement determination process as Canadian refugee and resettlement policies and services.

1.2.1. Creating the Grass Curtain: Slavery, Colonialism and Independence

The complex history of Sudan’s two prolonged civil wars is often over-simplified by those who wish to distill the causes down to two factors – a history of oppression, exploitation and slave raiding by the predominantly Islamic or Arab north on the African south, and the artificial division that was imposed between the two regions by the Anglo-Egyptian government in the first half of the twentieth century (Johnson 2011). In a country as diverse as Sudan however, with a population of approximately 31 million, one third of whom now reside in independent South Sudan, and over 100 languages, the majority of which are spoken in the south, it is difficult to explain the country’s conflicts solely in terms of religion or race. A more holistic approach that takes into consideration numerous factors including the history of slave raiding, colonialism, differences in religion, race and ethnicity, as well as economic and struggles over resources provides a more nuanced picture of the complex history that led up to the wars and eventual independence of South Sudan in 2011.

Slavery and slave raiding have been reported in the area of what is now Sudan and South Sudan for centuries. However, the deep southern parts of the country remained relatively untouched by earlier states’ efforts to collect slaves, which were primarily limited to peripheral areas (Johnson 2011). It was not until the nineteenth century, with the foundation of a strong Islamic state in Khartoum, that the south was opened up to active slave trading. While southern groups had been for the most part able to prevent deeper incursions by the successive northern states, the Turko-
Egyptian invasions of Sudan changed the balance of power in the region. New forms of taxation and land ownership rules created a greater need for slave labour and income generated from the slave trade, while a more centralized government had increased power to push further south (Johnson 2011). Towards the peak of the slave trade in 1870, it increasingly became the norm for northern agricultural households to have domestic southern slaves. With the beginning of the Mahdist revolution in 1881, state power contracted and organized slave raids into the south were intermittent. While Mahdist forces consisted of large numbers of Southerners, many of them were slave riflemen, and northern attitudes of discrimination toward Southerners based on race remained stable (Johnson 2011). This normalization of the role of Southerners as slaves served to reinforce the negative perception of southern groups that contributed to their marginalized throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods (Jok 2001).

Once British forces, led by Kitchener, had intervened and overthrown the Mahdist state in 1898, they were left with the question of what to do with Sudan. They were unwilling to hand full control back to Egypt, and there was very little appetite to make the area a fully-fledged British colony. The solution was the establishment of the joint Anglo-Egyptian Condominium 1899, allowing for joint Egyptian and British sovereignty over Sudan (Holt and Daly 2000). The agreement recognized Egyptian rights; however, authority over civil and military powers rested with the Governor General who until the end of the condominium in 1955 would always be a British subject (Holt and Daly 2000).

Kitchener remained in Sudan as Governor General for the first few months, but was soon called to South Africa and was replaced by Wingate, who remained in the position under 1916. His first priority was to pacify local groups and erase resistance to condominium rule. Similar to the
difficulties slave raiders faced, this proved to be a difficult task in the south due to the inaccessibility of the region and the resistance of local tribes. The process continued well into the 1920s (Holt and Daly 2000).

In terms of religious policies, administrative approaches were markedly different between the north and the south. In the north, popular Islam was viewed with suspicion, Mahdism was suppressed and orthodox Islam encouraged. Christian missionary activities were opposed, much to the chagrin of missionary groups back in England. While the penal code was based on models developed in India, personal law was governed by Shari’a courts (Holt and Daly 2000).

Concerned by the danger posed by spread of Islam to the south, however, the administration tried to limit Muslim influence in the region. Contrary to policy in the north, Christian missionary groups were allowed spheres of influence throughout the south, the remnants of which are still visible today in some of the denominational splits present in South Sudan. The responsibility for education was given over to missionary groups, and the language of instruction was English, not Arabic. Even Arab dress was discouraged and administrators began recruiting troops for southern posts locally in order to cut down on the presence of northern troops (Holt and Daly 2000). Separation between Northerners and Southerners in regards to slavery however, remained difficult to enforce. While the British had entered Sudan with the goal of ending of the slave trade as one of their justifications, the slow economy and labour shortages led them to favour a more gradual end to domestic slavery. Due to this reluctance, the trade in slaves from the south went on well into the 1920s (Holt and Daly 2000, Jok 2001). This process of separate administration in regards to development, education and religion would be formalized in the 1920s and became known as the ‘grass curtain’ (Collins 1983).
Anglo-Egyptian relations began to deteriorate during the 1900s, in particular during the Egyptian revolution in 1919 and the country’s subsequent independence in 1922 (Holt and Daly 2000). Relations reached a crisis point when Stack, the Governor General who had replaced Wingate, was shot and killed in Cairo in 1924. The accompanying pro-Egyptian movements in Sudan provided the British with the impetus to reduce Egyptian influence by ordering all Egyptian troops out of the country. The result was the continuation of joint rule, but with the formation of a wholly Sudanese army paid for by the Egyptian government.

One of the responses to growing concerns over how to govern the country in the 1920s was the full implementation of a system of indirect rule. Indirect rule, developed by Lugard, the High Commissioner of Nigeria, in 1899 to facilitate British rule in Nigeria, was a system of colonial rule where local officials were left to administer the day-to-day affairs of their area. The system allowed for a large territory to be ruled by a relatively small number of higher up British officials, making use of identified “traditional” rulers to serve as local administrators. By implementing indirect rule the administration hoped to keep the population from joining under common causes and “counteract the preponderating influence of religious leaders and to minimize the numbers and influence of the educated urban class” (Holt and Daly 2000: 117). The strong tribal connections the system required, however, were often not as well defined or delineated as the administration wished. This lack of well-defined boundaries led to the search for appropriate tribal authorities with whom to entrust local governance, or in several cases led to the “re-creation” of such tribal leaders when they could not be found (Holt and Daly 2000: 119). Along with the implementation of indirect rule, the administrative separation between the north and south that had been in place since the early 1900s, was formalized with the introduction of
the Passports and Permits Ordinance of 1922. This policy designated the south as a “closed district.” Known as the Southern Policy, this meant the exclusion of northern traders from the economy and limited the number of Southerners who could go north to work (Holt and Daly 2000: 119). Education grants were made to Christian mission schools so they could increase their operations. It was decided that English would remain the main language of instruction and standardized text books where introduced. The number of schools was also expanded in an attempt to extend their influence. In 1926 there were only four boys elementary schools in the south, while by 1930 the number had increased to 32 and the number of intermediate schools had increased from one with 35 students to three with 177 students enrolled (Holt and Daly 2000: 120).

Throughout the 1930s nationalist sentiments and unrest began to rumble, and continued into the 1940s. The British administration acknowledged that independence and integration were in the country’s near future. The grass curtain between the north and south remained closed however, and the policy of separate development continued. A conference held in Juba in 1949 to discuss the role of Southerners in the upcoming national assembly revealed the serious concerns Southern representatives had with integration. British officials reiterated that the south would remain linked to the north upon independence and should begin to prepare immediately for full integration. Southerners however, argued for a slower transition to integration, in order to allow them time to “grow up” and prepare to work with the north on more equal footing (Holt and Daly 2000). The British agreed to include safeguards for the south in any final arrangements in order to avoid their exploitation; however what these safeguards would entail was never made explicit.
The Egyptian revolution in 1952 sped up the self-determination process. The new Egyptian government and the British agreed to establish Sudanese self-government in 1953 with full independence to follow on January 1, 1956. Once self-government was established in 1953, the pace of “Sudanization” in the south sped up in preparation for full independence. Despite Southern concerns British administrators were dismissed and of 800 administrative posts “Sudanized,” only six went to Southerners (Holt and Daly 2000). The concerns of Southerners boiled over into several strikes and incidents of unrest. In fact, many Southern Sudanese I spoke with during my fieldwork pinpointed the start of the first civil war in 1955, when striking southern workers were shot and killed by northern troops and the Equatoria Corps of the Sudan Defense Force refused orders, spreading unrest throughout the south.

The first post-independence parliamentary session was short lived, ending with a military coup in 1958. There followed in the south, which had been relatively quiet since the unrest in 1955, a heavier handed implementation of the “Sudanization” policies begun in the early 1950s. Missionaries who were out of the country on leave at the time were prevented from re-entering, the weekly day of rest was changed from Sunday to Friday, the establishment of new mission schools was banned, mosques and Islamic schools established and Christian religious activities outside of churches were prohibited. In 1964 the government ordered the expulsion of all foreign missionaries from the south. The rising discontent in the south began to coalesce around this time when rebel leaders Father Santorino Lahure, Joseph Oduho and William Deng, set up in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, forming the Sudan Closed Districts National Union, later becoming the Sudan African National Union. Organized rebel military
resistance also emerged in 1963 with the formation of the Anya Nya rebel group was formed (Holt and Daly 2000: 154), at which time the first civil war was well underway.

1.2.2. Civil Wars and the Establishment of an Independent South Sudan

The devastation caused by two prolonged periods of civil war in South Sudan has been severe. In addition to massive emigration, the war also claimed more than two million lives and displaced another four million people within Sudan.\(^8\) Despite the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, and South Sudan’s declaration of independence in 2011, the situation in the new country is still far from settled. As one Canadian official with the country’s Joint Donor Task Force jokingly described the situation in the winter of 2009 “it’s not a post-conflict situation at all really, at the office we like to call it a sustained low level conflict situation”. In the time between that conversation and writing the security situation in the country has only deteriorated. Tensions between Sudan and South Sudan have continued to increase in regards to South Sudan’s decision to cease oil production due to a conflict over transport fees, continuing conflict over ownership of the Abyei region, and accusations from both sides of supporting rebel factions in both countries.

In the first episode of civil war, from 1955 to 1972, the government’s response to Southern

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\(^8\) The continuing uprising in Darfur and the violent retributions of the government and the ‘janjaweed’ militias it supports – not addressed by the recent peace negotiations – have killed an additional 50,000 people, displaced one million more internally, and forced 200,000 into refugee camps just across the western border in Chad (UNHCR, “Chad/Darfur Emergency” Updates).
uprisings and calls for autonomy included bombings and the burning of villages. These measures, combined with the lack of economic and institutional development in the southern part of the country caused the flight of approximately 500,000 people to neighbouring countries. The years of peace and development between 1972 and 1983 encouraged many of these émigrés to return to their homes across the country, although development in the form of roads, hospitals and schools remained relatively sparse. The imposition of an authoritarian version of Shari‘a law and a redivision of administrative districts by then president Col. Ja‘afar Numairi in 1983 heralded the country’s second slide into civil war. Southern opposition groups arguing for regional autonomy coalesced and founded the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement and its affiliated Army (SPLM/A) the same year. Some northern refugees, opposed to Numairi’s changing tactics and fearful of the brewing tensions, left immediately for asylum in Egypt. Others waited, hoping the democratically-elected government of Sadiq al-Mahdi that came to power in 1986 would return stability to the country. But the coup led by current president Omar Hasan al-Bashir in June 1989 both shattered these hopes and greatly intensified the war in the south and the outward flow of refugees from both the northern and southern regions of the country.

The violence of the war and recurring regional droughts and famine throughout the 1980s and early 1990s provoked further mass emigrations. By the mid-1990s, the number of internally-displaced persons (IDPs) had reached four million; another 430,000 had sought asylum in neighbouring countries (USCRI, 1997 Sudan Country Report). In-fighting among SPLA leaders, led to the formation of the SPLA - Nasir faction, which split from the SPLA in 1991. The split leading to an increase in Southerner-on-Southerner violence, exacerbating inter-tribal tensions as
the SPLA remained Dinka dominated while the SPLA-Nasir was Nuer dominated, and even more internal and external displacement. From 1993 to 2001, the Bashir regime worked increasingly closely with Hassan al-Turabi and his National Islamic Front party to ‘Islamize’ the government and the nation, in an overt attempt to consolidate its command over Sudanese politics. But following the 2001 break between the two leaders and the subsequent imprisonment of al-Turabi, Bashir entered peace negotiations with the SPLA and other opposition political and military groups from across the country. In August 2004, the last of four protocols signed in Naivasha, Kenya concluded one and a half years of peace negotiations and provided for a referendum on independence for the South after six years. In January 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed and the roadmap to referendum and independence was laid out. In the intervening years repatriation and reconstruction were key priorities of the semi-autonomous Southern Sudanese government. However, these goals were hampered by the daunting lack of infrastructure and the complex process of demobilizing, disarming and supporting thousands of SPLA fighters and militias. Continued conflicts over food insecurity, cattle raiding and land claims, as well as the lack of medical and school facilities, have made repatriation difficult, and often not attractive, especially for those coming from well serviced camps in Kenya and Uganda. At the time of my fieldwork in Sudan, conducted during the fall and winter of 2009/2010, returning refugees from neighbouring countries appeared to have reached a plateau, with a total of 328,118 people returning since 2005. However, in preparation for the January 2011 referendum on independence, the pace picked up with over 250,000 refugees repatriating to Sudan in recent months (UNHCR, Sudan Repatriation Operation). At the time of writing the stability of the South Sudan remains in question, as the South has cut off oil production and both countries appear to be building up troops along the border despite calls to return to the
Figure 4: Map showing Sudan political borders as of April 2007.
Figure 5: Map showing division of South Sudan and Sudan, post-7th July 2011, as well as the contested area of Abyei.
negotiating table. (See Figure 5 and Figure 4 showing Sudan before southern independence, and the two countries after separation, as well as the disputed Abyei region).

1.3. The United Nations and Canadian Refugee Resettlement System

The process to achieve third country resettlement is highly technical; those seeking refugee status, and later resettlement, must go through a series of interviews and checks in order to prove that they fit what is often critiqued as the “one size fits all” criteria for refugee status. Shandy’s (2007) research among Nuer in the United States found that the refugee status determination process often led individuals to construct new forms of affiliation and self representations in order to fit within certain categories of eligibility. She further argues that participating in the refugee status determination process, and negotiating the various bureaucratic channels involved in seeking resettlement to the United States, contributed to refugees’ ability to develop multiple forms of representation and become adept at deploying them in various situations. Malkki (1995a) describes a similar situation among Burundian refugees who self-settled in towns in Tanzania. In order to evade immigration authorities and avoid deportation, the self-settled refugees switched between various ethnic, national, and even legal identities, depending upon the context and the advantage each identity afforded (Malkki 1995a). While the ways which Southern Sudanese negotiate these processes are further discussed in Chapter 3, the following section briefly lays out the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as Canadian refugee resettlement processes.
1.3.1. United Nations Policy and Procedures

All UNHCR country and regional offices abide by standard resettlement referral policies as outlined in the “Resettlement Handbook” produced by the Department of International Protection. These guidelines specify that resettlement is not a right for refugees and that the possibilities of voluntary repatriation and local integration in the country of first asylum should be explored before an individual is determined to be eligible for resettlement (UNHCR 2004). UNHCR also identifies certain criteria to be met in determining eligibility. These criteria accord legal or physical protection needs the highest priority; they also extend support to those who are most vulnerable, including women-at-risk and unaccompanied minors (UNHCR 2004). Other issues that can determine eligibility for resettlement include family reunification, particularly for children or the elderly, and whether a person is a survivor of torture or has pressing medical issues that cannot be resolved in the host country. Finally, when there are surplus resettlement spaces available, refugees can be referred on the basis of ‘lack of local integration prospects.’

In general, once a refugee is recognized by UNHCR under the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol⁹, the individual is scheduled for another interview to determine whether he or she is eligible for resettlement. At this interview, the UNHCR case worker explains the three possible

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⁹ According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as well as the 1967 Protocol, a refugee is anyone who “owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular 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 a 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.”
‘durable solutions’ to the refugee situation, reviews the individual’s claims with her, and gathers additional information from the refugee to determine whether she is eligible to be referred for resettlement to one of the countries participating in the program. The local situation in the country of asylum has an effect on the decision. In Cairo for example, where a large number of the Southern Sudanese living in Calgary arrived from, the ‘lack of local integration prospects’ rationale formed the basis for a large percentage of these referrals for resettlement to Canada, although this quickly changed with the advent of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 when repatriation became an increasingly possible option.

If a refugee is successful in her resettlement eligibility interview with UNHCR, her file will be referred to one of the embassies currently participating in the resettlement program. Her travel is not yet guaranteed, as the approval for her visa and refugee status in the resettlement country is ultimately the embassy’s decision. The refugee is interviewed again by a government representative in order to ensure that she meets the country’s security and specific status requirements. Once her refugee status is approved by the resettlement country government, she is required to undergo a medical exam and attend a Cultural Orientation session before travel arrangements are finalized.

The private sponsorship process offered by the Canadian government is quite different from the above process. Privately-sponsored refugees do not necessarily even have to secure refugee status through UNHCR, as their procedures are conducted entirely through Canadian officials.

10While some European countries run small resettlement programs, the United States, Canada and Australia are the three main countries offering refugees resettlement.
and the potential sponsoring agency – generally a faith based or community group. I met several Southern Sudanese families in the Calgary area who had been sponsored through faith based organizations, as well as several youth, who had arrived through World University’s private sponsorship programs. Refugees who are resettled to Canada through private sponsorship are not eligible for the majority of the government sponsored services detailed below, as their sponsors commit to providing for their housing and financial needs for their first 12 months in the country.

1.3.2. Canadian Policies and Programs

Government-assisted refugees comprise the bulk of the yearly intake of resettled refugees at approximately 7500 per year, while between 2900 and 4000 privately sponsored refugees are accepted annually (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012)\(^1\). For several years between 1996 and 2004 refugees from Sudan made up a large portion of the refugees granted resettlement to Canada. For example, according to Canadian embassy officials in Cairo, in the early 2000s, the embassy maintained an annual target of approximately 1000 refugees, some 800 of whom were government-assisted refugees and 200 privately sponsored; approximately 80 percent of these spaces were filled by Sudanese. These numbers, from Cairo as well as camps in countries neighbouring Sudan, dropped dramatically after 2005 and the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the majority of Southern Sudanese who continued to arrive after that date did so through private sponsorship or family reunification.

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\(^1\) These numbers are for resettled refugees only – those who received refugee status in another country and are selected for resettlement to Canada. They do not include asylum seekers - individuals who arrive on Canadian soil and claim refugee status.
Government-assisted refugees receive a variety of services aimed at facilitating their integration into life in Canada. While the discourse of empowerment, capacity building and self sufficiency that permeates these programs provided by the settlement sector are discussed in detail in Chapter 3, it is helpful at this point to briefly review the types of services provided to Southern Sudanese as they arrived in Calgary.

Resettlement agencies, funded by the federal government, administer the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) in which refugees are provided with immediate and essential services that include: greeting at the point of entry and transportation to temporary accommodations; information on other government programs; assistance with finding permanent accommodation; and referrals to secondary settlement programs. Income support is provided for up to one year or until the refugee or refugee family becomes self-sufficient. The amounts provided are very basic and cover only food, shelter and miscellaneous household costs. Refugees with special needs, such as those with medical disabilities, the elderly, or victims of trauma and torture, may receive income support for up to two years. As refugees become permanent residents upon landing, temporary health care coverage is provided under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFH) until refugees become eligible for provincial healthcare (usually after a wait time of three months). The IFH funds emergency and essential healthcare and dental coverage only.

Refugees who receive RAP are also eligible for Canada’s settlement programs which aim to promote social cohesion and faster adaptation to what are often referred to by settlement workers as Canadian “norms and values”. The settlement programs, administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), include the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program, the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) and the Host Program.
Refugees and immigrants are eligible for CIC settlement programs until they become Canadian citizens (at least three years).

The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program provides basic language training to adult newcomers in one of Canada’s official languages to facilitate their social, cultural and economic integration into Canada. In order to ensure that eligible clients are not prevented from participating in the LINC program because of personal disability, dependent children, or inability to meet the travel costs, the program includes financial provisions to cover the costs of: equipment or other assistance required to facilitate the full participation of people with disabilities; informal, unlicensed, on-site arrangements for the care and supervision of dependent children while the parents attend LINC classes (however, in certain situations, contracting seats through a day-care centre approved by the province or territory may represent a more cost-effective option); and transportation costs for clients for whom language training would otherwise be inaccessible. While all of these services are officially available, the experiences of many Southerners in the city however, indicate that childcare and transportation are major barriers to attending language classes, for women in particular. It is also important to note that there is no formal ESL curriculum in Alberta. Children are often placed in grades according to age rather than level of education, and ESL supports vary widely by school and between the two major school boards - the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic School District.

The Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) funds direct services to immigrants such as reception, orientation, translation, interpretation, referral to community resources, solution-focused counseling, general information and employment-related services. ISAP
funding is also used to carry out other activities that improve settlement services. Enhanced Language Training (ELT), geared towards providing refugees with “workplace ready” English, is an ISAP initiative that delivers employment-related language training, often with on the job experience in the form of work placements. The cultural orientation sessions delivered to Canada-bound refugees are also funded under ISAP.

It is important to reiterate that while these programs exist, the majority of Southerners I spoke with found the process involved in accessing services to be confusing and difficult, leading many of them to give up. It should also be noted that interviews with service providers indicated an equal level of frustration on their part with the insufficient funding and large case loads, giving them little time to help “high needs” clients negotiate the system. Finally, regardless of barriers to accessing the services, as will be discussed throughout the dissertation, for many Southerners the pressure to support their kin back in South Sudan led them to devote their energy to working and sending money home during their early years in Canada, rather than focusing on language learning and furthering their own education.

1.4. Anthropology in South Sudan

Anthropology has a long history in South Sudan. Ethnographies on groups such as the Nuer, Azande and Dinka have become anthropological classics and have contributed widely to theories on kinship, political organization, religion and magic used across the discipline. Ahmed (2003) divides anthropology in Sudan (both north and south) into three phases; expatriates doing anthropology under colonial rule, anthropology housed at the University at Khartoum but still mainly taught and led by non-Sudanese anthropologists, and the post-1971 period where Sudanese anthropologists began to emerge in the field. He also acknowledges what at the time
was an emerging, but now more prevalent, surge in non-Sudanese anthropologists arriving as consultants for development and humanitarian aid agencies in the country.

It is impossible to completely separate early anthropological research in Sudan from the colonial administration of the country. While *Sudan Notes and Records* became the first forum for the publication of systematic ethnographic research and reports on the Sudan, its purpose was to serve as a source of information for colonial administrators in Sudan. As Wingate wrote this in the opening of the first edition in 1916, “knowledge is power, in Africa and elsewhere” (Johnson 2011: 309). To this end the colonial administration supported anthropological training for future administrators, subsidized research and publications of ethnographies by early ethnographers (Ahmed 2003). In promoting anthropological research the British administration was hoping to gain the knowledge required to effectively govern the country through indirect rule, which, as mentioned above, required establishing knowledge around “traditional” ways of living which were believed to have been disrupted by the unrest during the Mahdist period and subsequent years of famine.

Many critics of anthropology during the colonial period argue that it was designed to serve colonial objectives and directly contributed to the subjugation of the Sudanese under Anglo-Egyptian administration. Early anthropologists are also accused of contributing to detrimental policies such as the ‘grass curtain’, or the Southern Policy, which led to underdevelopment of the South. Ahmed (2003) points specifically to the work of Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer to illustrate the role colonial administration played in shaping Sudanese anthropology. He argues that while Evans-Pritchard wished to continue his research among the Azande, he was ordered further north to conduct research on the Nuer, who were restive at the time and had yet to be fully pacified by
the British administration. He was asked to provide information which would help the administration understand the political structures of the group and facilitate their governance. Later anthropologists such as Hutchinson (1996) have criticized him for not mentioning the often violent pacification campaigns which were happening on at the time of his research. Ahmed (2003) also points to the organization of his first ethnography the Nuer (1940) which he argues was arranged topically in such a way as to answer the questions the colonial administration were asking him to explore.

Other post-colonial anthropologists, such as Wendy James, who conducted extensive research among the Uduk, have been less critical of the involvement of early anthropologists in the colonial administration of the Sudan. James (1973) argues that Sudanese anthropology arose out of a critique of the colonial encounter. By disseminating facts through *Sudan Notes and Records* and ethnographies, anthropologists were not only able to set higher standards for data collection and reporting, but also to humanize colonial policies while not becoming directly involved in their implementation. She points out, that while administrators found Evan Pritchard’s early work useful they found his later books too theoretical to be of administrative use, and that Evans-Pritchard himself stated that the details and information administrators were looking for were not often commensurable with the goals of the discipline and information collected through ethnographic research (Ahmed 2003).

The fourth phase of Sudanese anthropology identified by Ahmed (2003) was related to development, conflict and humanitarian aid. This area of anthropological interest has continued to grow throughout the second civil war and in the post-war reconstruction period in South Sudan. Ethnographies focusing on the effects of conflict and displacement within South Sudan
and bordering areas were key sources for this dissertation and include ethnographies by anthropologists such as Hutchinson (1996), Abusharaf (2009), James (2007), Jok (2001) and ongoing writing by Francis Deng (1998). Although they are not as common, more recent research by anthropologists studying the Southern Sudanese diaspora in North American and Australia have also been foundational to my research\(^\text{12}\).

While the anthropological focus in South Sudan has, for a large part, shifted to studies of conflict, migration and humanitarian aid, key themes from earlier ethnographic work remain prevalent for understanding the new forms of sociality developed through forced migration and conflict. Earlier theoretical concepts around political organization such as the segmentary lineage system or age grades, as well as the central role male initiation, marriage, bridewealth and cattle exchange play in social reproduction among Dinka and Nuer, are integral to understanding the discussions in the following chapters and are briefly described below\(^\text{13}\).

The segmentary lineage system among the Nuer, as described by Evans-Pritchard in *The Nuer* (1940) is perhaps one of the widest recognized anthropological concepts to come out of Southern

\(^{12}\) This dissertation relied on numerous articles dealing with displaced Sudanese groups, these are cited throughout, as are two key book published on Nuer living in the United States – *Nuer American Dilemmas* by Diane Shandy (2007) and *Nuer Passages* by Hotlzman (1996).

\(^{13}\) It is important to note the diversity among Southern Sudanese groups, both in Sudan and Calgary. This brief overview is a broad generalization of anthropological terms for practices that appear differently across Southern Sudanese groups. Cattle exchange and bridewealth practices in particular are more applicable to Dinka and Nuer. To deal with this plurality of practices, throughout the dissertation I specify which tribe a speaker identifies with when discussing a particular practice.
Sudanese anthropology and inform the rest of the discipline. Most often described as a system of “fission and fusion” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2011) that involves shifting forms of alliance, a segmentary system consists of a number of groups organized in a kinship tree composed of nested patrilinearly related groups, descending from the most inclusive to the least, each group defined in opposition to the other. By providing a balance of power with no centre, the system allows for changing affiliations and alliances based on context as segments can unite or divide depending on the challenge they are facing. It came to be a common framework for studying political organization in acephalous societies in Africa. Chapters 2 and 3 explore the concept more fully, detailing how segmentary system has informed the organization and politics of Southern Sudanese groups in Calgary.

Within Southern groups at the village or community level, age grades are a common form of social organization. Age grades normally consist of non-kin based groups in which members, usually of the same gender, are put together with roles and values assigned. Most often consisting of males born within a few years of each other, they are grouped together and assigned various purposes and responsibilities that shift as they age. For example boys in the same age grade may be responsible for herding and caring for cattle, while young men may be responsible for defending the group and conducting cattle raids until they pass into the leadership and later elder phase of responsibilities. In cases where formal initiation, such as the scarification practiced among the Dinka and Nuer\(^\text{14}\), is practiced, an age grade usually involves those who

\(^\text{14}\) Both Dinka and Nuer groups practice initiation of boys that involves a series of horizontal lines between cut into the forehead. While pressure to end the practice intensified during the second civil war in the 1980s, it is still
were initiated together, or within a few years of each other and the men will move through the various roles and responsibilities as they age and pass from junior to more senior ranks. While varying degrees of obligation and responsibility exist between age mates from various groups, the concept appears throughout this dissertation as it related to shifts in affiliation, roles, responsibility and authority among resettled Southerners. For example groups such as the Lost Boys, who will be discussed in detail later in the dissertation, have shared experiences of flight and time spent in refugee camps and view each other as key source of support in resettlement, regardless of kin affiliation. Several young men informed me that it was in fact their Lost Boys friends who become their age mates and had provided the majority of financial assistance toward their bridewealth, not their male relatives. Age based groups were also beginning to challenge the authority of elders, banding together to demand more say in community matters. Chapter 2 further discusses the increases salience of age, as well as experience, based forms of affiliation among resettled Southern Sudanese.

Marriage is a fundamental aspect of Southern Sudanese life – it is only through marriage that a boy can truly become a man, and through marriage and childbirth that a girl becomes a woman (Evans-Pritchard 1951, Deng 1972, Hutchinson 1996). It is also the foundation of a complex web of relationships between family members and in-laws through the ongoing process of negotiation and exchange of bridewealth (Grabska 2010). In the case of Dinka and Nuer, as cattle are exchanged a various points throughout the union – the engagement, marriage, birth of children – the relationship between the two families is continuously reaffirmed and strengthened. The

practiced in many areas. For a full discussion of changes to scarification practices among the Nuer, see Hutchinson (1996).
amount to be paid in bridewealth varies considerably, based on the economic and social context at the time, the availability of cattle or cash, and whether the groom is living in South Sudan or has resettled to a Western country. Shifts in the amount, and form, of bridewealth payments, as well as the importance of cattle to the process, are further explored in Chapter 5. Through the exchange of cattle a man and his family are not simply gaining access to a wife, but also rights over her reproduction. Therefore, if a marriage ends in divorce, and bridewealth has been paid, custody of the children belongs to their father’s family. As discussed briefly at the beginning of Chapter 3, and in more detail in Chapter 5, tensions arise between Southern families when in resettlement, custody rights associated with bridewealth come up against Canadian family law.

1.5. Key Concepts and Literature

Three key concepts inform the arguments and discussions that run through this dissertation - refugeeness, transnationalism and belonging. While the relevant literature surrounding each concept is woven throughout every chapter, the following sections provide a brief grounding of the key arguments and literature from each area. The section on refugeeness highlights the normalized discourses of victimhood and depoliticization that often dominate the field of refugee studies and the international humanitarian regime. The discussion of transnationalism highlights three key points: the importance of moving beyond concepts of belonging rooted in bounded nation states, the often indirect effects of transnational activities, and the role transnational behaviours can play in strengthening the concept of the nation state, rather than simply breaking it down. Finally the section on belonging focuses on the performative nature of belonging and the opportunity for agency and resistance within those performances.
1.5.1. Refugeeness

The displacement undergone by refugees tends to be studied differently than other kinds of
deterritorialization. While migrants move from their home country for various reasons often
deemed to be external to the individual (economic opportunities, adventure etc.), refugeeness and
its associated lack of territorial connection is often considered a condition located within the
bodies and minds of refugees themselves. Malkki (1995a and 1995b) argues this internalization
of ‘refugee’ as a condition is due to their categorization as outside of the “national order of
things,” by which she means the common sense notion that people and things are classified on
the basis of national boundaries. In order to problematize this taken for granted national order,
we must approach the nation state system as a hegemonic one that “requires study, not just as a
political system narrowly understood, but as a powerful regime of order and knowledge” (Malkki
1995a: 5). Such an approach allows us to move beyond viewing nationalism and the national
order as constituted through ritual and aesthetics, but also through the continual exercise of
power at both the micro and macro scale (Watts 1992, Foucault 1972).

The “hegemonic topography” (Malkki 1995a: 5) of the national order of things not only serves to
categorize refugees’ social and political identities, but also shapes the homogenized subject of
the ‘refugee.’ The concept of the “icon” used by Fraser and Gordon (1994) in their exploration of
dependency in the United States is useful in exploring this universalized subject as constructed
by humanitarian aid systems, media, government, receiving societies and refugees themselves.
The iconic subject, they argue, condenses “multiple and often contradictory meanings” (Fraser
and Gordon 1994: 311) which are representative of the social anxieties that underlie them. For
example, iconic representations of the “welfare recipient” are seen to represent anxiety around
issues race, citizenship or class. Similarly, the icon of the refugee presents contradictory meanings - refugees as representations of bare humanity, stripped of their agency, history, identity or politics, as well as signifying potential threats to national security, citizenship, and sovereignty (Agamben 1995, Arendt 1951, Dusenbery 1997, Harell Bond 1986, Malkki 1995a, 1995b, Shandy 2007, Soguk 1999).

The construction of refugees as bare humanity is reinforced by the notion that by crossing a border refugees have “lost connection with their culture and identity” (Malkki 1995a: 11). Images of refugees in popular culture and the media as vulnerable, forgotten, lost and in need of charity reinforce this view, while serving as effective fundraising tools for humanitarian agencies and masking the agency deployed by refugees (Cohen 2001). The system of policies, practices and services that have grown up around the category tend to reinforce this view - taking one-sized fits all approaches to status determination and services which ignore the complex histories and politics refugees bring with them, or focusing solely on the basic biological or psycho social needs of refugee, divorced from the broader socio-political context.

While represented as powerless victims, the bare humanity invoked by displacement is at the same time viewed as a corrupting and dangerous influence. Striped of identity and history, and placed between nation states, refugees are “liminal in the category of nation states” (Malkki 1995a: 11). Their lack of passports, nationality or formal immigration status limits the ability authorities to place them in specific, commonly understood categories, making them at once conceptually, socially and politically anomalous, and therefore a threat to national security and sovereignty. Systems and institutions, both national and international have proliferated to manage this threatening transgression of categories - border controls and tighter immigration
laws (Soguk 1999), warehousing in refugee camps (Harell-Bond 1986), and policies and practices to manage difference within the nation (Iacovetta 2006, Kernerman 2005) have been developed. Early formalized attempts to deal with refugees after World War II, who were seen as tainted, or to have lost their “moral bearings” through the loss of their bodily connection to their homeland are clear examples of the formation of such systems (Iacovetta 2006). Under Canadian post war refugee policies, Jewish refugees, women in particular, were seen as dangerous to the moral fabric of the nation due to their war time experiences of displacement, exile and imprisonment which had removed them from recognized categories of citizenship and nationality (Iacovetta 2006). As a precursor to the current complex settlement and integration regime which regulates potentially unmanageable difference through official multiculturalism, officials developed intensive programs targeting migrant’s domestic structures in habits in order to quickly transform them from the state of bare humanity their removal from the national order of things was considered to have caused, and shape them into proper Canadian citizens. At the time this was connected with Cold War policies and thoughts, particularly targeted at women, turning housewives into good consumers, including lessons on the importance of the proper appliances, house wares required to run a middle class Canadian home, cooking lessons in Canadian cuisine and even classes in décor and fashion, aimed at encouraging them to develop proper middle class Canadian households (Iacovetta 2006). In a similar vein, current refugee settlement programs often focus on family and household, involving parenting classes, nutrition and gender roles.

It is important to recognize however, that the systems and institutions involved in constructing refugees as bare humanity and both powerless and threatening, are simultaneously normalized
and normalizing. “People learn to represent themselves in a specific manner that supports existing institutional and cultural order” (Carr 2010: 15) and the icon of “refugee” recognized broadly in media, government and NGO systems and society is not a static subject. It is reproduced and challenged through interactions between institutions and stakeholders working with refugees, media, receiving societies and the refugees themselves.

1.5.2. Transnationalism

Transnational studies in anthropology reflect the disciplinary shift away from defining the “field” solely as a geographically bounded unit of analysis (Appadurai 1991, Gupta and Ferguson 1997). The growing body of literature exploring the transnational nature of refugees’ lives has increasingly highlighted the importance of these transnational social fields and raises key questions surrounding some previously held assumptions about transnational behaviours (Al-Sharmani 2006, Shandy 2007, Sherell and Hyndman 2006, Um 2006, Van Hear 2006). In order to ground the following discussion of Southern Sudanese transnationalism three of these issues are highlighted - the importance of moving beyond forms of affiliation and belonging based solely on national identities, the widespread and uneven effects of transnational processes and networks, and the ways in which transnationalism often intertwines with, or supports, nationalism, rather than serving as a de facto subversion of the nation state.

While transnational studies originally focused on the transnational nation-state as “the reconstitution of the concept of the state so that both the nation and the authority of the government it represents extend beyond the state’s territorial boundaries and incorporate dispersed populations,” (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2002), there have been more recent moves to address ways of belonging outside of the framework of “methodological nationalism” that
previously limited transnational studies (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, Silverstein 2004). Focusing on multiple forms of belonging beyond national identities, including new forms of affiliation that are created through the migration process, and how they are deployed in various contexts allows for the recognition that migration and integration occur “within the context of two or more locations and that (new) identities are forged across this space” (Sherrell and Hyndman 2006).

In addition to moving beyond “methodological nationalism” in how we explore new forms of belonging and relating across transnational spaces, more recent studies of immigrant and refugee transnational behaviours also throw into question the notion that the connections or networks stretching across borders must be direct or linear (Mercer et. al. 2010, Silverstein 2004). As the discussion in Chapter 5 of the link between rising bridewealth prices, increasing cattle raids and transnational marriages highlights, it cannot be assumed that those with indirect ties to their homeland, or those who stayed behind with no direct connections to kin in resettlement, will be any less affected by transnational processes than those with more direct connections. The effects of men’s return migration to South Sudan on women and children who remain largely immobilized in Calgary, discussed in Chapter 6, is also an example of how transnational processes can affect those not directly engaged in transnational activities.

The involvement of Southern Sudanese in long distance nation building also highlights the intertwining of globalization, transnationalism and nationalism. The heightened focus on globalization and the increased movement of people, technology and ideas that comes with it, along with an increase in transnationalism, are thought to be reducing the nation state to its “last legs” (Appardurai 1999). Research with diaspora populations such as Eritreans (Bernal 2004,
Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001) and Haitians (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2002, Pegram 2005) demonstrates, however, that diaspora groups often engage in long distance nation building projects in order to strengthen the national boundaries of their countries of origin. For example, in the case of the Eritrean diaspora, Bernal (2004) discusses how the use of online forums, such as Dehai.org, were used to organize, fundraise and advocate for Eritrea’s independence, as well as debate and negotiate ideals of what it meant to be Eritrean. While their efforts are less formally organized than such groups, Southern Sudanese living in Calgary have maintained an evolving level of engagement in the long distance nation building of South Sudan throughout their years in Canada, as discussed in Chapter 3.

1.5.3. Belonging

As the primary focus of the following chapters is on how Southern Sudanese reproduce and negotiate various forms of belonging across transnational spaces, it is important to clarify the lens through which belonging is discussed. Belonging is approached as (re)produced and negotiated through performances and actions, rather than as “simply or ontologically belonging to the world, or to any group in it” (Bell 1999). This approach expands on Althusser’s (1971) theory of interpellation by exploring how, or why, Southern Sudanese choose to respond - or not - to the various forms of belonging to which they are summoned, and how they fashion, produce and perform those positions in their daily lives.

The notion of belonging as performed, or enacted, also draws heavily on Goffman’s (1959) theories of performativity, in which individuals manage the impressions they give to others through careful public performances that are often staged to reflect back to their “audience” what the individual or group believe they expect to see. However, while the roles Southern Sudanese
perform are often shaped by hegemonic processes present in the refugee and Canadian resettlement systems, those in positions of power are not always in control of the stage on which they are played out (Scott 1983). While Southerners may reproduce the subject positions they are called on to perform, they also strategically perform such positions in order to benefit from such summons (Butler 1993, Carr 2010). As Chapter 3’s discussion of how Southern Sudanese negotiate categories of “good refugees” and “good Canadians” demonstrates, there is often room to maneuver within, and create opportunities and advantages through, those performances.

1.6. Layout of the Dissertation

As mentioned above, the dissertation is not a holistic ethnographic study of one group in a bounded location, but rather the chapters each present an example of how Southern Sudanese in Calgary are continuously renegotiating local ideals of belonging across transnational spaces. Chapter 2 begins by describing the Southern Sudanese groups in the city and discussing how categories of belonging and affiliation such as tribe and kin group have shifted and expanded through forced migration. In order to highlight the diversity of the Southern Sudanese groups living in the city, and counter the common misrepresentation of them as one community, the chapter also draws on ideas of fission and fusion as they relate to social organization. As key issues affecting their various communities arise, they use the opportunity to come together under a “Southern Sudanese” umbrella in order to acquire the necessary assistance or resources to deal with the problem.

Chapter 3 explores the process of becoming a “good” refugee, as well as a “good” Canadian and the ways in which these categories are performed to their best advantage. It also discusses the problems that occur when community members break from the script they are trying to follow.
Chapter 4 then moves away from performances of refugeeness and Canadianess, to explore how Southerners are redefining what it means to be a Southern Sudanese national through their engagement in long distance nation building and how that relationship has evolved throughout the civil war, post conflict and independence periods. Continuing with transnational engagement, Chapter 5 explores one activity in particular - transnational marriage - in order to look at how Southern Sudanese are attempting to negotiate and recreate “local” Southern idealized gender roles. Finally, Chapter 6 examines the experience of return migration to South Sudan, calling into question the boundaries drawn between durable solutions of repatriation and resettlement and the notion of “home” as many Southerners discover that going home is not as straightforward as they may have expected.
2. The (Un)Making of the Southern Sudanese Community in Calgary

There are so many conflicts. You see, the problem is how the Sudanese communities have always worked...we break down into so many communities – when you form a community, tomorrow it can be two, and then the next day three, and so on... one community can combine and then divide all the time, until you come down to your own village. So people are always still dividing themselves.....they don't understand that to survive here we need to speak with one voice (Deng, Dinka man in his 30s).

Deng's explanation of the fragmented nature of Southern Sudanese community organization in Calgary evokes Evans-Pritchard's (1940) classic description of Nuer political systems as a segmentary system of fission and fusion - the "ordered anarchy" that came to represent many East African political systems (Comaroff and Comaroff 2011). Through his detailed descriptions of Nuer political systems, Evans-Pritchard (1940) demonstrated that rather than unordered system, the segmentary system allowed for flexible social action. Key to this flexible social actions is the idea of structural relativity (Evans-Pritchard 1940:135) inherent in the system, as “a man sees himself as a member of a group only in opposition to other groups and he sees a member of another group as a member of a social unity however much it may split into opposed segments” (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 137). In Calgary for example, the majority of Nuer living in Calgary may consider themselves allies and members of the Nuer Union, which functioned as the main community group for Nuer residents in the city. While the Nuer Union represented a strong, unified front at meetings with other Southern Sudanese groups, that did not prevent members from segmenting into factions based on sub-lineages when conflicts arose at Nuer
Union meetings. Even the most contentious discussions however, were put aside when it was time to regroup and represent Nuer concerns at the next larger Southern Sudanese meeting.

The flexibility and shifting negotiations of affiliation inherent in the segmented system led to a level of complexity in Southern Sudanese social organization that was difficult for government and service providing institutions in Canada to grasp. While community organizations working with Southern Sudanese groups in Calgary tended to refer to them as the “Sudanese Community” and sponsored events such as the “Sudanese Youth Talent Show”, or spaces such as the “Sudanese Education Centre”, members of groups from Southern Sudan seldom limited themselves to one identifying term. As Berger (2001) found in her research with Southern groups in Brooks, Alberta, individuals often employed descending levels of identification, such as tribe, clan and sub-clan, depending upon the audience with whom they were speaking. The more distant the perceived relation between the listener and speaker, the more general the identification provided. For example, when conducting interviews it was not unusual for someone to refer to themselves as a Ruweng Dinka, Dinka, Jieng\(^{15}\), Southerner, or Sudanese, all within the course of a two hour conversation.

The focus of contemporary ethnographies on social changes occurring among Southern Sudanese groups due to prolonged civil war (Hutchinson 1996, James 2007), and resettlement (Berger 2001, Holtzman 1999, Shandy 2007), may lead to the assumption that shifting identity categories in Sudan are primarily the creation of decades of conflict and recent resettlement to North America. Earlier anthropological work in Sudan (Evans-Pritchard 1940, Southall 1976),

\(^{15}\) The term Dinka, and often other Southern Sudanese, use when referring to Dinka, meaning “people”.
however, shows the fluid nature of identity among groups is not simply a post-independence conflict phenomenon. In his discussion of Nuer assimilation of Dinka individuals and groups, Evans-Pritchard’s (1940) analysis of the Nuer political system highlights the long standing relative, and changing, nature of group affiliation. Southall’s (1976) historical overview of the possible origins of the distinction between Dinka and Nuer also highlights the historically fluid nature of identity and group membership among ethnolinguistic groups in Sudan. Despite the long history of shifting identity, though, there is evidence the ongoing conflict in Sudan has affected the shifting conceptions of self and identity among Sudanese groups. James (2007), for example, recently noted a marked reification of “Northern” and “Southern” as identity categories among the Uduk. She found that since the onset of the second period of civil war in the 1980s the two categories have increasingly taken on attributes of good (South) and evil (North). Hutchinson (1996) also discusses the recent increased politicization of religious and ethnic identities occurring during the second civil war, which she states was compounded by the split of the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) in 1991, which pitted Southern groups against one another (Hutchinson 1996).

As Abusharaf (2009), in her work with displaced women in Internally Displace Person (IDP) camps on the outskirts of Khartoum notes "what becomes audible at the grass roots are the ways in which difference has been revisited through the reconfiguration of selves in new locations" (Abusharaf 2009:11). This chapter explores those reconfigurations, and the new forms of sociality formed through forced migration. These new forms of sociality often cross cut associations based on tribe and kin, contributing to greater complexity and diversity among Southern Sudanese groups living in Calgary. This complexity makes it extremely difficult to
speak of a unified, or singular “Sudanese” or “Southern Sudanese” community. However, the pressures encountered in asylum and resettlement, two of which are discussed in the second part of this chapter, also appear to push Southerners to address their shared concerns under the umbrella of a unified Southern Sudanese community. This demonstrates how forced migration, and the renegotiation of selves and relations to others that have accompanied it, simultaneously make and unmake the idea of a "Southern Sudanese community".

2.1. The Unmaking of a Community

The diversity of the Southern Sudanese population in Calgary is often underestimated. It consists of dozens of tribes and sub-tribes; over a dozen languages, with numerous dialects, are spoken. While groups such as the Dinka and Nuer are more visible due to their larger numbers, there is also a significant number of smaller groups, though no official count of the various groups in the city exists, partially due to the fluid nature of their social organization. Groups or communities continuously form and split depending on how many families from a particular village or region live in the city at any given time. During my fieldwork, for example, the number of groups/associations from the Equatoria region operating in the city varied from a low of 19 to a one time high of 27.

Southern Sudanese groups in the city tend to organize themselves into flexible categorical hierarchies similar to the segmented lineage system used by the Nuer in Sudan. The Zande, Jieng (Dinka), Didinga, Bari and Nuer Union, for example, all represent several sub-tribes under their

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16 During my fieldwork I met members of several tribes including Balanda, Budi, Azandi, Lou, Anuak, Shilluk, Nuba, Fur, Dinka and Nuer. However, Dinka and Nuer were by far the largest groups in the city.
umbrellas. The Dinka were led by the Jieng Association, which had an elected head of “community,” as well as a constitution and set of bylaws. Under the umbrella of the Jieng Association were numerous sub-tribes (Ruweng Dinka, Padang Dinka, Bor Dinka etc.), most of which had some form of organized association with an elected sub-community leader and board of directors. Under the sub-communities were smaller clan or sub-clan groups, most often organized along the village level. Bor Dinka, for example, subdivided themselves into several sub-clans, each with their own association having an elected community leader. Roles and responsibilities of the associations were fluid and varied, depending on where the group sat on the segmentary scale. The larger Jieng association was normally responsible for dealing with community-wide issues, such as helping families when children were taken by social services, or organizing court interpreters by contacting heads of sub-tribal associations. Sub-tribe level groups often looked after issues such as assisting members to raise money for funeral expenses, or celebrate cultural events such as weddings. The village-level organizations were usually focused on sending money back to South Sudan to assist with local development and responding to immediate calls for funds from extended family members and friends in their home village.

While this segmented system remained the base of most Southern Sudanese social organizations in Calgary, extended periods of time in countries of asylum outside of Sudan, followed by resettlement to Canada, contributed to new forms of sociality that often cut across pre-existing tribal and kinship categories. The roots of these new forms of sociality can often be found in the different paths, both geographically and procedurally, that Southern Sudanese refugees took prior to arrival in Canada.
As mentioned earlier, Southern Sudanese refugees arrived in Canada under a variety of refugee resettling and sponsoring procedures. Ideally, new immigrants have access to similar levels of service, regardless of the program through which they arrive. In reality however, that is often not the case. Individuals arriving under private sponsorship often benefit from more hands on support than those resettling as government sponsored refugees, and those arriving as family reunification cases usually have the advantage of the experience their relatives had already gained. In many instances, however, particularly in cases of transnational marriage, the arriving individual may not be referred to the appropriate services. The program under which an individual or family is accepted for resettlement also influences their earliest experiences of resettlement, and those with whom they develop an affiliation. "We were on the same plane together" was a common response when enquiring about someone's relationship to a friend, or being introduced to someone by an informant. The statement was not simply referring to the fact they traveled to Canada on the same plane together, but that they had shared the same settlement experiences upon arrival, and were coming from similar asylum experiences. Those bonds, formed through the stress and excitement of resettlement, often led to the establishment of incongruous friendships and social networks. One such group in Calgary included three families – a Lou family from Bar el Ghazal, Dinka from the Gorgrial region, and Azande from Eastern Equatoria. They had all been in Cairo together; "travelled on the same plane" to Prince Edward Island and, after 6 months had made the decision to move their families to Calgary. Twelve years later they remained an extremely tight knit group, despite the often serious political and social tensions between their respective community associations.
In addition to arriving under a variety of resettlement programs, Southern Sudanese living in Calgary also traveled a wide variety of physical paths en route to Canada. Even setting aside the diversity of routes and experiences exiting Sudan (including moving between various IDP camps, coming from areas of heavy fighting, being from a government controlled or SPLA controlled town, or spending extended periods of time in Khartoum before leaving the country), and focusing solely on differences in the countries of asylum people were living in prior to resettlement, once can appreciate the wide diversity of experiences of resettlement Southern Sudanese endured.

The Southern Sudanese population in Calgary traveled, for the most part, from three main asylum countries – Kenya, Ethiopia and Egypt. A smaller number of people traveled from Uganda, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, or even from countries of asylum further afield such as Singapore or India.\(^\text{17}\) There is also a large group of Southerners who were resettled from Cuba\(^\text{18}\). While some individuals from Ethiopia and Kenya were living as urban refugees in Nairobi or Addis Ababa, the majority of individuals and families arriving from those countries spent their time in asylum living in large refugee camps such as Kakuma in Kenya, or Itang in Ethiopia. While the civil war started in 1983, little action was taken to resettle Southern

\(^\text{17}\) Most people who traveled from countries outside the immediate vicinity of Sudan were studying in those countries when the civil war broke out.

\(^\text{18}\) Resettled as a group from Cuba in the late 1990s, the Cuban- Sudanese, as they are referred to in Alberta, consist of young people who were sent from South Sudan to Cuba in 1985. Mainly children of high-ranking officials and commanders in the SPLA, they were dispatched to Cuba to receive a socialist education, with the hope they would eventually return to South Sudan to be the future of the new Sudan.
Sudanese refugees until the mid to late 1990s. It is not surprising, then, that many individuals, men in particular, moved between several refugee camps, or back and forth between refugee camps and Sudan, before attaining resettlement to Canada. The bulk of urban refugees from Southern Sudan now living in Canada arrived from Egypt, where they had spent time in Cairo or, in smaller numbers, Alexandria. In Egypt the economic and social livelihoods of refugees were precarious. Egypt is a State Party to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Egypt, however, registered significant reservations to the 1951 Convention upon signing on in 1981, and has yet to implement any domestic legislation specific to refugees. Its reservations to the Convention include personal status (art. 12[1]), access to primary education (art. 22[1]), access to public relief and assistance (art. 22), and labour legislation and social security (art. 24). Specifically these reservations prevented Sudanese refugees from accessing public education or healthcare as well as any social services. Egypt did not express reservations to Articles 17 or 18, regarding wage-earning employment and self-employment. Because of the lack of domestic legislation specifically addressing their situation, however, refugees in Egypt must follow the same employment regulations as other foreigners living in the country\textsuperscript{19} (Fanjoy et. al. 2006) Those Regulations include having to obtain a work permit for employment in the formal sector - a process that is both cumbersome and costly. It was only when the “Wadi al-Nil” treaty, that guaranteed Sudanese the right to work and reside in Egypt without specific visas, was abrogated in 1995 after an attempt on then president Hosni Mubarak’s life was blamed on Sudanese Islamists, that the UNHCR Regional Office in Cairo

\textsuperscript{19} Governed by Egyptian law no. 137 of 1981.
(RO Cairo) began conducting Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interviews for Sudanese asylum seekers. Many of the earliest Southerners to be resettled to Calgary recounted their involvement with pride in the movement to push UNHCR in Cairo to open a resettlement program for Southern Sudanese, and several of the ‘community leaders’ from that movement went on to become the main political actors in their communities upon resettlement to Canada.

Experiences and levels of services differ greatly between those in Cairo and those in the refugee camps settings. While those in camps had less freedom of movement, and residents frequently faced food, financial and physical insecurities, they often had access to a limited number of programs and educational opportunities provided by the UN and NGOs, which were usually unavailable to those living outside the camps. These included primary and secondary school programs, language training, as well as specialized programs such as courses on gender equality and human rights education classes (Grabska 2010). In contrast, the UNHCR provided only very limited assistance to recognized refugees living in Egypt. The little help provided by the UNHCR included educational grants to help refugee children attend school at local churches, covering 50% of refugees’ medical expenses with designated health care providers, and distributing monthly financial aid to particularly needy refugee families. The threat of physical violence was also an issue with urban refugees in Egypt, who reported facing daily insecurity in the form of harassment from Egyptian security and police (Fanjoy et al. 2006).

Languages and cultural traits acquired in asylum contributed to new forms of association that cross cut normalized tribal relations. Those who sought asylum in Kenya or Uganda, for example, tended to speak Swahili as a second language, while those who spent time in Cairo – many of whom had also spent considerable time in Khartoum, Northern Sudan – most often
spoke Arabic. Due to the diversity of languages spoken by Southern Sudanese, friendships and groups tended to form in resettlement around common second languages. Fashion choices, such as women's dresses, also reflected differences associated with asylum location. The dress of women who spent time in Kenya or Uganda tended to reflect sub-Saharan African styles, while those from Cairo dressed in a more Northern Sudanese or Arab fashion, with women donning tobs\textsuperscript{20}, and men often wearing jalabiyas\textsuperscript{21} on formal occasions. Those venturing through Cairo also engaged in some other cultural practices, such as holding henna parties before weddings, more commonly found in Northern Sudan or Egypt than in the south.

There also tended to be differences in education and social class between those who had sought asylum in Egypt and those in camps. Many Southerners of the former had greater financial resources, and higher levels of formal education, than those who spent time in camps. The cause of the discrepancy was that many of the Southerners who were resettled from Egypt had been civil servants, or were from middle class southern families, and were studying at Egyptian universities on Sudanese government scholarships at the time they sought asylum. When the government cancelled their scholarships and attempted to recall them to Sudan in the mid 1990s, they refused to return to Khartoum, and claimed refugee status in Cairo. Additionally, the resources required to get to Egypt from Sudan were high, and the personal connections needed more complex, making it extremely difficult for the majority of refugees not already in

\textsuperscript{20} A tob is a Sudanese dress, normally consisting of a 15-foot long piece of often colourful material wrapped around the body with one end thrown over the left shoulder. The dress covers the legs down to the ankles, and it has an open edge in the front. Usually, women wear the tob over a short dress.

\textsuperscript{21} A simple robe, generally ankle length, worn by both men and women, often over clothes.
Khartoum, or without friends and family in Egypt, to reach Cairo\textsuperscript{22}. The camp versus Cairo division was evident among Southern Sudanese in the Calgary. A common complaint from those who had come from camps was that were treated as inferior by "Egyptian Southerners" who attempted to exclude them from becoming involved in community organizations. That was not an unfounded accusation, for it was common to hear those who came from Egypt refer to refugees who had spent time in camps as being "from the bush," and not well enough versed in politics to get involved in community organizations and advocacy.

To more clearly illustrate the diversity within Southern Sudanese groups in Calgary, the following excerpt from my field notes describes my initial impressions when attending a wedding shower there for a young Dinka woman from the Gorgrial region of Southern Sudan. She had left Sudan for Cairo while still very young. She had grown up speaking Arabic, learned to speak English upon resettlement to Canada as a teenager, and spoke very little Dinka. Her wedding shower was thus very similar to several I had attended in Cairo. It was also unique, however, due to the distinctly Kenyan flavour resulting from the presence of a large number of Gorgrial women who had spent several years in the Kakuma refugee camp located in Kenya.

<<The room reminded me of the traditional Anglican wedding showers I have attended in New Brunswick – white table cloths, vases full of fake flowers, a head table with a crepe paper border and balloons, and lots of ladies gossiping. There were at least 120 women present, a mix of old and young, with dozens of children and babies. The women were dressed in a mix of fashions.\textsuperscript{22} Similar effects of refugees’ socio-economic positions on flight, asylum and resettlement patterns have been noted among other refugee groups, such as Sri Lankans and Somalis (Van Hear 2006).
Several ladies, especially the married ones, wore tobs, and large number were in colourful East African style dresses – brightly coloured dresses with long fitted skirts flaring out at the bottom, with matching blouses as well as elaborate starched head dresses. Some of the younger ones were in fairly short flamboyant skin-tight dresses more likely to be seen at the local night club. Conversations at the tables were going on in Swahili, Dinka, Arabic and English. For the most part the music was a blaring mix of Kenyan and Egyptian. Some of the younger girls kept encouraging the DJ to play hip hop music but the mother of the bride soon put a stop to that. About two hours after the expected start time for the shower, ululating could be heard from the hallway. Suddenly ladies stopped chatting, stood up, and joined in. The bride, beautifully painted in henna, and dressed in a fabulous red tob, heavily beaded in gold, was led in by her mother and female relatives. The first three women leading the procession were carrying gold trays filled with incense and henna painting tools. >> (Excerpt from fieldnotes August 15th, 2011).

The event was open to all members of the Gorgrial community, and there was no overt tension among attendees. There was, however, a visible seating separation, and dance preference differences, between those who had come from Egypt and those who had come from Kenya. One group of young women, dressed in tobs with their hands and feet covered in intricate henna patterns, complained the party was not turning out to be good because the DJ was Kenyan and did not have an extensive enough collection of popular Egyptian music. On the other hand, several older married women who had spent time in Kenya complained bitterly about the late arrival of the bride, and the hassle they claimed henna always seemed to cause at wedding showers. The diversity of opinions and styles at the shower interested me, and a few days later I mentioned the apparent presence of three distinct social groups- the "Egyptian", "Kenyan", and
young "hip-hop" girls, to Sara, a young Dinka woman who had attended the shower. She explained to me:

You know our people have experienced a lot trying to deal with two cultures....but really when you think about it we are dealing with more than two. Like me - I have Sudanese in me, both north and south, because I lived in Khartoum, and I have Egyptian, and Canadian. Like our people who have come from Uganda and Kenya, they have nothing in common with us who came from Egypt. When I meet someone who came from Egypt we go crazy because we feel like we are a lot closer. Yes we are Sudanese, like others who came from Kenya, but we are one step closer [to those who came through Egypt]. And then we live here in Canada for a while and we are closer still, another step closer than people who stayed in Sudan.

There are times when you want to speak your language, you are aching to but you can’t. Those who came from Kenya, they can’t speak Arabic, so I was like, what a bummer when I met them. That is one of my criteria for finding a mate - they have to speak Arabic, because if they speak Swahili, yes we’ll have English in common, but I want something else. I understand Dinka and Bari but I can’t speak it, only a few words here and there. So whoever I marry has to speak Arabic because, for me, that’s as Sudanese as I get in terms of language. So if I find someone who comes from Kenya, we’re going to end up speaking English the whole time. I know a lot of people who think like that, even in the selection of friends. You know, you find that those who came from Egypt, they like to hang out together, and they make fun of those who came from Kenya, and those who came from Kenya, also the Nairobi people, made fun of the Kakuma people, (laughing) it’s so complex, we’re so confusing!

Sara's statement begins unpacking some of the complexity of social relations in the Southern Sudanese population living in Calgary. While kinship and tribal membership remain key
building blocks of social organization, new factors, such as language and shifts in cultural practices, have begun to create new ways of belonging for various groups. Two Southern Sudanese groups in the city highlight that point quite clearly: the Lost Boys Association, and a group of young Southern Sudanese resettled from Cuba.

The Lost Boys are a group made famous by American media accounts of their experiences as young unaccompanied minors fleeing from conflict in South Sudan to camps in Ethiopia and later Kenya. The majority of them fled, or were sent by their families or recruited by the SPLA, to camps in Ethiopia over a period of several years starting in the mid 1980s. When the SPLA was expelled from Ethiopia after the fall of Mengistu’s government in 1991, the refugees were forced out of Ethiopia and many journeyed across South Sudan to camps in Kenya. While some travelled directly to the camps, other spent extended periods of time fighting for the SPLA prior to entering. In 2001 a partnership between the United States and UNHCR resettled over 3800 “Lost Boys”, as they came to be referred to by the Western media, to the United States. While the group received much more media attention in the United States than they did in Canada, a large number of individuals who identify themselves as part of that group were also resettled to Canada during the same time period, many ending up in Calgary. No longer boys, the majority are now in their 30s and represent a highly motivated section of the Southern Sudanese

\[23\] Popular accounts of Lost Boys experiences tend to follow a standard narrative of flight from cattle camps, exile and wanderings through the bush before reaching safety in Kenya. Many Lost Boys, however, have begun to challenge these standard narratives by speaking out about their experiences as child soldiers and the SPLA’s involvement in recruiting boys away from villages so they could undergo military training in camps. Some of the debate surrounding these competing narratives will be discussed in following chapters.
population. Many now have college diplomas or university degrees and have attained professional employment in the city. Despite having varied tribal and sub-tribal origins, they tend to fundraise and advocate on behalf of Southern Sudanese in the city as a single group. The leader of the Lost Boys and Girls Association of Calgary\textsuperscript{24} explained their role as one of a unifying force.

[Leader of the Lost Boys and Girls Association of Calgary]

The main aim of creating a Lost Boys group is actually to identify with people. It is an identity that tries to bring those who have the same background, those who have gone through the same suffering together and to reflect on the hardships they have gone through to try to see what is the best way they can be helpful to themselves, and what is the best way they can be helpful to Canada and Sudan too. I think it works on a social base. It is a social organization.

[Martha]

So people are invited to join no matter what tribe they belong to?

[Leader of the Lost Boys and Girls Association of Calgary]

It actually encompasses almost all the different tribes in South Sudan. So Lost Boys and Girls is open to everyone as long as he or she is from Sudan and shared our experiences, they are welcome to join.

\textsuperscript{24} While the majority of unaccompanied minors resettled were boys, thus the popular name “Lost Boys,” there were young women in the camp who were resettled at the same time in much smaller numbers. In response to the desire to be inclusive of their experiences there are several “Lost Boys and Girls” associations.
Do conflicts between members from different regions cause problems?

I think the Lost Boys group is excluded from this mess. Like when they [other Southern Sudanese community organizations] come to sit together they make all of these problems by themselves. They see the community as a parliament and everyone wants their communities to be represented...but only the strongest of the community groups can win. But when you come to the Lost Boys you don’t talk about communities, you talk about needing someone who can lead people best, so there is no friction between different tribes in our group. We are able to stay away from politics.

You see, the Lost Boys stayed with each other for a long time. In those days you could see a Dinka, Nuer, a person from Equatoria, and they were mixed, because people used to come from different villages. And when we were in the camp we were mixed up so that tribal lines were removed. We were in the same group together for over 7 years, eating the same food, helping each other. It is not the same for an old Sudanese guy from tribe X and another old Sudanese guy from tribe Y who have never met and don’t know each other - when they come here they have nothing in common so they fight. But we were living with each other [for] a long time, and all know each other, so the chances of integrating and forgiving each other and trying to move forward with a common goal are much better. It actually puts down tribal divisions.

While the leader of the Lost Boys and Girls’ Association paints an optimistic picture of unity, with little conflict, it is also important to note that in recent years two splinter Lost Boys Associations split off from the main organization. Both splits appeared to form along tribal lines,
and originated from ongoing conflicts over which regions of Southern Sudan should be the focus
of the organization's educational fundraising efforts.

In addition to the Lost Boys and Girls Association, the group of Southern Sudanese who resettled
from Cuba is another example of shared asylum experiences contributing to the formation of
social attachments that transcend tribal boundaries. Resettled together from Cuba in the late
1990s, the Cuban-Sudanese as they are referred to in Alberta, consist of young people who were
sent from South Sudan to Cuba in 1985. Mainly children of high-ranking officials and
commanders in the SPLA, they were dispatched to Cuba to receive a socialist education; with the
hope they would eventually return to “South Sudan to be the future of the new Sudan.” Their
role, as John Garang, the leader of the SPLA, put it, was to fight with the pen while others fought
with guns. Changes within the SPLA, including their decision to distance themselves from their
communist allies in the early 1990’s after being expelled from Ethiopia, and the turmoil caused
by the formation of an SPLA-Nasir splinter group led by Riek Machar in 1991 that plunged the
South into a period of violent inter-ethnic infighting, resulted in the virtual abandonment of the
Sudanese youth in Cuba. An agreement was eventually reached between Cuba, the UNHCR, and
Canada to resettle the bulk of the Cuban-Sudanese to Alberta. Many of the young adults arrived
in Canada with high levels of education in fields such as veterinary science, medicine, dentistry,
law, and pharmacy. Most, however, were unable to secure credential recognition from Canadian
agencies, and were subsequently restricted from finding professional employment. Despite their
advanced Cuban education, many wound up working as labourers in a meat-packing facility in
Brooks, Alberta (Berger 2001). Berger (2001) documented the settlement experiences of the
Cuban Sudanese in Alberta, and noted their tendency to associate across tribal lines rather than
along them. As with the Lost Boys, this may be because strong kin-like bonds developed from spending extended periods of time relying on one another regardless of tribal divisions. Additionally, however, Berger (2001) noted the significant influences of the socialist education they had received in Cuba, an education that reflected John Garang’s vision of a New Sudan free of conflicts rooted in religious and tribal affiliations. The group also, however, stood out in other ways. Linguistically they spoke Spanish when conversing with one another, and preferred Latin music and styles of dress. While many of the young Southerners from Cuba I interviewed had joined local Sudanese community groups linked to their tribe or their parents' home village, they none the less maintained strong social ties with those they had spent time with in Cuba, regardless of tribal affiliation. Many other Southerners referred to them as "fake Sudanese," and pitied their in-between status. One elder Didinga woman stated emphatically, "you have to feel sorry for those young ones from Cuba, they are not Sudanese at all, they will never really be Canadian, and of course they are not Cuban - they belong to nobody."

While the importance of relationships based on tribal membership, kin groups, and home villages should not be understated, it is clear that new forms of association and ways of belonging, which have developed along the various paths Southern Sudanese took on their journeys to Calgary, often cross cut tribal and linguistic boundaries. Those new forms of sociality, combined with existing levels of affiliation based on kinship and tribal membership, simply add to the complexity of an already shifting system of Southern Sudanese social relations that has previously been characterized as a process of constant fusing and fissioning. The highly complex and diverse nature of Southern Sudanese social relations therefore makes it impossible to speak
of a general Southern Sudanese community in Calgary, unless by ‘community’ one refers simply to geographic proximity.

2.2. The desire for recognition and the making of a Southern Sudanese "Community"

In his landmark speech introducing the Multicultural Policy to parliament, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau stated that groups could “will themselves into existence” (1971). In the daily practice of official multiculturalism in Canada, however, that is seldom the case. More often official Canadian multiculturalism tends to rely on what Malkki (1995a) refers to as the “national order of things”, the according of recognition and official identity to groups based primarily on the boundaries of existing nation states (Malkki 1995b, Dusenbury 1997). Until the recent independence of South Sudan in July of 2011, this policy placed Southern and Northern Sudanese-Canadians in the awkward, and usually very difficult, position of attempting to present a unified front to gain recognition and access funding. The tendency to link cultural group recognition to national boundaries not only glossed over the difficulty of uniting Northern and Southern Sudanese groups under the same umbrella, it also completely ignored the extreme diversity within just the Southern Sudanese population. While not explicitly stated as government policy, Southern Sudanese groups in Canada were repeatedly told by government representatives, as well as non-governmental service providers, that, in order to secure funding for social programs, or even to be invited to a seat at the table to discuss their issues, they, in the words of a Calgary Police Services representative, "needed to come together, forget [their] differences, and act as one community". Responding to such directives over the past 10 years, while trying to work within the established system, several Southern Sudanese groups in Calgary
have attempted to do just that. Their success rate, however, has been dismal, and the history of Sudanese community groups in the city reads like a 'how not to' manual for community organization. One group after another formed, operated for a short time, and then disbanded, usually due to internal conflict. In one case the final meeting of a group degenerated into a fight that resulted in the destruction of a City of Calgary meeting room. Another conflict within a meeting resulted in the representative of a major funder fleeing the room in tears, while yet another group disbanded over accusations of fraud when a board member apparently disappeared to South Sudan with thousands of dollars of the community’s money.

Southerners often voiced feelings of embarrassment and frustration over their inability to achieve the perceived successes that immigrant groups such as the Chinese, Korean, or East Indian communities in the city had achieved. People within the greater Southern Sudanese community in Calgary constantly referred to the ability of Chinese-Canadian parents to send their children to Mandarin or Cantonese language classes on Saturdays, or the experiences of large Indo-Canadian and Chinese cultural centers and associations, as examples of what they would like to achieve. The difficulty they experienced when trying to fit all the various sub-communities into a larger group labeled "Sudanese", or even just "Southern Sudanese", caused many Southerners to draw negative comparisons between themselves and other immigrant groups in the city.

For example -our kids are involved in very bad activities right now with gangs. Most of them have guns. You can see them in the street all the time. And you can see from all immigrant communities the worst is the Sudanese community. We don’t even have dignity in the city right now. We are the last people, and least educated, the ones with no community. If we had a community we could discuss all of this and try to help each other. We need to educate people [to] the benefit of having community in this country. If you see Chinese community, Indian
community, they are doing well and they are supporting their kids, and their kids even speak their own languages, especially the Chinese, their kids read and write Chinese. This is something we could try to do - our kids cannot even speak our own languages, we should come together to fix this.

During my research it appeared the community may have finally hit upon a winning formula when they formed the Southern Sudanese community group the called USES (United Sudanese Canadian Enhancement Society). USES had been registered with the province of Alberta as an organization for three years at the beginning of my field work, and had been quietly building trust and relationships with the various non-Sudanese groups within the city. While northern Sudanese were conspicuously absent from the organization (USES claimed they had been invited to join, but had declined), USES did manage to bring representatives from all other Sudanese regions living Calgary together under one umbrella (See Figure 6).

![USES Organizational Chart]

**Figure 6: USES Organizational Chart**

The chart in Figure 6 is more than simply a list the Sudanese regions grouped under USES. It represents their attempt to organize the community in a way that made sense to funders and
service providers. The organizational chart was presented at all meetings with government representatives, funders, service providers, and anyone who fell into what USES board members referred to as the “mainstream”\(^{25}\), in an attempt to translate the diversity they saw within the “Sudanese” community into bounded, manageable categories, understandable by outside agencies. The categorization of the community into territorial groupings, which contained multiple tribes, rather than tribal groups which spanned state boundaries, reflects not only salience of the ‘national order of things’ in how Southerners chose to represent themselves to Canadians, but also USES’ attempt to deemphasize tribal allegiance in favour of broader Southern Sudanese affiliations and to avoid one tribe dominating the organization. For example, while the Dinka, or Jieng, were the largest group in the city, and could potentially dominate the organization if they voted as a block, or demanded representation proportional to their size, under USES’ structure they were spread across at least two regions (Bar el Ghazal and Upper Nile) and grouped together with several smaller tribes within those regions. This affiliation between a Dinka sub-tribe and their region, however, did not prevent the Dinka from forming alliances that crossed territorial boundaries in order to voice their opinions and push their broader Jieng Association’s agenda. This constant shifting between territorial and patrilineal or tribal affiliation reflects the complexity of relationship between lineage, sub-lineage and territory as well as the flexibility of Southern Sudanese social organization as they negotiated between territorial and lineage or tribe based belonging.

\(^{25}\) The use of this term reflects adoption of terms used by government bureaucracy as funding refers to mainstream Canadians as any groups outside the “multicultural spectrum” that the programs are geared to.
One of the main tenets of USES was “unity within diversity”. As one board member put it while addressing a town hall style meeting with the Nuer Union, "in order to build a strong and viable community we must come together, but that does not mean we do not support and value the existence of all of our sub-communities - sub-communities must have an equal say in all we do."

In the spring and summer of 2009, in yet another attempt to gain access to government funding, USES was asked to produce a five year strategic plan, part of which was to be based on a community needs assessment. In attempting to deal with the diversity of Southern Sudanese sub-communities existing in Calgary, which the funding organization was simplistically generalizing as the "Sudanese Community," USES decided that, instead of conducting a handful of focus groups that could only reflect a small portion of Southerners’ perspectives, a wide ranging community survey would be undertaken. The project was approached employing USES's strategy of diversity within unity. USES representatives from each of the six regions (see Figure 1) were asked to approach all their respective sub-communities to ask for nominations of candidates to serve as community researchers. The candidates were then brought to regional meetings where the whole region elected two individuals (a man and a woman) to represent their region on the project. The process ensured that the sub-regions and regional heads, rather than the USES board, would be held responsible for the actions of the researchers, as well as any accusations of favoritism, while also ensuring that each of the six regions was equally represented. Having researchers from each region also ensured there was sufficient linguistic diversity among selected representatives so that surveys could be conducted in the languages of respondents’ choice. Building on the participatory research methods used to select the community researchers, workshops were then held with all selected team members in order to
solicit community input regarding survey design and provide training for the researchers. Following data collection a final workshop was held to discuss the process, the findings, and provide recommendations for further community directed projects. The final survey results were later shared at a town hall style meeting open to members of all regions and sub-communities.

The results of 150 completed surveys indicated that, while some internal differences did exist between various Southern Sudanese groups, issues facing the Southern Sudanese community as a whole were also identified. While particular concerns raised in the survey varied, including issues such as racism, unemployment, and language barriers, two stood out among all others as garnering the greatest concern, intergenerational issues and domestic problems. Those two, therefore, will be the focus of the following two sections in this chapter. In focusing on those two themes, as well as the most commonly suggested solution to the problems - a Southern Sudanese community centre - I will explore how the notion of a "Southern Sudanese" community is being formed, and utilized, by Southern Sudanese in Calgary to address the social and economic difficulties they are facing in resettlement.

2.2.1. Intergenerational Issues

As noted above, anxiety over issues facing youth and increasing intergenerational tensions was a key concern raised in the community surveys, and was a constant theme in discussions surrounding challenges facing Southern Sudanese groups in the city. Concerns ranged from worries over the high percentage of youth, particularly boys, dropping out of school, to youth involvement in crime and organized gangs, and parents’ general feelings of stress and frustration at their growing inability to communicate with, and discipline, their children in a way that they deem appropriate.
There are so many issues contributing to the problems our young people are facing. Parents, transitions, and cultural issues, these are three big things that are contributing. First, parents are not really giving a big effort to support their children in school like other people would. Back home, when children go to school parents don’t have to do anything, they are not even involved in education, they give the responsibility to the school. When a child behaves badly in the school their expectation is that the teacher and the administration will take care of the child, either to punish them or do whatever they want to do with them. With their homework, they don’t look after that because when children go to school it is the teacher’s responsibility to ask them did you do your homework or not, and if you didn’t do your homework you have to be punished, there is consequences but the teachers look after it. So, because of that, people relax at home, you cannot even be bothered checking your children’s homework because you know there is someone taking care of those things. People don’t know the difference with the education system here. They don’t see that here the responsibility is shared with the parent and the teacher. This is one thing that is a really big problem, parents need to have a workshop to understand the education system here, they don’t even go to school for parent teacher interview….they don’t go. If you ask many teachers “did those people come?” no! I have so many Sudanese kids here now, [and] their parents never show up.

The second big problem is with how they [the school board] put kids in classes. Some kids, when they come here, they’ve never been to school. For example, you come here you are like maybe 14 or 15 but you’ve never been to school, but they still place in like, grade 9 or 10. This is a problem and a very big challenge because they go to school and they don’t understand what is going on there. They decide, because this country has a lot of choice, if the school doesn’t work they can try to do something different, so leave school. When they see their chance in school is limited, they don’t see a future, and there is no goal for them, so they leave.
The third is that they want to fit in with a culture. They see they don't fit with the white kids, and they don't feel they fit with their parents and the other Sudanese, they see other black guys hanging out on the street, and they see the media, and they feel they want to be part of that black group. They think to be part of black culture they have to act like in the media - to be gangster. They don't want to be seen as a newcomer, they want to fit with those that came a long time ago. They see their parents like a shame, and they don’t even want to show others that these are our parents, but they don’t know how hard it will be. [They do not realize that the rap star] 50 Cent has already made his money, and [that] you can’t get that far that fast, and [that] you get lost here if you try. You can see them how they dress, even girls, if you see them in the street they dress very well because they want to be like their role models, like Beyonce, but they don’t care about who they are, they just want to be like someone else. They really just want to fit with that group and they are getting lost trying. (Dinka man in his mid 30’s who works as an in-school settlement councilor for immigrant children in the Calgary Catholic School Board).

While there are no firm numbers on Southern Sudanese dropout rates, conversations with parents, service providers and school officials all indicate that it is abnormally high. In 2011, high school completion rates in Alberta were the lowest in the Canada at 78%, with Aboriginal completion rates below 30%. Most informants estimated that Southern Sudanese completion rates lie somewhere between those two, but exactly where is unknown. The blame for such a high drop-out rate was attributed various factors. NGOs in the city tended to point to poor ESL services in schools and the lack of unified ESL curriculum or coherent strategy for integrating immigrant children into the school system. Parents identified the main cause to be the schools’ practices of placing children in grades appropriate for their physical ages, but not their levels of education, while many school officials I interviewed placed the blame squarely on the parents,
who they argued were uninvolved in their children’s education, either due to a lack of interest, or lack of language skills which prevented them from contributing to their child’s education. One young Nuer man, who works for an NGO that provides after school support for immigrant children put it thus:

In Sudan we expect the school to discipline the children and here it's different. The school will expect the parents to discipline the children. But there's a gap in the understanding there because they were told if you discipline your children how you want to the children will be taken by child welfare. That is a big trauma they fear, so they are too scared to discipline the children because they are confused about how to do it in a way that is ok in Canada. That’s a miss communication between the whole system - they don't understand they can still correct the child....the child tells them "if you tell me anything I will call 911", and the parent believes it because the child knows more English than them. They think the government has taken the whole authority from them and they are nothing. So there’s a lot of frustration there.

Southern Sudanese parents’ apparent lack of direct involvement in their children’s education is not unique among resettled refugee populations, and represents a major gap in Canadian refugee resettlement policy and services. Research with other refugee groups, such as Somalis, has shown that despite being in Canada for a decade or more, many parents view the role of the school system and education as completely separate from that of the family (Naji 2012). That is in stark contrast to the Canadian school system, where in general, there is the expectation that parents will take an active role in their children’s education, through homework support, volunteering at school activities, etc. Many Sudanese parents spoke of the difficulty of getting clear information on the expectations for their role in their child’s education, and complained
that when the school did try to contact them it was typically through written memos, sent home with their children, that they were unable to read.

Closely related to worries of unusually high school dropout rates were concerns over youth crime and gang activity. The involvement of young men in violent gang and drug related activities was extremely upsetting to community members. During my fieldwork there were several shootings involving young Sudanese men. The most shocking to the community was the shooting death of the young adult son of the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) representative to Canada on a city street corner during a confrontation with members of a rival gang. The community’s views on the best solution to the problem varied, often vacillating between wishing the police would enforce tougher penalties on offenders in order to “scare others straight,” and hoping the police would do more to involve Southern Sudanese community members in sentencing and custody arrangements for young offenders so they could handle situations in what they deemed were more culturally appropriate ways.

The concept of what constituted “culturally appropriate” manners of raising children often led to conflicts between parents and children, families and social services, and schools and the police. The main issue in this regard arising from the community survey, and my own interviews, was that people felt children in Canada had too much freedom. Parents were repeatedly frustrated by what they saw as government interference in their personal family matters. They were often confused by child protection laws with regard to what constituted acceptable discipline. The result was the development of a rampant mistrust and dislike for child protective services in the community, with some people even accusing government agencies of “child abductions.”
From the perspective of many of the young people in the community it was argued that youth no longer had the same priorities as their parents, and that they should not be expected to. Parents were often preoccupied with the political situation in South Sudan, sending money back to family members there while maintaining proper Southern Sudanese values within their community in Calgary. Many youth, however, found the focus on extended family networks, both in Calgary and back in Sudan, had been elevated to a greater degree of importance than the focus on individuals within the nuclear family, and were thus considered to be excessively constricting. The speed with which most children and youth picked up English, and adapted to the variety of new systems they were exposed to in Calgary (transit, shopping, schools etc.), when compared to the difficulty some of their parents had adapting to those same systems, often led to power relation role-reversals in the home. Parents, particularly single mothers, often found themselves relying on their children to act as interpreters for them and to assist them in filling out forms, or negotiating various technologies.

Many young people argued that after watching their parents struggle for years, only to remain in low paying jobs, and remit what little income they had to South Sudan, there was little motivation to follow their advice to achieve an education in order to enter the mainstream work force. A young woman who was attending university, but whose boyfriend was an active gang member, articulated what she saw as many of her friend’s motivations for leaving school to join gangs.

They [Sudanese parents] juggle school and family, and send money home, and never save anything. They work nights in factories and other low jobs and after five or ten years in this country achieve nothing. So why do their sons want to
follow in their footsteps when there was easier money to be made? They see this as an easy way to get a car and a house and everything they’ve wanted.

The role of elders in decision making and disciplining youth was another point of intergenerational tension. The majority of adults believed that elders within the community should remain the final authority in family conflicts and child rearing issues, and many argued that existing intergenerational tensions would not be as serious if there was more community and government support for the role of elders. Many young adults, however, felt there should be more room for young people to have a voice at the family and community level. Regardless of community feelings toward the role of elders, however, or a willingness on the part of government agencies and service providers to involve them in decisions, one of the primary issues facing the Southern Sudanese in Calgary was simply a lack of elders in the community. Due to the nature of forced migration and the refugee resettlement system, which tends to select young families and men who are in their prime working years, the demographics of Southern Sudanese in resettlement tends to be skewed toward youth. While a small number of men fell into the “elder” category (which usually tends to include people over the age of 55-60, or grandparents), the majority of elders falling into the official Canadian definition of seniors (+65 years old) tended to be women. There were more elderly women in the community because they were often sponsored by children who had already resettled in Canada. The lack of traditional male elders in the community led to a conceptual shift in the definition of who was considered and elder. Many middle-aged men below the age of 50-55, who would not normally hold the position, suddenly found themselves included in that category, and in a position of greater authority than they normally would have held in their community group. The leader of the Jieng community, for example, assumed that position when he was only in his late 30's, and spoke of
the difficulties he had in adjusting to his new social position when he first arrived in Calgary. It was his position as an elder in the Jieng community, he explained, that prevented him from accepting my offer of a coffee during one of our conversations at Tim Hortons:

See, in Sudan and Egypt I could do what I wanted....I could eat and drink with my friends, and go for coffee, but here I have to be more careful. Now I am an elder here, and I have a position that is big. I can't come to Tim Hortons here and just order a coffee with all of these young guys around. I can't just walk down the street with my coffee in my hand. I have to make sure they have respect for me. It would be a shame for me if they saw me walking around with my coffee, just like a young guy from the street.

While many who were now considered to be senior men, such as the Jieng community leader above, struggled to find their footing as elders in the community, other younger Southern Sudanese chaffed under traditional age restrictions and social norms that they felt unfairly limited the voice and independence of young adults. They argued that, in Canada, childhood ends at 18, and were frustrated by what they considered to be the lack of respect they received from adults. They felt their opinions and ideas were often disregarded, even when dealing with issues concerning youth such as school dropout and gangs, and many believed there was no space for them in community organizations, beyond being seen as token youth members. Groups such as the Lost Boys and Girls Association, in particular, argued they should have more say in community meetings and consultations with service providers and government agencies. While some youth acknowledged that a certain respect level for elders had been lost during the war, many others suggested they were also accorded little respect from those older than themselves.
The problems between youth and elders come from the war. Before, in our country, in South Sudan, people respected elders a lot and there were stages of life that everyone lived in. You had to know your stage and stay in it. You go with others your age, and even in your own age group, you have to respect everyone, because if you don’t respect them, you won't have any friends. So when people met and talked in the community, there had to be stages that were respected. Like, maybe a young guy like me, sometime I cannot even attend the meetings because I am too young, and not in that elder stage. But in the war, when people went to refugee camps, things were different. You go by yourself, without parents, and you become like...you can say whatever you want to say, to anyone, and there is no one to stop you, so you start to like to speak and make decisions. So we lost the respect for elders. We might still call them elder and we involve them in things, but when it comes to an agreement I can say no, because what are they gonna do- nothing. So many elders, they just pull back now, they don't want to meet us in the middle, so there is no respect from both sides. (Nuer male in his early 30’s, member of the Lost Boys and Girls Association).

The comment from the young man above indicates the frustration many youth, especially those who arrived as unaccompanied minors, felt toward the lack of respect that elders showed them. They often argued that as they had looked after themselves for years in refugee camps, and after their arrival in Canada, they were no longer children and should have their voices heard and respected at community meetings. Opinions on how to deal with the growing gap between youth and adults were varied. Some parents, like Paul, an influential Bor Dinka elder, believed that elders needed to take a step back and allow Southern Sudanese youth to choose their own path in Canada:

I have to take what is good from my culture and give it to my kids, but it is their choice to choose whatever they want to take from me, even if they want to choose
Canadian culture, it is ok. It is not important that, because I am a Dinka man, my kids should be marked on the head like me,\textsuperscript{26} or talk like me – no, they are growing up here and they have different ideas. If we went back to Africa today it would be OK for me, because I grew up there, but for them it would be very difficult. So for me personally, I will not tell my kids to follow my system. I was born in different environment than my kids. Nobody clothed me until I was 10 years old, but my kids were never naked. I was born on a cow skin, my kids were born in the hospital. I never saw TV until I was grown into a big man, my kids have seen TV since they were small. I drank all milk, no food, just milk for many years, my kids, they ate food. So, the environment is completely different. If I were to tell my kids, "I will teach you the way I grew up and you must be that way too", they would not accept it. So it is better to give them the choice to choose the best choice for their future.

Paul, however was in the minority. Most Southerners mourned the loss of their elders, and the practices that normally guided their children into “proper” Southern Sudanese adulthood.

We used to have a lot of elders that really connected us, and kept us in the right way. That is who we really respected the most, and they were the law in our society. Whatever they say, we respected it. They are living for a long time, they know enough from their experiences in the world, and we need that kind of elder, and their story telling, here in Canada to help us. Like the marks (points to the

\textsuperscript{26} The marks Paul is referring are the scarification marks that young Dinka and Nuer men receive on their foreheads upon initiation into manhood. While the scars can take different forms depending on the group, in general they tend to be a series of horizontal scars running across the forehead. Many claim that the practice is dying out in South Sudan, and Hutchinson (1996) noted SPLA efforts to stamp out the practice during the war. However, it was not uncommon when I was in Juba in 2010 to see young boys who had been scarified.
Gaar\textsuperscript{27} scars on his forehead), it’s like marking a child as a man and connecting him with his elders. They will tell him, “now you are a man, you have to do this and that, don’t get involved in stupid little-boy things anymore, try to behave like this and that,” and when you hear that you think “well well, these stupid boyhood things, I shouldn’t do them anymore”. Like you don’t have to be crying in front of people, you don’t have to be throwing silly, or dangerous, words out in front of people, you are not a little child, you are a man now you have to act like a man. So to live right you have to copy how to live from the elders, and the people you grow up around, but we've lost a lot of this, and we have no way to make the children learn and to teach them here. (Achak, a Nuer man in his forties)

Achak’s comment is interesting since it not only points to the absence of the lack of elders, but also highlights a concern often expressed by older Southern Sudanese in Calgary about the disappearance of ritual practices that marked a youth’s transition into adulthood. Such practices varied from community to community, and similar concerns were raised by adults from various tribes.

2.2.2. Divorce and Domestic Violence

The extremely high divorce rates and rising incidences of domestic violence among Southern Sudanese families in Calgary were of great concern to community members. Debates surrounding the reasons for the high rate of family breakup were a common topic of conversation among Southerners. Many of the suspected causes identified by community members involved in the present research - stresses associated with immigration and settling in a new country, financial stresses that were being compounded by pressures to send money home, and shifting

\textsuperscript{27} Gaar is the Nuer term for the scars a young man receives on his forehead upon initiation into manhood.
gender roles - echoed the findings previous research with Southern Sudanese refugee communities in North America experiencing similarly high levels of divorce and domestic violence (Holtzman 1999, Leng 2006, Shandy 2007). Men were often quick to accuse women of ‘going crazy with freedom’, and suggested that was one of the main causes of divorce. Women, on the other hand, countered that a lack of support at home, and the unwillingness of their partners to adapt to ‘Canadian ways’ drove most women to leave.

Some of our men are very rigid to changes. I think in every culture women adjust to change much easier. When we were in Egypt our girls were able to speak Egyptian Arabic like that (snaps her fingers), but the men had a hard time. They were resisting it, and I find that here too. A lot of the women, even those that are not educated, they are more flexible, they are adjusting easier to things like work and school. [She then gives a hypothetical example] So a wife gets a job and she wants her husband to help her in the kitchen - but in our culture men don’t go to the kitchen - but the women are like, “I’ve changed, I’m working now, like you’re working, so you need to change too.” And that’s where a lot of problems start. The guys call back home [Sudan] and complain, “My wife is turning bad, she is becoming too Canadian,” and the family starts to get involved. But for her, she just needs some physical rest; she needs some help from her husband. (Married Acholi woman).

Displacement, and then resettlement to Canada, has brought about changes to traditional Southern Sudanese gender roles. The majority of men held negative views of Sudanese women in Canada, especially women who had been brought up here. Many stated that women, similar to youths, misunderstood freedom and used it irresponsibly. They believed women had been spoiled by what many referred to as "the Canadian way". The widely held view of the nature of
these beliefs is exemplified by one Latuka woman’s experience at the airport in Juba, Southern Sudan when she was returning to Canada after her first visit back to Sudan.

When the customs officer saw my Canadian passport he got less friendly. He looked at me and said, “ah you are one of those Canadian-Sudanese women, we hear that over there it is the women who are the men, and the men serve like women! That in Canada it goes women, then dogs then men!”

While men and women differed on who, or what, was the main cause of marital tensions, both agreed the lack of extended family support in resettlement significantly contributed to the escalation in the frequency of marital conflict, and the high number of divorces.

Marriage for a Southerner is not between only man and woman; it is for the whole family. So if you do something wrong to her, it is not only her who will say something to you, the whole family will back her up, her family and yours, especially if she is the one they [your family] chose. We miss that here, and it causes lots of problems. If I marry back home there [Sudan], my dad and mom, they are like mentors, they have to stay with me because they know there is a lot of difficulty for the young families. My mom will have to stay with my new wife all the time and tell her, “you have to do this and that,” and tell me, ”my son, be like this and that, and if you get mad try to be calm”. But here, we miss it. If there is any problems that are happening between you and your wife, in Sudan your dad will play a big role. If you are acting badly to your family he will tell you, “she is a good girl, why are you acting like this? I don’t want a bad name in my family, don’t bring our family down, because we all see you are wrong, and we don’t need that kind of name in our family background.” Divorce is really bad in our culture; it’s really, really bad. Everyone will work on your problem and help you settle it. If they see the girl is feeling a little down they will call her mom, or they will take her to her mom’s house and they will inform her mom, and if she was doing something bad she will have to face her family, and they will tell her
the same thing - that she is shaming them. And if you don’t listen you are in trouble. They will target your friends and where you work, they will target every network you have, and then they will all pressure you and tell you are wrong until you correct it. And if you don’t change they will completely dismantle any source of connection you have, and they will tell you on your next marriage, “we are not going to support it”. They will tell you, “Go away from this village, and the girl you want to marry we will not speak for you to her family”. But we miss all this here. Here the police and government just bring documents and say, “sign this and this, and go here, and you go there”. There is no mediation, so this is where we feel the loss of our elders and our families. (Newly married Dinka man in his late 30’s).

Various Southern Sudanese community groups in the city recognized the gap left by the lack of extended family support, so community leaders tried to fill the need, and address family breakdowns by encouraging couples to contact them before problems get out of hand and the police are called. These efforts are focused mainly on women, who are often accused of escalating situations by calling 911 and getting the ‘system’ involved. Community leaders’ involvement in the issue ranges from meeting with couples to try to solve the issue, or contacting family in Sudan to call to try to mediate, to applying social and sometimes physical, pressure on misbehaving community members. In one instance, for example, a man known to be extremely physically violent with his wife and children was called to a meeting with several community leaders from various tribes and was told to stop the abuse or leave town. Soon after the meeting another violent incident occurred at his home that resulted in his teenage daughter being thrown from a second floor window. Men from various communities then began applying their own pressure on him and he was ’run out of town,’ and subsequently moved out of the province.

While the majority of the men believed that was the best way to address domestic issues, several
women argued that once the community is involved they often face so much pressure from families in South Sudan, and the community in Calgary, that they are ‘guilted’ or shamed into staying in marriages, regardless of the suitability of the situations. Exacerbating the issue is the fact that many women, particularly those who have just recently arrived in Canada as wives of men who have been in the country for several years, are without kin networks in the city to help protect their interests. Without the protection of a local kin network, community mediations tend to end in the man's favour.

While tensions caused by changing gender roles were often blamed for rising levels of domestic violence, men’s inability to retrieve bridewealth payments or maintain custody of children during domestic disputes or divorces were also cited as contributing factors. Bridewealth, in the form of either cattle or money, can be difficult to retrieve in the event of divorce in South Sudan, and the disrupting affect of the civil war, and continuing post war tensions, have only increased those difficulties (Hutchinson 1996). Bridewealth for those in a resettlement scenario, whether in the form of cows or money, has circulated through numerous hands and often been transported across several borders. Thus it becomes nearly impossible to retrieve²⁸.

If you’ve paid money you don’t even bother asking for it back because nobody will even consider it. They will say are you crazy or something. With cows it depends. If she already has kids with you, and you get to keep the kids, then you and your family don’t get the cows back. But then again for people here and back home it is different. Here in Canada some may just forgo it and not bother. People have started to look at marriage in a different way. The reason they do it in the village [in Sudan] is because if you get married and then you get divorced how

²⁸The cattle/cash flows involved in transnational marriages will be explained in detail in Chapter 4.
Achuil’s statement illustrates the growing difficulty men have recovering bridewealth in resettlement. They additionally face increased pressures from families in Sudan to make a marriage work. After being in Canada for five years Achuil married a girl from his home village and sponsored her to come to Canada. He paid half of the required bridewealth of $20,000 out of his own pocket. The remainder was to be paid at a later date, once he and his new wife had children. The Dinka marriage rites were conducted in South Sudan, with the church ceremony and party to take place in Canada upon her arrival. His wife, however, decided after arriving in Canada that she was not ready to be married, so he held off the church ceremony and party in the hopes that she would change her mind. Three months later she decided she did not want to go through with the marriage and moved out of his uncle's house, where she had been living, and moved in with friends. Achuil was then faced with extreme disappointment, and anger from her family for allowing the marriage to fall apart and letting her go off on her own. He also was pressured by his own family to make the marriage work so the bridewealth investment would not be lost. He was unable to convince her to reconsider, however, and ended up letting her go. The failed marriage caused a major rift between the two families in their village in South Sudan. Her family refused to repay the bridewealth, arguing they had upheld their part of the marriage, and it was Achuil’s fault for not ensuring she remained safe and good in Canada. Achuil told the story over tea in Juba, where he had moved to look for work three years after his failed marriage. He was still trying to reclaim at least a portion of his $20,000, and
was still hoping to smooth things over between the two families. He had accepted the fact, however, that it was unlikely he would ever see any of the money again, but was in negotiations to marry another girl from the family instead. He was emphatic that this time his wife would remain in the south as a "Sudanese" wife because Canadian laws were no help to him in his last marriage.

Achuil’s frustration with the Canadian legal system is an example of the tensions that can arise when the differing definitions of marriage and parentage held by many Southern Sudanese clash with Canadian family law. Women appeared to adapt faster to the Canadian family legal system, and were quite adept at exercising a substantial amount of agency when negotiating the various meanings and categories surrounding parenthood, marriage, and divorce to their advantage. Men, however, felt the system constantly placed them in positions of disadvantage. Marriage is not considered by Southern Sudanese to be simply a one day event marking an immediate change in the martial and legal status of two individuals. For Southern Sudanese, marriage is only fully constituted after a lengthy process of negotiation and exchange. Particularly for Dinka and Nuer, but other Southern groups as well, the marriage relationship cannot be officially begun, or ended, unless proper bridewealth has paid, or in the case of divorce, repaid. Those requirements are irrespective of the marriage’s legal status in Canada. In one extreme incidence of domestic violence, in which a man violently assaulted his ex-wife, many men explained that, although he had gone about it in the wrong way, they understood his feelings of frustration because his wife was cheating on him with another man. When I pointed out they had been divorced for over five years, I was informed that since bridewealth had not been repaid, she was still his wife, and was therefore engaged in an adulterous relationship with her live-in boyfriend.
Differing views of child custody were also a cause of concern among Southern Sudanese living in Calgary. In most cases of divorce in Southern Sudan, if proper bridewealth has been paid, custody of the children usually passes to the father’s family. Children may remain with their mother if they are very young, but usually the father can claim custody of the child at around the age of seven. In Canada, however, custody arrangements tend to be decided in favour of the mother, leading to frustration among many divorced men. The issues are further complicated by the involvement of family members in South Sudan, who pressure men to assert control over their household in order to avoid losing what they interpret as their family's children. Attempts to balance competing definitions of marriage and divorce, along with the pressures many feel to maintain Southern Sudanese ideals of manhood, womanhood and proper households, are explored in greater detail in Chapter 5.

2.2.3. "It feels like we have an identity here": The desire for a Community Centre

The living room of the duplex is filled with plastic folding chairs, and a few used office chairs. A small TV in the corner blares out CNN all night. Men keep coming in every few minutes and going around the room shaking hands before sitting down to talk, or move down to the basement where the dominoes, liquor and cards are. Malual tells me that the older men stay in the front while the younger men hang out in the basement....and that it's ok for me to be here in the front room but that I should NEVER set foot in the basement. As the only woman in the place I feel painfully out of place and can't wait for the owner of the Social Club to arrive so that I can be properly introduced and then retreat to the back room where I will hopefully be able to conduct interviews during the rest of my fieldwork. I'm surprised by the diversity in the room.
The place is packed with people from several different tribes, and I point this out to Malual. “It’s our escape from the stress” he leans over and tells me, “outside, if we meet in the street, some of us may not even speak to each other, but here, we all belong, and we leave the community fighting stuff outside” “So you mean it feels relaxing to be here” I ask a bit jokingly, “a good break from work, wife and kids?” “More than that,” he responds, “it feels like we have an identity here, like we belong”. >> (Excerpt from fieldnotes, July 15, 2009)

The above excerpt was written after my first visit to the Sudanese Social Club. The social club provided a space for men to come together, talk politics, discuss the situation in Sudan, share their concerns and, as one man put it, "just be Sudanese". Unfortunately, the club’s existence was brief, it was open for just a little over a year. It was being run, without any license or permit, out of a rented residential duplex and the landlord insisted it be shut down once he realized what his three bedroom duplex was being used for. The club was male only and played a relatively minor role in the broader Southern Sudanese community. Comments such as the above quoted statement by Malual regarding the important role it played in men’s feelings of well being and belonging illustrate the importance of place to feelings of group belonging and recognition. The desire for a physical space that allowed people to simply ‘be Sudanese’ was repeated in the community survey, and in interviews and conversations throughout my fieldwork. The vast majority of contact, and survey respondents stated that, in order to address shared issues such as youth crime, school dropout, intergenerational tensions, and domestic turmoil, a space for them to come together, that allowed them to create a uniquely Southern Sudanese place, was necessary. Women in particular voiced a desire for a community centre where they could meet and socialize. While men already had the social club, and could meet more freely at coffee shops...
and other public spaces, women often found themselves holding their meetings and social gatherings in small cramped apartments, with little room for themselves or their children.

The need for a place was often voiced with reference to regaining what had been lost through war and resettlement to Canada. People spoke of lost family connections, lost practices, lost languages, lost values, lost identity, lost homes, and lost communities. The idea of loss, however, reached beyond concerns of lost traditions and material goods. Many Southerners voiced the fear that if they could not come together and assert themselves as "Southern Sudanese" in a way that would be recognized positively in Canadian society, they would become completely lost, neither Southern Sudanese nor Canadian.

If you lose your culture, and you lose your language, you are completely nothing. You are just completely a street person because you will not know what you are doing, and no one will know you. Yes, there are bad things in our ways, but there are bad things in the Canadian ways too, and failing to mix the two together, you know - throwing the bad and bringing the good things from our ways, and throwing the bad from the Canadian and bringing the good things - that’s why we have such big problems. But we need a place where we can teach each other about the good in our culture, and in Canadian culture. We need to teach our kids the good from both so they won't be lost. (Stephen, Nuer man in his late 30s)

It is likely that the majority of Southern Sudanese would prefer to have a physical space asserting their presence in Calgary based on their sub-tribe, or tribal level. There appears, however, to be an awareness, and acceptance, of the limits of recognition within the multicultural system in Canada, and therefore the resulting need to organize on a broader Southern Sudanese level to address shared challenges with one voice. The present goal of such a cooperative venture is to work toward the attainment of a community centre. Although the community in Calgary did
accept being recognized broadly as Southern Sudanese, there were limits to the level of abstraction they were willing accept. They continued to resist, for example, the suggestions that an 'African' community centre would be a more achievable and appropriate goal, and were frequently frustrated by the efforts of service providers and funders to lump all African refugees and immigrants into one broad group.

2.3. Conclusion

The shifting relations between groups, and the boundaries that define them, exhibited by Southern Sudanese living in Calgary, exemplify the fluid nature of the identity categories people choose to inhabit. It is clear that forced migration and resettlement has contributed to an ongoing reconfiguration and renegotiation of belonging and group boundaries. Macro level processes surrounding the prolonged civil war, the nationalist aspirations of the SPLM, and the recent independence of South Sudan, combined with local shared experiences in countries of asylum and resettlement, which were often related to class, education and language, have contributed to new forms of association which often cut across previously established tribal boundaries. This is especially evident among the youth, who tend to associate based on language learned in their country of asylum, rather than limiting their social contacts on a strictly tribal basis. While these new associations and ways of belonging have added to the complexity and diversity of the Sudanese population in Calgary, it is clear that a Southern Sudanese community has taken shape in an attempt to gain recognition and address the difficulties and pressures all Southern communities feel they have in common. The numerous attempts to form an umbrella Southern Sudanese organization, of which USES is the most recent iteration, are a clear indicator of the strategic acknowledgement that in order to attain official recognition by the government and
social services sector, a common voice is required. Through a strategic system of fission and fusion characterized by continuous renegotiations of group boundaries, Southern Sudanese refugees in Calgary are engaged in an ongoing process of simultaneously making, and unmaking, the notion of a Southern Sudanese community in the city.
3. Staying on Script: How to be a “Good” Refugee

The daylong meeting between various Southern Sudanese community members, the Calgary Police Service, and several service providers, had been called to discuss strategies of dealing with rising rates of youth crime and domestic violence in the Southern Sudanese community. Despite the contentious, and often sensitive, nature of the issues being discussed, as well as the volatile relationship the community had with the police, the meeting was going quite well. The mood was light and friendly and everyone seemed to be performing their roles admirably. The police officers present were exhibiting an appropriate level of curiosity and politeness regarding Southern Sudanese cultural practices - they had even created a new staff position for a constable who was now responsible for “African” issues, and ensuring “culturally sensitive” police interventions. The Southern Sudanese community representatives were also playing their parts nicely – maintaining a respectful tone with the police, reiterating their respect for Canadian laws and their desires to become “good Canadians.” I was also playing my prescribed role as the diligent anthropologist, there to take notes and, when requested, serve as the helpful “cultural interpreter” to help clear up any miscommunications between the two groups.

Several hours into the meeting the topic of domestic abuse was broached. The discussion following a standard pattern, familiar from previous meetings I had attended in which the topic had been raised. The police and service providers explained the importance of equality and women’s rights in Canada, and the need to leave “old patriarchal ways of thinking” behind, and the Sudanese representatives emphasized they had never had domestic abuse problems in Sudan, and that the trauma of forced migration was to blame. Everything was following the standard
script when suddenly Santino, a Dinka member of the Sudanese delegation who rarely attended these formal meetings, interrupted the community chairman and angrily burst out, “of course we’re angry when our wives try to leave, and of course we’ll hit them! I paid $30,000 in cows to get married and I’ll never get that back here. The laws are no good for husbands! I can’t afford to let her leave - I will never be able to marry again!”

Santino’s outburst was followed by an awkward silence; the police representatives and service providers looked down at their hands or up at the ceiling, while the members of the Southern Sudanese group shifted in their seats and looked visibly uncomfortable. Although the community chairman jumped in to try and smooth things over with a shaky explanation of bridewealth practices, the meeting never really got back on track and ended shortly after the outburst. No decisions were made regarding interpreters, the possibility of joint police/family decisions on custody arrangements for youth, or any other of the important issues raised at the meeting, and to date the community has not been invited back for further discussions.

After the meeting, the community representatives engaged in a heated discussion in the parking lot. Santino was chastised for going off the agreed upon script. I was told that prior to the meeting a decision had been made to avoid any direct reference to bridewealth, arranged marriages, physical punishment of children, and various other practices the group believed were contrary to Canadian values and norms. They were in desperate need of funding to carry out planned community projects and assistance to deal with growing youth crime rates. They were, therefore, eager to portray themselves as “good refugees” in the words of one community elder.
This chapter unpacks the idea of “good refugees” by focusing on how the refugee status determination and resettlement processes work to define the category. The first part of the chapter explores how Southern Sudanese rework and perform various narratives and identity categories in their attempts to act as proper refugee subjects and gain access to resettlement. The second part of the chapter addresses the move from “good refugees” to “good Canadians” that Southern Sudanese undergo as they discipline themselves to act as proper multicultural citizens within the Canadian context. Approaching both phases – becoming a good refugee and later a good Canadian -- through discussions of interpellation and the potential that being hailed as a particular subject opens up for resistance (Althusser 1971, Butler 1993, Carr 2010, Goffman 1959), as well as of the limits of tolerance in liberal multicultural societies (Kymlicka 1995, Povinelli 2001) and the “everyday forms of resistance” (Scott 1985) that occur in power laden interactions, will draw attention to the ruptures that occur in formalized narratives of forced migration and multiculturalism, as when, in Santino’s case, people chose to divert from the predetermined script.

3.1. Refugee Status Determination and Resettlement: Learning to be a “Good Refugee”

Prior to their arrival in Canada, refugees must negotiate a complex bureaucratic maze, often referred to as the refugee regime. As discussed in Chapter 1, Southern Sudanese took a variety of paths to Canada. Those who sought asylum in large refugee camps in countries neighbouring Sudan, such as Kenya and Ethiopia, were granted de facto refugee status and protection upon arrival in the camps. As covered in the Introduction and Chapter 1, those who managed to travel to urban areas outside of Sudan, such as Cairo, had to apply for status individually. Individual
applicants were required to prove their ‘refugeeness’ by demonstrating the precariousness of their unique situations, thus justifying their “fear of persecution” – an often difficult task for individuals who flee civil wars.\textsuperscript{29} The inability to attain a coveted United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) yellow protection card when outside of an official refugee camp left many Southern Sudanese vulnerable to police harassment, arrest, and often deportation back to Khartoum, Sudan.

As noted above, attaining resettlement requires a refugee to start a new process after official status has been granted. It involves interviews with both UNHCR and Canadian immigration officials, during which refugees must retell their stories to convince the interviewing officers of their need for resettlement. All of their answers and stories are closely compared with the answers they gave during their initial refugee status determination interviews (sometimes held over a year before the resettlement interview) and any discrepancies in dates, names or places can lead to their disqualification. The need for formalized narratives that fit with resettlement requirements contributes to a “one size fits all approach” to refugee status determination and resettlement applications, often leading to the homogenization of refugees’ narratives as they try to fit with what they believe resettlement officers want to hear (Shandy 2007). By shaping refugees as particular subjects, international and national settlement organizations “rather than simply silencing or excluding actors … assign ways of speaking to the identities they forge and therefore pre-establish ways of hearing people who come to inhabit them” (Carr 2010:154).

\textsuperscript{29} While the Organization for African United (OAU) has adopted a provision granting refugee status to those caught up in civil wars, it is not recognized by the majority of countries outside of Africa who still follow the original 1951, and 1969 UN protocol regarding refugee status.
Whether someone found themself in a camp, or in an urban setting like Cairo, competition for resettlement spots was fierce. As the civil war in Sudan dragged on, resettlement was often seen as the only hope for a future. Similar to other social programs, the assessment and intake processes for refugee status determination and resettlement are “power laden and goal driven exchanges where symbolic representations are transformed into material resources” (Carr 2010: 51). In this case refugees were presenting their life histories and narratives of flight and exile in exchange for the physical security, and potential resources, of refugee status as well as the potential future benefits of resettlement. In a situation where control over their future was often removed by a complex, and what many perceived to be an oblique process, managing how they presented themselves to status determination and resettlement officers was seen as one of the few ways to gain control over their future. Stories of people who had been accepted to migrate to Canada, Australia and the United States circulated among those still hoping to be resettled, and often took on mythic qualities. In Cairo, young men sat for hours rehearsing their resettlement interviews and gathering tips from those who had already been lucky enough to receive resettlement. Some also hired interview coaches, often other Southerners who worked for the UNHCR as interpreters, to help script narratives that best fit what they perceived to be each country’s preference – a young, healthy hard worker for the United States, someone who wanted to pursue their education for Canada, and young families for Australia.

While many who work within the refugee regime argue that refugees’ negotiations of their narratives of flight and exile cross an inappropriate line between strategy for survival and manipulation of a system meant to help the most vulnerable, it is clear that the agency employed by Southerners as they negotiated their way through the refugee system defied the
institutionalized and popular culture discourses representing refugees as helpless non-actors. Cohen’s (2001) discussion of representations of refugees in the media links the image of the refugee as a powerless victim to the need of humanitarian organizations to incite compassion and the willingness to donate financially in mostly western populations. He argues that since World War II the majority of people living in the West have not had firsthand experience of mass suffering and public atrocities. Exposure to these situations is filtered through the media and with the help of television everyone becomes ‘voyeurs of suffering’. Viewers are provided with immediate knowledge of crises around the world but the distance and the short attention span of viewers cancels the impact. Therefore watching does not equal an understanding of the seriousness of the situation. For humanitarian organizations to attract funding, therefore, their crisis, and the intended recipients of the aid need to be packaged properly. It is this packaging that starts to shape the “refugee” in the public’s mind as a voiceless victim. For example, “How to get on TV with your Disaster,” a media guide for humanitarian agencies includes advice such as: pictures not words turn an incident into an event; there must be a mediator present to authenticate the victim; the victims must be acceptable to the viewers and ideally a humanitarian volunteer should be interviewed and shown working with the victims (Cohen 2001). All of the above tips serve to represent refugees as silent non-actors, relying on aid workers to give voice to their situation and make their needs known, while they often remain voiceless victims of circumstance.

Refugees however, are not without agency in using, and moving through the category assigned to them. As Malkki (1995a: 7) found while working with Burundian refugees living in Tanzania, “the refugees lived at some level within categories that were not of their own making, but they
also subverted these categories, to create new ones.” By actively shaping their own narratives and subverting the categories they were required to move through, Southerners also actively engaged in recreating and renegotiating their own identities through the alteration of key identity markers such as age, birth, name, marital status, and religion. These negotiations took place at various phases along the refugee status determination and resettlement process, and were often undertaken in order to translate Southerners’ experiences and relationships into narratives that were deemed acceptable by the resettling society (Shandy 2007). The negotiation of these identity markers was a very sensitive topic with the Southern Sudanese in Calgary. It was several months before I was able to broach the subject beyond hushed whispers and simple gossip. In Canada, one reason for the reluctance of people to openly discuss renegotiations of identity of this type was that lying on resettlement paper work can be the grounds for the removal of permanent residency, or even citizenship if the lies told on resettlement applications are carried through to citizenship applications.

In addition to the very real possibility of negative legal consequences for thus shaping their lives to fit “Canadian” ideals of family and kinship, altering individual identity characteristics also sometimes led to personal concerns and difficulties. Many resettled men reflected on the difficult decisions they were faced with when disclosing their marital status on their resettlement applications. Though widely practiced, and legal, in Sudan, Canada does not recognize polygamous marriage. This single fundamental cultural difference caused concern for many men, forcing them to list only one spouse on their application forms, despite the fact they had multiple wives, as was traditional in Southern Sudan. They were forced to choose which wives to leave behind, in what could be very precarious situations in Cairo or in refugee camps. The policy
affected more than just the man and his wives, however, for the man usually had children not only with the woman listed on application papers as his wife, but with his co-wives as well. When that was the case, one strategy often employed involved “adjusting” the mother of existing children to just one woman so that all children were listed as the natural children of the wife who was chosen to resettle. In that way a man resettling in Canada would be able to bring all, or most, of his children with him. Attempts were also often made to keep polygamous families together in their entirety, including multiple wives, by adjusting the kinship categories co-wives by listing them as “sisters” on the application forms so they could join the man in resettlement.

Men were not the only ones to adjust their marital status in order to maximize their chances at being accepted for resettlement to Canada. Women often chose to divorce their husbands prior to being accepted for resettlement, or claim they were widowed, in order to gain resettlement under the protected person’s class, which gives priority to single mothers. The existence of that strategy was revealed in an awkward but amusing fashion during a visit with Mary, a well respected elder of the Acholi tribe. While engaged in an in-depth conversation about her journey from Juba, to Khartoum, then on to Egypt, and finally Calgary, she revealed the incident that triggered her flight from Sudan was the killing of her husband, a politician, in Juba. She arrived in Cairo as a single mother with three young girls and no close family to support her. She applied under the protected class of refugee and was able to be resettled to Calgary relatively quickly. Toward the end of her story, however, the phone rang and her teenage daughter hollered into the room “Mom, Dad’s on the phone!” Mary quickly grabbed the phone and stepped into the hall for a quick conversation in Arabic. She returned to the table a few minutes later, and with a sheepish grin confessed that while her husband had been a politician, he had not been killed, and was
currently running an import business in Khartoum. She was quick to add that this did not mean that things had been easy for them in Juba. They had fled to Khartoum together when he was accused of collaborating with the SPLA, and lived in an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp on the outskirts of Khartoum. While there her husband took a second wife, leading to conflict, and what she described as “no more hope for my girls to have any future,” so she decided to take the girls and go to Cairo. Once in Cairo she learned that as a widow she would have a greater chance at resettlement and promptly created the narrative surrounding the death of her husband and her fear of persecution by his enemies. She and her husband had since reconciled to the point that she even met him in Uganda, and is once again comfortable with her daughters having regular contact with him.

Not all cases of kinship adjustment for the purposes of resettlement involved such overt manipulations of relationships. Strategic marriage alliances among Southern Sudanese refugees, for example, were quite common in Cairo. Young men who had been accepted to resettle were often flooded with marriage proposals soon after the news of their good fortune spread (Currie 2007, or Piot 2010 for similar marriages among Togolese migrating to the United States). While these proposals often led to marriages based on convenience, at least in the beginning, they do not fall into a category of “deception” that policy makers and resettlement workers tend to object to.

Renegotiation of kinship relations also took place outside the context of marriage. When speaking to a member of the Dinka community an innocent comment regarding the age of his children elicited an unexpected response. The simple observation that that he must have been quite young when he had his first two children, since they were now teenagers while his three
youngest children were all under the age of six seemed to make him quite uncomfortable. After a brief moment of awkward silence he quietly proceeded to tell me that when he was in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, his brother, who was actively fighting in the SPLA and was therefore ineligible for resettlement, entrusted his two sons to him when he and his wife were accepted for resettlement to Canada. He added them to his application, giving them his name, and claiming they were his own sons, so they could travel to Canada as part of his family. His brother was later killed in the war and he expressed guilt and distress that the two boys may not be able to bear children in their father’s name because, although “his sons are alive, his name is dead, and I can’t fix it” due to the fear of being accused of falsifying documents. While he encourages them to change their surname once they are legally old enough to do so, he worries they will encounter difficulties due to a lack of proper documents such as birth certificates, or will be so removed from their Dinka traditions and culture by that time that they will not understand the importance of putting the effort into completing the process.

In addition to kinship categories, identity markers such as ages and names are also negotiated by potential candidates in attempts to make themselves desirable for resettlement. The lack of formal identification documents, such as birth certificates or passports, in the Southern Sudanese context has made this a relatively easy process. One of the most common strategies employed was for individuals to adjust their ages to make themselves fall within what were considered

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\[30\text{ To die without any children to carry on your name is the worst form of death for a Dinka man, hence the importance of ghost wives, where male relatives can marry and procreate in the name of a relative who died without sons. The importance of kinship obligations and ghost wives in the post war context is discussed further in Chapter 6.}\]
prime working years in the resettlement countries they were applying to - most often this was between the ages of 25-35. Older applicants routinely claimed they were younger in order to appear more productive, while younger applicants often adjusted their ages, both up and down, depending upon the specific situation. Young men often added years to their ages when fleeing Sudan in order to avoid being stopped at the airport or border and forced to perform their mandatory military service. Conversely, some would decrease their ages on resettlement paperwork based on reports received from family and friends who had already resettled indicating they needed to be below a certain age to gain access to high school education upon arrival in Canada. Some long-term unintended consequences of those age negotiations are beginning to become a concern for the Southern Sudanese community in Calgary. Many individuals who have been in Canada for a decade or more are approaching retirement age and would like to start collecting pensions. Because of having adjusted their ages for the purposes of resettlement, however, they now find themselves ineligible to receive benefits because, despite their actual ages being much older, their reported ages with the Canadian government indicate they are still too young to qualify for such programs.

Names were also a field of identity negotiation for Sudanese refugees resettling to Canada, often being closely linked to negotiations of religious affiliation. Both Holtzman (1999) and Shandy (2007) reported it was quite common for Nuer who had migrated to the United States to have changed their names from Islamic or Nuer sounding names to more Christian sounding names. The name changes were often made to elicit a sympathetic characterization of Southerners from a country in which the common perception of the war promulgated by North American media is that of Muslim jihadists attacking a Christian south. The name changing strategy for Southern
Sudanese refugees coming to Canada was very similar in motive and practice, both prior to, and during, the resettlement process.

James for example, grew up as a child with the Dinka name, Ajok Mayen, in Bor, Sudan. When his father wanted to send him to school, which at the time was controlled by Catholic missionaries, he was christened and renamed Michael Mayen. Years later his family decided he should enter the police academy, but by that time the Islamization policies of the Sudanese government in the north (Khartoum) were being fully enforced in the south, so he was required to convert to Islam and changed his name to Yousef Mayen. He served as a police officer for several years until he was accused of collaborating with the SPLA at the height of the civil war and was forced to flee to Egypt with his wife and children. In Egypt he promptly re-converted to Christianity, this time as an Anglican because the majority of services provided to refugees in Egypt are delivered by Christian missions, and the Anglican cathedral in the city provides the widest access to English classes and children’s education. Yousef thus changed his name to James and applied for resettlement to Canada on the grounds of religious and political persecution. With the impending independence of South Sudan, and members of the Dinka community firmly in political control of the soon to be independent country, he was considering resurrecting his original name, Ajok, in order to “celebrate my Dinka history and my family.”

3.1.1. Lost Boys and Child Soldiers: Ruptures within Refugee Discourses

A meeting between Southern Sudanese community leaders and representatives from various NGOs and City of Calgary departments discussing the potential for a new youth program was wrapping up when a guest speaker was introduced. A PhD candidate from the Department of
Psychology at the University of Calgary had asked permission to address those gathered in hopes of gaining contacts and participants for her study on trauma and depression among former child soldiers. In recognition of the lack of free counseling services available to refugees in the city, she was offering participants counseling in return for their participation. She explained her project in great detail, even providing a power point outlining the horrors experienced by child soldiers caught up in African conflicts. Her talk reflected popular narratives surrounding child soldiers, including several references to Emmanuel Jal, a Southern Sudanese “Lost Boy” who published a popular book detailing his experiences fighting during the civil war. Throughout her talk one of the men present, Biem seemed quite agitated, kept jotting down notes, and when she asked if there were any questions, stood up and addressed the room. Very politely he proceeded to explain to her that she had things all wrong, and that he was tired of hearing about support for “poor child soldiers”, and listening to people criticize the SPLA for their use of underage fighters. He went on to explain how he had willingly joined the SPLA at the age of 13, and fought for several years before finally fleeing to Egypt, and later Canada. He calmly told her that he had wanted to kill Arabs, and that all the other boys he fought with had the same feeling, adding that, if we (the non-Southern Sudanese present) had seen our villages burned, and our mothers killed by Arab aggressors, then we too would want to kill Arabs.

It was obvious that Biem’s speech made the researcher, as well as the other NGO representatives at the meeting, distinctly uncomfortable. Because of his disagreement with the researcher’s approach, I was surprised when he told me a few weeks later that he had tried to join the study. He explained that he still suffered frequent nightmares about his time in the war, and his memories had contributed to his difficulty finding employment. The major employers for
Southerners in the area are the three large meat-packing plants and Biem had been offered jobs at all of them over the years. He said, however, he was unable to accept them because, as soon as he stepped on to the cutting floor, the sight and smell of the blood left him shaking and caused flash backs to his time in the bush. Unfortunately, when he attempted to join the study and participate in counseling, he was told that his experiences did not fit the definition of a child soldier and he was rejected.

The rejection by the University of Calgary PhD researcher of Biem’s experience as a child soldier is representative of the ruptures that take place when individuals step outside the normative narratives surrounding “good refugees.” By acknowledging his agency and desire to become a soldier and “kill Arabs,” he countered the depoliticized, and often simplistic, discourse that surrounds the involvement of child soldiers in African conflicts. Such narratives, often couched in human rights discourse, are based on the notion of children as “placemarkers of innocence” (Bhabha 2006). As such they must therefore be not only innocent, but lacking agency, a characterization that tends to “favour a plot of innocence corrupted and then restored” (Moynagh 2011). The requirement for innocence has likely contributed to the standardization present in the narratives in both the United States and Canada. As Eggers (2006:21) notes in his account of ‘Lost Boy’ Achack Deng’s experience of flight and exile, “the tales of the Lost Boys had become remarkably similar over the years...sponsors and newspaper reporters and the like expect the stories to have certain elements, and the Lost Boys have been consistent in their willingness to oblige.”

While individuals like Biem actively counter such narratives, others within the community work hard to (re)produce them, often chastising those who, like Biem at the community meeting, or
Santino at the meeting with the police, stray from the script. Support for continuing with that script is far from unanimous, and the Lost Boys and Girls Association of North America (which has a large chapter in Calgary) has been engaged in an ongoing debate surrounding the issue of child soldiers. While many members share Biem’s opinion and believe they should acknowledge their past experiences without sanitizing them, others argue that standardized formal narratives of flight, wandering, and eventual salvation\textsuperscript{31}, via refugee camps in Kenya and resettlement to North America, are more conducive to attaining funding and support for programs both in North America and back in Southern Sudan, and thus serve a greater good.

After years in resettlement, though, a new discourse is beginning to gain popularity within the community – one of mental health and wellbeing. People are talking more openly of the need for counseling to deal with memories of war-time experiences. Many former Lost Boys are starting to say (still very quietly though) that the erasure and denial of their past in favour of fitting in with North American popular culture ideals is contributing to increased incidences of alcoholism, spousal and child abuse, and what is considered a general inability to “settle” and move on in Canada and the United States. Several unofficial men’s coffee groups have already sprung up where, in the words of one organizer, “we get together to talk about the war and share

\textsuperscript{31} It is interesting to note, that while these biblical representations of wandering in the wilderness and eventual salvation are often the only acceptable form of narrative recognized by groups working with refugees, or the trope of choice used by humanitarian agencies and media to represent refugees, Southern Sudanese often described their experience to me in relation to the Old Testament book of Exodus. Many of their accounts began by stating an affiliation with Israel, based on their shared experience with “hostile” Arabs, and traced the comparison back to the exodus of the Jews from Egypt and the hope for a promised land, which they eventually saw God fulfilling through the referendum and independence of South Sudan.
our troubles.”32 While resistance to challenging the standard Lost Boy narrative is still strong, and there is little sympathy for those like Biem, who lose out on opportunities by not staying on script, change may be coming, and it will be interesting to see if more ruptures begin to appear in the story as former child soldiers age, and their time in Canada lengthens.

3.2. Resettlement and Multiculturalism: Learning to be “Good” Canadians

When Southern Sudanese arrive in Canada they begin negotiating a new system, similar to the refugee regime, but influenced by the Canadian approach to managing difference through official multiculturalism. Ideals of Canadian multiculturalism often prove to be contradictory and confusing to refugees. Several Southerners in Cairo told me they had opted to apply to resettle in Canada over the United States because they believed the policy of official multiculturalism – which is heavily promoted in refugee orientation classes and literature distributed by the Canadian embassies abroad - would enable them to continue their traditions and raise their children in proper Sudanese households. Upon arrival, however, they were soon faced with contradictory messages. They were encouraged to display their cultural difference, but it soon became apparent to them there were very specific rules and limits surrounding what was considered tolerable difference.

32 This emerging discourse of mental health is interesting in light of previous resistance to mental health interventions in the community, and a general mistrust of many of the “psycho social” programs that were provided in refugee camps.
Official multiculturalism in Canada developed from discussions surrounding official bilingualism, Quebec nationalism, and Canadian national unity in the 1960’s. Several minority groups of European origin voiced concerns over the government’s emphasis on perceived bi-culturalism, which they believed was inherent in official bilingualism. They felt the implied focus on Anglophone and Francophone groups left other minority groups vulnerable. In response to these concerns, and after bilingualism was made official government policy in 1969, consultations with these minority groups were soon undertaken in an attempt to “reconcile the concepts of dualism with multiculturalism”. Those consultations ultimately led to the introduction of Canada’s Multiculturalism Policy by the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau in 1971 (Li 1999).

Canada’s multiculturalism policy, as it was envisioned at the time and still stands today, emphasizes a clear separation of language and culture. Minorities are encouraged to maintain their ethnic culture in their private lives, but conform to one of the two official languages in the public sphere. The policy states that there is no official culture in Canada, but emphasizes the fact there are two official languages - French and English. Minority groups are encouraged to integrate into mainstream institutions, while still identifying with their cultural origins and maintaining their cultural practices in their private lives if they choose to do so. The policy also promotes the celebration and sharing of diversity by encouraging cross-cultural exchange and providing funding for activities which fall under the policy’s mandate.

Much of the debate surrounding multiculturalism in Canada today concerns the limits of liberal tolerance in a multicultural society – how much of their culture or tradition should groups be allowed to practice? If groups can, in fact, “will themselves into existence”, as Trudeau stated in
a speech to parliament in 1971, where does the state set the limits of recognition? While Kymlicka (1995) argues the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Multiculturalism Policy already limit diversity by restricting illiberal actions, the lines defining the limits of liberal tolerance are not always clear. That lack of clarity often results in the accidental crossing of those boundaries, as was evident in Santino’s outburst at the police meeting, or Biem’s deviation from the accepted definition of a child soldier at the community meeting.

The potential for confusion and misrecognition created by the often contested ideals of multiculturalism and acceptable difference are compounded by the settlement infrastructure, which mirrors the international refugee regime’s ‘one size fits all’ approach.

As discussed in the introduction, refugees are consistently portrayed as outside the national order of things, and therefore stripped of their culture, history and identity (Malkki 1995a and 1995b). They are then received by settlement organizations, or private sponsors such as churches, both of whom often have little understanding of their histories or the complex circumstances that led them to Canada in the first place. Reflective of the “semi permeable membranes of institutions” (Goffman 1959) which allow for the articulation of select features of social life and identity while erasing others, many Southerners complained that the tendency of refugee determination and settlement institutions to treat all refugees as dehistoricized and depoliticized, made their settlement experiences more difficult. Many spoke of being lumped in with case workers or roommates who were also “Sudanese”, but with little regard to linguistic differences. When they tried to explain to settlement workers that even though they may both be “Sudanese”, they did not share a common language, their complaints were often ignored. When this issue was raised with settlement workers in interviews, the response was usually that the
fault lay with the refugees themselves, because as several settlement workers told me, they were too “ethnic”, or “tribal”, and needed to “celebrate their shared culture instead of hanging on to old tribal prejudices.” Somehow, it seemed, recognizing a shared ‘Sudanese’ identity would magically allow two people without a common language to communicate effortlessly with each other.

In my discussions with settlement workers and other service providers it became clear that many felt the Southern Sudanese population had too much difference to be celebrated by multiculturalism. Apparently they were only interested in performing the wrong kinds of difference. The community was highly criticized for its inability, or unwillingness, to pull itself back into the “national order of things” and unite under the banner of “Sudanese.” Their continued interest, and engagement, in Sudanese politics was also considered a black mark against the community. By the time my research began in 2008, the Southern Sudanese community in Calgary had been labeled as a “problem population” by local settlement agencies in the city. The discontent with the Southern Sudanese population was evident in the words of the director of one of the city’s settlement agencies who openly stated:

I’m so glad we’re getting Karens now, they are so much more polite and quiet. They don’t agitate like the Sudanese. All the Sudanese want to do is politics…even in school! I try to tell them to take social work and nursing and other things so they can help themselves, but all they want to study is political science and international studies - what good will that do them?

33 Referring to the government’s new group resettlement program which aimed to refocus overseas resettlement efforts on large groups of Karen refugees from Cambodia.
The reputation of the community had declined among service providers to such a degree that the executive director of one organization was shocked when she found out I was working with the Sudanese population in the city, exclaiming, “were you assigned this group by your university…you really chose them? I wouldn’t touch them with a 10 foot pole!”

The characterization of Southern Sudanese as “bad refugees” is in stark contrast to the reception they received when they first began arriving in North America in large numbers in the late 1990s, when they were the darlings of the refugee resettlement community. Efforts made by the U.S., and later Canadian, media to publicize the plight of the ’Lost Boys’, coupled with efforts by church groups throughout North America to call attention to what was portrayed as the persecution of southern Christians by the Muslim north, led to considerable public interest and support for Sudanese refugees when they began arriving in Calgary. That interest was amplified when church groups joined the community in Calgary, and across North America, to protest a Calgary petroleum company -Talisman Energy - for their actions in the oil fields of Sudan, protests that ultimately succeeded in pressuring the company to sell off their Sudanese oil interests in 2002.34

So what had happened in less than 10 years to transform the Southern Sudanese in Calgary from media darlings into “bad refugees”? Many service providers blame the Talisman experience, suggesting it made the community feel it was acceptable to be political. Others continue to lay the blame on the community’s ongoing interest, and involvement, in Sudanese politics, and their apparent inability to move beyond tribal allegiances. Southerners, who are well aware of their

34 The efforts to remove Talisman from Sudan will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4: The 7th Front.
negative reputation, often claim it is the fault of the settlement agencies themselves, who would rather keep them as clients in order to sustain lucrative funding contracts, rather than let them achieve independence within Canada. One man likened their relationship with service providers to their earlier relationship with the British, and Northern Sudanese, saying, “they all want to colonize us and control us….first the British, then the Arabs, and now here in Canada.”

3.3. Self Discipline and Display of Difference: Ruptures in Ideals of Multicultural Citizenship

If the rules regarding acceptable displays of difference and the limits of liberal tolerance remain largely unspoken, or even if, as Kymlicka (1995) claims, they exist in legal and political documents such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, seldom discussed in daily discourse surrounding multiculturalism, how does a good multicultural citizen learn to stay within the limits? Building on Althusser’s (1971) theories of subjectivity and interpellation, Knerman (2005) argues that minority groups are interpolated, or summoned by the state, to inhabit and perform acceptable identity categories through constant evaluation of their activities relative to the normalized ideals of multiculturalism.

If Knerman (2005) is correct, responding properly to those summonses and staying within the bounds of acceptable displays of difference requires constant negotiation on the part of Southern Sudanese. For while they are possibly “always already” interpellated as specific refugee subjects, this also opens up the potential of performing these positions in effective ways. As the largest African population in Calgary their difference was a commodity in high demand at multicultural festivals and other events celebrating the city’s diversity. The calls for community members to appear at events in “traditional Sudanese clothes”, or perform “typical Sudanese dances”,

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demonstrated misrecognition of the diversity within the community by organizations such as the City of Calgary. They also illustrated their ignorance of the impossibility of separating the majority of the traditional clothes, songs, and dances, from the past and present political context. While Southern Sudanese groups were often eager for the recognition implied by the invitations, the requirement to perform “as hailed” more often than not, led to complex and contentious negotiations.

A poster advertising a Southern Sudanese Community fundraiser (see Figure 7) illustrates one of USES’s attempts to respond to funders’ requests to perform their difference in an acceptable way, while simultaneously attempting to further one of the community’s ‘non-acceptable’ goals – acquiring a community centre. It is obvious from the poster the main purpose of the fundraiser is the ‘dream’ of a community centre. The evening, however, was staged as a cultural display, complete with what is often referred to by those who work in the immigrant and multiculturalism sector as the three C’s of acceptable difference – culture, cuisine, and costume. Framing the evening in that manner was a conscious decision by the USES board of directors. It was an attempt to encourage ‘mainstream’ donors and funders to attend, show them the acceptable displays of difference, and win them over to the idea of a dedicated Southern Sudanese community centre. Word was spread throughout the Southern Sudanese sub-communities to encourage women to dress “in traditional costumes”, and each sub-region was

35 The desire for a “Sudanese” community centre is a huge bone of contention between the Southern Sudanese in the city, the government and NGOs; the latter two see no need for one, while for southerners the need for a space to call their own in which to come together is seen as key to their settlement. Debate surrounding the community centre, and the importance of space/place in community organization is discussed in the previous chapter.
responsible for providing a group of dancers to represent their area. Even the text of the poster followed normalized multicultural discourse. It relates the community’s troubles to a lack of cultural identity and the need to recover connections with their traditions in order to regain a sense of pride thereby becoming better Canadian citizens.

What the poster does not reveal is the complex series of negotiations that went into both its creation and the planning of the event, reflective of the self-discipline entailed in successfully organizing such a multicultural display. Shaping an extremely diverse and politically divided community into a neat cultural display of six dances and six food dishes representing each of the six regions took hours of discussion and negotiation over several town hall style meetings. Arguments over what to include and what to leave out in the presentations from the various groups were long and passionate. Should dances or songs that deal with the war be included, and what group should represent the Dinka? The Bor Dinka are the largest group, but the Nyok Dinka have the most beautiful dance… but the Nyok Dinka cannot get access to the proper cow horns so refuse to dance….and what about the Padang Dinka? They perform those high jumps that will really impress the outsiders! And shouldn’t the Dinka and Nuer get more dances than the other groups since they are bigger and have more people? Should Darfur even be allowed to dance? It took weeks to sort out the evening’s entertainment, and there were still behind the scenes conflicts over the order of performances on the night of the event. On the surface however, the appearance of a unified, relatively homogeneous community was achieved.
Figure 7: Poster created by USES board members to promote their fundraising party.
Through the work of learning to manage and display their difference appropriately at such events, USES board members also became extremely fluent in the language and performance of proper multicultural citizenship amongst themselves. Just as managing displays of difference through multicultural governance works to neutralize the potential dangers of diversity to a unified national identity, sticking to the appropriate multicultural script allowed USES to mitigate existing political differences and tensions in order to maintain the unified front required to gain recognition from Canadian institutions.

The multicultural script was written into the organization’s bylaws, and was scrupulously adhered to during meetings. All positions were spread equally between all six regions, any listing of regions was consciously done alphabetically, all meetings opened with Christian and Muslim blessings and no food was served at meetings conducted during Ramadan, out of respect for fasting members from Islamic regions - Darfur, Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile. All meetings were conducted in English, and any discussion of Sudanese politics was avoided. If anyone deviated from the ideal, for example by slipping into Arabic, which the majority of Equatorians could not understand, they were quickly reminded of the rules. Such a level of self-discipline, however, can be hard to maintain, and as in both Santino’s and Biem’s cases, ruptures occasionally occurred that were often devastating to both internal relations and attempts to gain official recognition as a unified community.

Toward the end of my fieldwork USES held a board meeting during which a recently missed funding application deadline led to heated accusations of mismanagement, incompetence and secrecy. As the argument progressed, a member from Darfur accused the majority of the board of
playing “Jenubieen” games in Canada, and hinted that the continuous political strife between southern tribes was why they had always remained militarily inferior to the north, and as such, would never attain success in Canada. While his colleagues were busy convincing him to apologize, a member from the Shilluk community, who was normally very soft spoken and often played the diplomat in such situations, slammed his fists on the table repeatedly and violently exploded, “He’s nothing but a goddamned Arab and we should get rid of them all! They killed us during the war, they are still killing us at home and they are killing us here by working against us!”

Similar sentiments were often whispered in private conversations, but rarely voiced, and never in the context of a group meeting. A heavy silence descended, and everyone froze in place. It was clear a taboo had been broken, there was the feeling we had witnessed something terrible and shameful, and none could look each other in the eye. The rupture was reflected in people’s movements, without a word they scattered throughout the church building where the meeting was being held, and it was several painful minutes before the small groups that had formed began to talk quietly, and then quickly go to their cars and leave without further discussing the incident. The next day I received an email from the secretary of the USES Board of Directors, copied to all community and sub-community leaders, apologizing for what was referred as a “lack of professionalism”, and “behaving as if we were still in the bush.” The email concluded, “We are still new to Canadian ways and still learning how to be Canadian and conduct our business in the proper Canadian way”.

\[36\] Common term for Southerners in Arabic.
It was not likely a coincidence that the accusations of secrecy and mismanagement, and the subsequent violent outburst against Arabs, occurred at about the time of the first national elections to be held in Southern Sudan for over 15 years. The ongoing political tensions surrounding the elections were keenly felt in Calgary, and various factions within the community had been tense for several weeks. Unfortunately the rupture continued to grow, leading to several other accusations, and the resurfacing of old grievances rooted in the past. The continuing political tensions in Southern Sudan catalyzed a splintering of the organization along tribal lines. The unresolved disagreements eventually led to a leadership dispute within the organization and, finally, its destruction. At the time of writing USES was no longer functioning. After South Sudan gained independence in the summer of 2011 the group disbanded as Darfur, Blue Nile and Nuba Mountain groups were not part of the new country. It appears that independence and establishment of the nation of South Sudan has encouraged USES to apply the ‘national order of things,’ which they vehemently argued against when being categorized as Sudanese, to their own organization now that they feel the national boundaries adequately represent them. They are now in the process of forming a new association based on Southern Sudan’s national boundaries and including equal representation from each of the states.

3.4. Conclusion

To be recognized, first as good refugees, and later as good Canadians, Southern Sudanese actively negotiate and shape their identities to fit accepted “western” norms and narratives of flight, exile and diversity. From the beginning of the refugee process they are hailed as particular subjects – nationless victims of violence cut off from their history and culture and in need of aid. As the above examples illustrate, however, when faced with institutional pressures to conform,
Sudanese refugees do not simply acquiesce, but rather, they actively negotiate the categories into which they are summoned in an effort to manipulate the systems, not to their advantage, but to their “minimum disadvantage” (Scott 1985). As Scott’s (1985) study of everyday acts of resistance among peasants in Malaysia highlights, interactions are fraught with unequal power relations, and nearly always drive at least a portion of the accepted script underground. That resistance and negotiation is clearly evident in Southern Sudanese efforts to respond to, as well as manage, the expectations placed upon them by the agencies, governments, organizations, and individuals they interact with (Goffman 1959). Those everyday forms of resistance are first revealed in the omissions, additions and shifts of relationships evident in the narratives of flight and exile, when Southerners made use of a “calculated conformity” (Scott 1985: 286) to the norms and expectations surrounding “refugeeness” held by those in positions of power over their refugee status, and in control of their chances for resettlement.

Upon arrival in Canada they were once again hailed, and called upon to perform another identity. As Povinelli (2002) in her work on multiculturalism, the state and Australian Aboriginals found, multiculturalism often asks its minority groups “to be other so that we will not ossify, but be in such a way that we are not undone, that is make yourself doable for us” (329). In making themselves doable, both as good refugees and good Canadians, Southern Sudanese are asked to perform a particular type of difference, one stripped of politics, history and anything that could be considered outside the acceptable limits of Canadian tolerance. Under these guidelines, statements regarding the existence and prevalence of bridewealth, or a child’s experience of agency and desire to become a soldier, are unacceptable transgressions beyond the bounds of tolerable difference. That is the “cunning” nature of recognition offered by neoliberal
multiculturalism to which Povinelli’s (2002) work refers. Minority groups such as the Southern Sudanese are offered rights and limited recognition through the promises of multiculturalism, but soon learn that the technical and administrative processes required they comply with, and display, their differences in an “acceptable” manner which in turn limits the resources and political power they had initially hoped to attain through their recognition (Hale 2005, Kowal 2008).

In order to fit within the limits of acceptable difference, and in the process become ‘good Canadians’, Southern Sudanese continuously negotiate which parts of their script to reveal in varying contexts. That is evident in the internal conversations between Lost Boys on the merits of maintaining their formalized narrative in order to continue to receive funding and public support, or with USES’s attempts to present an acceptably unified and ‘Canadian’ style organization to service providers and funders. By strategically responding to the summonses to inhabit the subject positions of child soldiers, victims, clients in need of aid, or depoliticized exiles, they anticipate the roles expected of them and inhabit or use them in politically effective ways. Carr (2009) notes similar strategies in her research on the interactions between recovering addicts and the service providers at their treatment centers. Recovering addicts serving as client spokespersons on the institution’s board were able to gain more benefits for program clients by purposefully enacting what they felt to be the anticipated behavioural traits of recovering addicts (shame, gratitude, adopting the program language of self help and empowerment etc.). Client representatives who chose not to adopt expected roles (criticizing the programs and self help or empowerment discourse etc.), were unsuccessful in gaining more rights for clients, and in one case, was removed from the treatment program for noncompliance. Carr (2009) argues,
therefore, that by “flipping the script”, and actively choosing to inhabit the anticipated identities, clients were able to use the categories into which they were hailed in politically effective ways. The benefits of “flipping the script” are evident in the success of the Lost Boys groups in achieving funding and recognition, as well as in USES’s early success at gaining recognition as a voice for Southerners living in the Calgary. By not simply reproducing the positions assigned to them, but rather *strategically* reproducing them, both groups were able to open up the possibility of countering the potentially negative positions to which they were being hailed and use them to their benefit (Butler 1993), Similar to the recovering addicts who spoke against the expected narrative cited by Carr (2009), however, Biem’s experience of being shut out from the research and treatment group for child soldiers, simply because he challenged the norms surrounding what it means to be a former child soldier, reveals the fallout that can occur when deviating from the dictated script. Because he refused to follow accepted practice he was placed outside the former child soldier category and deemed ineligible for treatment.

By strategically conforming to the categories of “good refugee” or “good Canadians” Southern Sudanese actively challenge, anticipate and perform the identity categories expected of them. Similar to the group of addicts Carr worked with, they become “ethnographers in their own right”, observing cues and language, reading the situation and deciding how to respond appropriately, and making daily choices regarding when and where to inhabit and perform the various identity categories that have been ascribed to them.
4. The 7\textsuperscript{th} Front and Long Distance Nation Building

"Related to this growing unity is the growing role of the Sudanese Diaspora, which I declare as the 7\textsuperscript{th} Front." (Dr. John Garang de Mabior - 16 May 2002)

The "7th Front" was a term I heard on a regular basis throughout my research, particularly when discussing Southerners’ engagement in transnational activities between Canada and Sudan. In the early months of my fieldwork, a large part of the "education" on Sudan that people felt I needed involved becoming familiar with the many speeches given over the years by the late Dr. John Garang. Whether shown on grainy VHS copies that had been passed around to countless households, burnt CDs or YouTube clips, the above quoted speech, delivered to a meeting of Southern Sudanese living in the United States in 2002, was played for me many times. People were so familiar with this speech that I often recognized quotes from it in conversations with people discussing their responsibilities to Southern Sudan.

By declaring Southern Sudanese living in resettlement countries as the “7\textsuperscript{th} Front,” Garang was calling on Southern Sudanese living abroad to unify and engage in the civil war effort. This 7\textsuperscript{th} front was in addition to the existing six fronts, or key regions, where the SPLA was already fighting the central government. If the number of times I was shown this speech is any indication, Southerners took this call to heart, but the type of engagement Garang was calling for was often in dispute among community members. Was he referring to the establishment of an organized remittance campaign to support the SPLA’s efforts, similar to the system set up by Eritreans during their war for independence from Ethiopia (Bernal 2004)? Or should efforts
focus on political lobbying, awareness raising and activism? And what role does the 7th Front envision for themselves in the post-war context where the focus has shifted to building a new independent South Sudan?

4.1. Transnationalism and Long Distance Nation Building

Much of the discussion surrounding globalization and transnationalism has focused on the decreasing importance of bounded nations and nation states in the lives of individuals. The experience of many immigrant communities, however, tends to indicate the opposite - that in facilitating transnational activities, the increased ease of communication and travel that comes with globalization has provided diasporic communities with the means to build stronger imagined communities across borders with the purpose of supporting and reinforcing nationalistic goals (Bernal 2004). Research with Haitian communities in the United States, and with Bosnian, Tamil and Eritrean communities in Canada and Europe (Al Ali and Koser 2001, Glick Schiller and Fouron 2002, Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001), all highlight the move toward what Glick Schiller and Fouron (2002) refer to as “transborder citizenry.” They argue that, although no longer bounded by the physical borders of their nations, members of the diaspora living across transnational spaces are able to reinforce the existence of bounded nation states by continuing to support and participate in long distance nation building. This is often the case regardless of an individual’s legal citizenship, and is based instead on a continued feeling of connection and responsibility to one’s country of birth. A key element of long distance nation building however, is that it moves beyond feelings of attachment to one’s home country, or sentimental feelings of belonging to an imagined community - it “does not only exist in the
domains of the imagination and sentiment” (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2002: 20) but leads to specific actions.

The concepts of transborder citizenry and long distance nationalism are helpful in understanding Southern Sudanese Canadians’ evolving relationship with South Sudan. While many community members have been away from Sudan for over 10 years, and the majority of younger Southerners have very little to no memory of the homeland, their affinity for South Sudan moves beyond nostalgic imaginings, to involve actions that have concrete effects on the community in both Calgary and South Sudan. This chapter begins by exploring what many consider to be a defining experience for Southern Sudanese living in the city - the activism surrounding Talisman Energy’s oil operations in Sudan during the civil war. More recent and active forms of political participation are then explored through their engagement in the 2009 Sudanese elections and the 2011 referendum on independence. Finally, the increasing move away from a focus on individual remittances toward a growing interest in engaging in “development” and reconstruction projects is discussed. Through these examples this chapter highlights how Southerners’ relationships with their home country and country of resettlement have shifted over the course of their history in Calgary.

4.1.1. Political Activism and Talisman Energy

In 1998, Talisman Energy, at the time the second largest independent oil company in Canada, acquired ARAKIS Oil. In doing so they also acquired a 25% stake in The Great Nile Petroleum Oil Corporation (GNPOC), the consortium responsible for oil exploration and extraction in Sudan. At the time of purchase, Sudan was heavily embroiled the decades long civil war against
the SPLA and the oil fields were located in a heavily contested region of the country (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Map showing oil infrastructure in Sudan and South Sudan

The Canadian company’s activities in Sudan went unnoticed by the public for over a year. Aside from a small spike in interest surrounding the resettlement of “Lost Boys” to the United States in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s, the civil war in Sudan remained of relatively little interest to the
However, it was not long before resettled Sudanese refugees, North American church groups and international human rights organizations began to protest the company’s involvement in Sudan’s oil industry. They argued that not only did oil revenues received by the Sudanese government help to fund the war against the south, but areas were being forcibly depopulated and whole villages razed to the ground in order to facilitate oil development (Amnesty International 2000).

Efforts to call attention to Talisman’s involvement in Sudan gathered steam quickly, and before the end of the year Sudanese living in North America, along with Amnesty International, several anti-slavery groups and the Canadian Inter Church Coalition, joined together to start one of the largest divestment campaigns in Canada since the anti-apartheid movement. A public relations battle ensued, with Talisman CEO Jim Buckee claiming that most of the accounts of human rights abuses coming out of the oil region in Sudan “have been made lurid and exaggerated.” Both Buckee and the Sudanese government claimed that the areas adjacent to oil development projects had been uninhabited for years, so therefore tales of forced displacement must have been fabricated (Amnesty International 2000). These claims were later proved to be false, in large part based on accounts of former residents of the region who had been resettled to North America.

One Dinka man, who was involved in the protests against Talisman in Calgary, proudly told me about the part he played in calling attention to the dishonesty behind these claims. He was attending a meeting with Talisman representatives, the Canadian federal government, and NGOs, and the Talisman spokesperson showed a series of air photos provided by the Sudanese

37 It was not until the conflict in Darfur became a “cause célèbre” of sorts in 2003 that public interest in the conflict in Sudan began to increase.
government which purported to show the location of a village that the government was accused of burning in order to clear the area for oil development. The photos showed an overgrown patch of land that had clearly been uninhabited for decades. My informant gleefully told me how at that point he stood up and announced to the room that he was from the village in question (and could prove it with documents), and that “since I was born there and lived there and my family lived there until you burnt it and chased them out….and I am only 30, all of this you are showing us is a lie”. The satellite and air photos being used by Talisman to justify their stance were later proven to be falsely labelled and were actually images of other uninhabited areas of Sudan, far removed from the oil development projects (Amnesty International 2000).

In response to mounting public pressure, in 1999 the then Liberal government of Canada commissioned what later became known as “The Harker Report.” John Harker and a team of investigators were sent to Sudan to investigate claims of human rights abuses linked to oil extraction in the country. The team’s report, released in 2000, concluded that Talisman’s participation in the oil industry was in fact exacerbating the conflict and leading to increased forced displacement in the region, stating:

“The underlying reality is that there has been, and probably still is, major displacement of civilian population related to oil extraction. Furthermore, oil has become a major focus of the fighting. Worse, the oil operations in Government of Sudan-controlled territory are used, even if to a limited extent, and possibly without the knowledge or approval of the oil companies, to directly support Government of Sudan military operations” (Harker 2000).
Talisman’s head office is located in Calgary, and it soon became the focal point for protests against the company. Many of the Southern Sudanese I spoke with, who were in the city at the time, highlighted their involvement in these protests as a key moment in the history of their community. The community was still very new to Calgary at the onset of the Talisman protests. While there are conflicting narratives recounting who was the first to get involved, or who led the charge, it is clear that many of the key organizers were “community leaders” from Cairo, who had been heavily involved in negotiations with the UNHCR in Egypt to begin accepting southerners for refugee status. This group were some of the first Sudanese refugees to be resettled to Canada, and as an already heavily politicized group with experience dealing with large NGOs, they were eager to begin organizing the small community in Calgary against Talisman’s activities in Sudan.

Formal accounts of Talisman’s involvement in, and eventual withdrawal from, Sudan tend to downplay the role the Sudanese community played in the events. They instead focus on court cases filed by church coalitions and reports commissioned by groups such as Amnesty International. Despite their relatively small presence in the formal historical accounts of Talisman’s withdrawal, the importance Southerners place on their involvement in the movement should not be underestimated. I did not meet one individual who lived in Calgary between 1998 and 2002 who did not highlight their involvement in the Talisman protests, whether as a community representative, or a person simply attending meetings. Many stated that it was the beginning of their political awareness in Canada, linking it to discourses they had learned in citizenship classes regarding the rights and responsibilities required of active and engaged citizens. Several Southerners, as well as service providers who work with them, also saw it as the
root of attempts to establish some sort of unified Southern Sudanese community group in the city, as they were required to represent themselves as Sudanese who were opposed to the company’s actions, not individual groups of Dinka, Nuer etc. Therefore, while it is impossible to tease out one, unified “Sudanese community” narrative of the movement against Talisman, it is clear that Talisman’s eventual withdrawal from Sudan, which finally happened in 2003 when the company sold their shares to India’s national oil company for $750 million, was considered a great victory for Southerners living in resettlement and a seen as one of the first major contributions of the 7th Front to the SPLA’s war efforts.

A decade later, issues surrounding oil extraction remain a rallying point for the Southern Sudanese community in Calgary. Many Southern men spent their time in resettlement working in the Alberta oil and gas industry. They purposely sought out training with plans to pursue careers in the oil industry in what they envisioned at the time to be a new, more democratic and free South Sudan. Unfortunately, upon return to Southern Sudan after the war, many complained that their expertise was not wanted\textsuperscript{38}. One Dinka man, who holds a diploma specializing in safety and environmental regulations in oil operations and has several years experience working in the Alberta oil sands told me upon his return to Calgary from Southern Sudan “they don’t want Southerners who know things to work there….then they would have to make it better and stop exploiting people and ruining the land”. Those I spoke with who had returned to oil producing areas to visit family were disappointed and shocked at how little the situation had improved since the end of the war. An elderly Padang Dinka woman who had recently spent two months in her home village located adjacent to the Heglig oil fields, told me she “cried until I was out of tears”

\textsuperscript{38} The issue of return migration and unfulfilled expectations will be explored further in Chapter 6.
over the state of the village’s water supply, which was contaminated by the nearby oil
operations. Community members claim it is impossible to rebuild cattle herds and plant crops
due to the heavily contaminated soil and water. They appear to have lost faith in the
government’s ability to bring the oil companies to account, and as will be discussed later in the
chapter, have begun their own development projects in attempts to resolve these issues.

4.1.2. The Election and Referendum

Following their involvement in the protests against Talisman, the Southern Sudanese living in
Calgary remained very politically active, both in terms of internal group politics, as well as
involvement in Sudanese politics. Those who moved to Calgary after living in other parts of
Canada often mentioned the highly politicized nature of the Calgary Southern Sudanese
communities and linked it to their anti-Talisman activism. Several Southerners from Calgary
were also active in the establishment of SPLM chapters across the country and the development
of a Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) mission in Ottawa shortly after the signing of the
comprehensive peace agreement in 2005, well before the south gained its independence in July
2011.

Two of the largest demonstrations of Southern Sudanese political involvement in Sudanese
politics occurred during the course of my fieldwork – the Sudanese national election which took
place in April 2010 and the referendum on southern independence in January 2011. Individuals’
engagement with the national election varied - while some Southerners living in Calgary

39Both national SPLM representatives post 2005 were based in Calgary, and the current GoSS representative to
Canada is a Southern Sudanese from Calgary.
returned to Sudan to run for positions or register to vote, others were satisfied to follow the process in the news and engage in heated local debates, while a few remained neutral toward the whole process. In the early months of my fieldwork there were rumours that Sudanese living outside of Sudan would be allowed to vote in the election. When that was proved untrue, however, there was very little disappointment amongst several community members, as by that time many believed the election results were almost inconsequential due to the impending referendum on independence. As one Nuer man told me “the focus should be on the referendum, these elections mean nothing to us…their results won’t mean anything to Southerners in a few months.”

Divergent opinions on the usefulness of the national elections served to highlight key divisions within the southern community in the city, which ran mainly along generational and tribal lines. Those who felt the elections were important, including those who traveled back to the south to vote or run for office, tended to be members of non Dinka and Nuer groups who did not fully support the SPLM, or younger men and women who were hoping to see alternative parties and independent candidates gain some strength in the south. However, even these groups admitted that the results would mean little once the south gained independence.

Despite the widely held view that the elections had little meaning for Southerners, it would be incorrect to assume they had little or no tangible effect on the Southern Sudanese community in Calgary. Existing political and tribal tensions were magnified during the lead up to the election and often resulted in serious community rifts, as demonstrated in the growing conflict among USES board members discussed in the previous chapter. The main point of conflict- whether

40 This feeling also shared by many southerners and Sudanese Canadians that I spoke with in Juba leading up to the elections in 2010.
other parties should be allowed to challenge the SPLM – was passionately debated in the months leading up to election. When the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement - Democratic (SPLM-DC) was formed by Lam Akol in summer 2009, the challenge the party presented to the SPLM, along with Akol’s controversial history, sent ripples throughout the community in Calgary almost immediately. Within 48 hours of Akol announcing the new party, a SPLM-DC chapter was opened in Calgary and many non-Dinka community members attended their first information meeting. When word of the meeting spread and a list of attendees was made public, accusations of betrayal and collaboration with Khartoum began to spread through various community groups like wildfire. The tension was particularly high between Dinka, who tend to support the SPLM, and Nuer, who were key members of the SPLM-DC. One account of how these tensions manifested themselves in the community was related to me by Peter, a loyal SPLA veteran and a strong critic of the SPLM-DC:

41 Lam Akol, along with Riek Machar and Gordon Kong, disagreed with John Garang regarding the goals of unified Sudan, preferring instead to fight for an independent South Sudan. They spilt from the SPLA in 1991, starting a period of intense infighting that led to thousands of civilian deaths and displacement. He joined the NCP and served in Omar Bashir’s government as Sudan’s Minister of Transportation until 2002. In 2003 he rejoined the SPLA.

42 The 1991 split is often discussed along ethnic, or tribal, lines, as Machar and Kong are Nuer, and Akol is Shilluk, while Garang and his close advisors in the SPLA were Dinka. The bulk of the intra-Southern violence that resulted from the split pitted tribe against tribe. While Akol, the leader of the SPLM-DC is Shilluk, the party attracted early support and interest from other groups in the city, such as the Nuer and Azande, who felt the Dinka were controlling too much power in the SPLA. For a discussion of the resulting militarization of identities see Hutchinson and Jok (1999).
We were all at the social club talking and watching the news, same as always. All of a sudden these two young Nuer guys come in the door, and we all know they are probably with the SPLM-DC guys. So without any of us even saying something we all just start talking Dinka. We just turn our backs and talk Dinka so they can’t follow us, you know? It took some time, but they got the point and left.

The Sudanese Social Club, discussed in Chapter 2, was originally intended to be a meeting place for “all,” Southern Sudanese men⁴³ to come discuss politics, meet up with those who had recently returned from visits to south, or just to play cards and watch television. Due to the linguistic diversity among Southerners, the language of choice at the club was normally English, and sometimes Arabic. The sudden switch to Dinka upon the entrance of the two young Nuer men was an obvious attempt by SPLM supporters to shut their rivals out of the shared space, which throughout the lead up to the election became increasingly politicized SPLM meeting space.

Similar to the tribal rifts that were magnified during the election, the inter-generational tensions that flared up were most often between younger people who were in favour of opening up the political arena in the south to more political parties, and elders who tended to argue that the SPLM should have priority, as divisions among southerners could prove dangerous in the lead up to the referendum. These concerns were dismissed by many young men and women as fear

⁴³ As mentioned in Chapter 1, while the club was for “all’ Southern Sudanese, it was implied that this meant men. I never saw a woman in the building, and while I was allowed to conduct interviews in a back office or kitchen (as my “sponsors” in the community considered that to be more appropriate and safe than meeting up with men on my own), the majority of the space was off limits to me as well.
mongering and an attempt to limit the democratic process in the south. A heated argument I witnessed between a middle aged man in his 40’s and a young man in his 20’s, was typical of these discussions – upon hearing the young man declare his support for an independent candidate in his home state, the elder exclaimed in frustration “How can you not support the SPLM? They are the party – they are the MOVEMENT!” The young man angrily countered that “when Stephen Harper travels he does not represent the Conservative party, he represents Canada, the SPLM are only interested in representing themselves, they should be representing all Southerners! We shouldn’t blindly support a party….we should elect and support a government based on who the best people are!”

The debate between these two men can be tied into a more general divide between older and younger Southerners, not only on the role of the SPLM in Southern Sudanese society, but also the role that young people want to play in the development of South Sudan. While the frustrations of younger southern returnees will be discussed further in Chapter 6, in terms of politics in Calgary it was clear that many young people felt that their voices were ignored by elders. One group of youth angrily recounted how at an SPLM meeting they were lectured by the visiting Sudanese politicians and told to “stay out of politics” as they were too young to have actively participated in the conflict and therefore were ill-informed on the issues facing the country.

While actual participation in the election was somewhat limited, the community’s involvement in the referendum on independence was much more active – which also led to increased tensions and conflict between groups in the city. The increased involvement was due to the fact Southerners living outside of Sudan were allowed to vote in the referendum and polling stations
were set up in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). While initial support for voting in Calgary was strong, the process soon came under suspicion and many factions within the city began discouraging their members from participating. Those arguing for a boycott of the process in Calgary cited fears that their votes would be high-jacked and tampered with because the IOM’s agreement involved sending the ballots to Khartoum to be counted. Worries of outside interference, intimidation and espionage by northern Sudanese agents in Canada were also voiced. There was also concern with the logistics of the process, claiming it was unfair that many had to travel great distances to reach a polling station, and that the weather in Canada in January could prevent some who had registered from making it to the polling station to cast their votes. They worried that this would lead to an insufficient number of registered voters actually voting “yes” and an invalid result. There was a myriad of other concerns, ranging from a general mistrust of the IOM based on past experiences with them while going through the resettlement process, to internal conflicts within the southern community as to who should even represent them at meetings with the referendum organizers. IOM representatives I spoke with were shocked by the controversial nature of the referendum vote in Calgary, and perhaps in an indication that the claims by many that the Southern Sudanese community in Calgary is more divided and politically charged than in other cities in Canada, the high level of conflict and disagreement surrounding the referendum led to relatively low voter registration and turn out in the city.\(^4^4\)

\(^4^4\)Of the roughly 10000-15000 Southern Sudanese living in the area, only 1328 cast votes in the referendum (Southern Sudan Referendum Commission 2011).
Despite this, the majority of community members I spoke with, both men and women, were in favour of separating from the rest of Sudan. The few who voiced a preference for unity tended to be younger and had left Sudan as small children, or were older, but had spent many years internally displaced in and around Khartoum and retained strong family, financial and cultural ties to that part of the country. Even those who voiced a desire for unity, however, tended to add that they did not think unity could be practically realized.

Members of smaller tribes often found themselves caught in the middle of referendum debates, as they worried about Nuer and Dinka dominance in an independent Southern Sudan. Many of the Equatorians, for example, would quietly speak about their desire for unity as an alternative to complete SPLM control of the south. The dissatisfaction with SPLM domination was also shared by members of the Shilluk community in the city, although at the time few voiced these concerns in public.

Those who were placed in the most fraught position by the referendum, however, were people from the Blue Nile and Nuba Mountain regions of Sudan. Both regions had fought with the SPLA during the civil war, and elected SPLM-North representatives during the national election. They were, however, treated separately in the CPA and are scheduled to vote in a separate referendum, along with the contested area Abyei, on whether to stay with Sudan or leave to merge with South Sudan. Just days after the south seceded, Sudanese President Omar Bashir declared the SPLM- North an illegal party and removed the legally elected governor from his post in Southern Kordufan. At the time of writing both areas are embroiled in their own conflict with the Sudanese government, leading to mass displacement of people and increasing tension.
between Khartoum and South Sudan as accusations that each side is supporting rebel movements within the other’s territory continue to fly back and forth.

It did not take long for the physical split between South Sudan and the Blue Nile and Nuba Mountain regions to be reflected in community relations in Calgary, particularly within USES, the umbrella organization representing the sub-community groups discussed in the previous chapters. As political differences and tensions built between members of USES throughout the election and referendum, and rifts began to appear in the organization, talk of separation started. As I noted earlier, realizing through their practices an image of “nation” as bounded and discrete entity, the group decided to split into two factions in order to better represent the geo-political reality on the ground in Sudan – Darfur, Blue Nile and Nuba Mountain would retain the USES name and structure, while the Southern Sudanese groups are in the process of forming a new, independent community organization.

4.1.3. Remittances and Engagement in Development

Financial remittances are one of the most common, and most studied transnational activities engaged in by refugee and immigrant groups. Some writers have argued for the need to differentiate between the transnational capabilities of groups (Al Ali and Koser 2001, Van Hear 2006), in particular when it comes to remittances, noting that a group’s ability to engage in such activities is limited by factors such as their immigration status, the situation in their home country, the socio-economic situation of individuals both pre and post migration, and the experiences of a particular group in their country of resettlement. Refugee groups in particular are often regarded as limited in their abilities to engage in large scale remittances and development projects in comparison with other categories of immigrants, in large part due to the
nature of their emigration, which often involved sudden flight and years in a refugee camp or country of first asylum. Research with some refugee groups however, has demonstrated that the presence of conflict or an unstable political situation in a refugee’s home country may actually lead to an increased desire to participate in transnational activities, regardless of the group’s perceived financial or social capabilities. Bernal (2004) for example, found that Eritrean refugees were extremely organized and efficient in terms of raising awareness, as well as large sums of money to support the Eritrean independence movement against Ethiopia, despite their often precarious financial and social situations in their countries of resettlement.

Southern Sudanese were much less organized in their approach to remittances; however, their recent arrival in the country and lack of financial resources and organization did little to deter them from engaging heavily in remittance sending activities, many of them within days of arriving in resettlement (Leng 2006, Riak Akuei 2004, Shandy 2007). Many Southerners recounted that the pressure to remit began even before they departed for Canada - the days leading up to their departure were often filled with phone calls from family members in Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia reminding them of their responsibilities to those they were leaving behind. I witnessed several departures at the Cairo airport where individuals and families destined for resettlement in Canada were sent off by relatives and community members singing songs reminding them of where they came from and admonishing them not to forget to look after their family and friends. Upon arrival in Canada, common stories from the first years of resettlement included “lost” relatives suddenly appearing on a weekly basis and calling to re-establish connections, and never ending late night phone calls providing constant pressure not to “forget your people”.

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It is not surprising then, that for most the first concern upon arriving in Canada was to send money back to family and friends. Many sent home the whole amount of their first government assistance cheque immediately upon receiving it, without realizing that they would need the bulk of the amount to cover rent, food and utilities. The trend of sending the majority of one’s income away in remittances was well established when I first began conducting research in Calgary in 2003. At that time remittances, along with acute settlement needs such as housing and employment, were the main concerns people spoke of. It was not uncommon to encounter single young men living five to a two bedroom apartment so they could send $1000 a month each in remittances to family members and friends scattered throughout Sudan and neighbouring countries of asylum.

The personal and familial stress that has been linked to the pressure to remit cannot be understated. Informants repeatedly spoke of the strain that maintaining these financial obligations placed on their families, and their marriages in particular. Leng’s (2006) research among the Sudanese community in Calgary explores this issue in detail, linking the pressure to fulfill often exorbitant remittance requests to increasing marital conflict and divorce among Southern Sudanese in resettlement. The pressure men feel to maintain, and strengthen, kin relationships in order to reproduce their social positions often leads to greater focus on the husband’s family when deciding where to direct remittances. Wives then became increasingly frustrated with their lack of ability meet their families’ remittance requests. This frustration was often coupled with an increasing desire on women’s part to reduce the amount sent abroad in
order to consolidate the family’s limited financial resources to support their immediate households in Calgary.\textsuperscript{45}

Upon my resumption of research in 2009, there appeared to be a slight, yet noticeable shift in the attitudes of many Southerners toward remittances. With the impending independence of South Sudan, the focus appeared to be moving away from individual remittances, which had dominated conversations in 2003, toward a discourse that reflected the desire for a more comprehensive and holistic approach to reconstruction and development. Individuals still fulfilled kinship obligations and contributed to special events such as weddings or funerals, putting relatives through school, and providing basic living expenses for some relatives; however, there were increasing complaints about the large sums they were sending back to “disappear into stomachs of greedy relatives,” coupled with widespread dissatisfaction with the Government of Southern Sudan’s efforts to provide for the basic needs of the people.

A man from Eastern Equatoria, who made the above statement regarding “greedy relatives,” spoke of his frustration with his home village upon his return to Calgary after his first post-war visit to his home village. He explained that after years of sending remittances to relatives he decided it would be better to help the village develop a solar energy project to increase their “self sufficiency.” He raised several thousand dollars through his community’s diaspora networks in Canada and the United States to purchase and ship solar panels to Kenya, which were carried across the border into his village at a great expense. When he arrived with the panels, he was upset by the lack of interest in the project, and the attitude of his family. He claimed they were

\textsuperscript{45} These competing kinship obligations will be explored further in Chapter 6.
upset that he had brought the solar panels instead of cash, and angrily stated, “they get all the Kenyans and Ugandans to work and they sit back and ask us for money….they only want money and won’t accept help from us who have the skills they need, because we are from the outside now…they think we are just being arrogant and trying to tell them how to live.”

Diaspora instigated development projects such as the one described above were common among the various Southern community groups, often referred to as home associations, in the city. Most often based on the village, or sub-village level, the projects varied in scope and scale, ranging from small scale handicraft and catering businesses organized by women to raise money to keep a handful of children in school, to large scale, well funded educational and medical projects. One creative Dinka man painted his van with slogans and contact information for his project collecting bottles in order to maintain a school in his village. He claimed that he received enough phone calls and emails to pick up bottles every month to consistently pay the monthly salary of a teacher in his home town.

Schools and clinics were by far the most common projects such groups attempted to develop and fund. The main source of funding outside of community members’ own pockets tended to be faith based organizations, and competition to find a church willing to partner with a sub-community’s project was fierce. While most groups continuously attempted to access more lucrative government and international NGO grants, they often lacked the knowledge and resources required to negotiate the complex application process and achieve the registered charity status that most donor organizations require.

Reasons for participating in such projects were often as varied as the projects themselves. Many who participated spoke of a desire to “save face” by returning to the south with something, such
as a school or clinic, that would benefit the whole village. This would prove that their time in Canada had been a success. Several men and women also saw bringing such projects to their home villages as contributing to the post war development of the south in a meaningful way, in reparation of sorts for not remaining to participate in the war effort. The majority also strongly believed that such projects were a useful strategy to reduce their personal remittance responsibilities by building up the resources available to their family and friends in South Sudan. Perhaps most importantly, every individual or group I spoke with who was involved in some sort of community development project in the south linked their participation and efforts to their responsibility and desire to use the skills and advantages they had acquired in Canada to contribute to building a new, independent South Sudan.

Many described their participation in the long distance nation-building of South Sudan as an urgent intervention, required by the Government of South Sudan’s (GoSS) unwillingness, or inability, to provide even basic services for the bulk of the region. Calgary Sudanese were frustrated with lack of GoSS support for infrastructure and social services, and with its rampant corruption. The experience of Maria, a middle aged Latuka woman, exemplifies the experiences of many home associations’ attempts to work with GoSS:

"We were trying to get supplies to a clinic in our village that the government had built with an NGO, but was sitting empty for over two years. Two years! No doctor, no supplies…just empty shelves. My husband went back and saw it for himself – just sitting there empty. So we raised money for over a year to send a container full of supplies to Juba [she later informed me that the cost of this was approximately $12,000]. When it got there it was impounded for no reason! We had all the paperwork and had paid everything but they would not let it go. We had to send more and more money to pay off health department people, and"
finally it was released. When they [people from the village who had come to collect the supplies] opened it, like three quarters of the supplies were missing! All that extra money and all that time and almost nothing reached the village. And you know what’s worse? A friend of mine who is a pharmacist works for GoSS and inspects some private clinics – she said she saw some of our supplies in a private clinic in Juba owned by a minister’s relative! The boxes still had my labels on them!  

Women seemed to be the most outraged by this type of behaviour, and consistently spoke out against the corruption in GoSS. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, most men, in particular elders, felt that the time many former SPLA commanders had spent in the bush earned them a “free pass” of sorts when it came to matters of corruption and personal gain. The feeling that former fighters were owed something by the new country, along with the volatile nature of Southern Sudanese community politics, led to very few men in any position of authority openly criticizing the government’s reconstruction or development track record. Women, however, were a different story. Older women in particular, where willing to join together, regardless of tribal affiliation, to lecture SPLM representatives on GoSS’s perceived corruption. A Dinka woman in her 60’s explained the differing attitudes of men and women toward this issue by relating it to the responsibility mothers feel toward all children:

As a mother you know how sweet a baby’s life is, but men don’t understand this. So as a mother you cannot feed your baby and not another’s. You cannot watch another baby die. But the government is men, so they helping some areas and not others because they are men – that is not right – we are all their children.

46 Private clinics are extremely lucrative business opportunities, particularly in Juba, and many returnees are investing in them.
Those involved in home association development projects argued that due to the high levels of corruption and lack of human resources, any attempts to have the government start delivering services was futile. The majority of non-Sudanese faith-based groups and NGOs I encountered working with these groups also held the same opinion, preferring to circumvent GoSS whenever possible. I had several conversations with a Canadian NGO representative who was visiting Juba to lay the ground-work for a school and teacher’s training facility they were partnering with a home association in Calgary to build. When she told me of all their plans to import teaching curricula from North America and find funding to rewrite the documents for the Sudanese context, I mentioned that my Dinka instructor, a professor in the Department of Education at the University of Juba, was currently involved in a GoSS project, partnered with the EU, to develop a teacher training curriculum and training centres. She quickly informed me that it did not matter what GoSS was doing as “they were hopeless, there’s no point trying to coordinate anything with them. They all need to be taught how to work and learn here. It’s not just the village people that need to be completely re-educated, the whole country does.”

The pressing need to “re-educate” Southern Sudanese was a common theme in non-Sudanese charities’ and NGOs’ development work, as well the discourse surrounding Southern Sudanese home associations’ attempts to access funding. The conflicts that often arose between funders, home associations and the intended beneficiaries in South Sudan regarding “proper” development, which projects were appropriate for the village, and what were the most pressing needs, were often framed by both non-Sudanese and Southern Sudanese organizations as being rooted in the villagers’ ignorance, and their need to be taught what “modern development” is. One home association’s attempts to raise funds toward the reconstruction of their village in Unity
State highlights the often contested category of “development,” while problematizing commonly held assumptions about “ethnic” home associations. Founded in 2005, the organization’s structure exemplifies the long distance nation building engaged in by Southern Sudanese groups abroad. Rather than representing a straight-forward line of cash and ideas flowing from Calgary to their home village in South Sudan, the organization consists of a complex web of networks with members in Edmonton, Calgary, St John’s, and Vancouver, as well as large chapters in Salt Lake City, New Hampshire and Sydney, Australia. Based in Calgary, the organization is registered as a charity in all three countries and collects money through various coordinated fundraisers, which is then pooled in their common account. As Mercer et. al. (2010) found in their research with Tanzanian home associations in the United Kingdom, while community groups such as these are often referred to as “ethnic” community associations, the actual composition of such groups is often far more fluid. Membership in this particular association, as well as the numerous other groups I spent time with in Calgary was not limited to individuals from the specified home village. Aside from members who may have married someone from the target village, many members who attended social events and meetings were from the vicinity of the village and had no direct kinship ties with the group.

The original organization was founded as a regional home association for all Dinka villages in the vicinity of Bentiu, which is a predominantly Nuer area that contains a small cluster of Dinka villages. The organization’s purpose was to raise funds to complete educational, medical and water projects in a handful of these villages, all of which had been razed and abandoned numerous times throughout the civil war. Conflicts soon broke out over where to begin focusing their limited financial resources, and the organization soon split into two groups along sub-tribal
lines - one group chose to focus on water projects in their village, which had been affected by oil field contamination, while the other took over the school project. Despite the contentious split over development priorities, both associations regularly came together for cultural events such as dances and holidays, and to raise funds for weddings, funerals and family emergencies both in Canada and South Sudan.

After the split, the group focusing on the educational project was able to obtain registered charitable status through their partnership with a faith-based organization. The stated purpose of charity was to raise money to build a school and community center. Along with the faith-based organization, they partnered with a local architectural firm, whose vision was to create a sustainable school for primary through secondary grades, as well as a trade school, using the latest “green” building techniques. Association members in Calgary and abroad were initially supportive of the project, and could not believe their luck when two established organizations wanted to partner with them. However, dissatisfaction with the project soon started to show. While the project fit perfectly with donor priorities of environmentally sustainable and holistic approaches to community development, there was tension between the members living in resettlement and those living in the village in South Sudan regarding how the money raised should be spent, and how quickly the funds should begin being disbursed.

For example, there were several women who died in the village over a short period of time due to complications in childbirth (the nearest hospital or staffed clinic is a two day walk away). They learned that a nearby village had found the money to hire a doctor from Kenya to live in their village for two weeks a month and that he would be willing to spend the other two weeks in their village if they could pay him $300 a month. They also proposed to the association that for a
minimal sum they could have a midwife from Bentiu stay in the village for the other two weeks of the month. This type of arrangement was very common, and there were several other home associations in Calgary supporting similar plans. However, members of this particular association were forced to turn down the village’s request for funds, as their partners told them it did not fit the parameters of the project they had agreed on. Feeling that the plan was a good one, however, they took it upon themselves to hold internal community fundraisers in order to send the money to South Sudan to pay for the doctor and midwife. This led to further conflict with their non-Sudanese partners, who stated that any fundraising done under the organization’s name now had to go to the school project under Canadian Revenue Agency charitable donation regulations. The partners also lectured association members for giving in to the villagers’ demands and losing site of the “big picture” which consisted of “long term sustainable development.” These divergent views on what comprised an appropriate development project and how best to contribute to the well being of village residents back in South Sudan placed association members in Calgary in a difficult position between the village and their NGO partners, and the ensuing tensions compromised the international links between the groups. At time of writing, the organization was debating having to let their charitable status lapse and separating from their partners so they could return to providing for their families with fewer restrictions.

An important aside to this discussion is the increasing interest governments and international NGOs have shown in putting refugee and immigrant groups to work for development. A recent presentation by World Bank representatives given to policy makers in Ottawa argued that since remittances are already a significant source of development, “migration presents significant
untapped potential for Africa’s development” (Dilip Ratha 2011). Home associations may make standard development organizations uncomfortable because they appear to straddle two worlds – they have adopted the language of the NGOs but also have deep insider knowledge of the groups the NGOs are hoping to work with (Mercer et. al. 2010). However, the Canadian government, along with large international NGO and faith-based organizations in the country are increasingly viewing small home associations such as the one discussed as a source that can be tapped to reduce some of their costs and the risks of development projects, especially in relatively unstable regions such as South Sudan. Despite all the talk about ‘untapped potential’, few have paused to question whose interests are best served by increased participation of home associations in government and large-scale NGO development projects. The experience of the association members outlined here speaks to the emotional and financial stress that ensues when home association members are placed between their home village’s wishes and the priorities of large funding agencies. Is it ethical to put such pressure on groups still struggling to establish themselves in Canada? Moreover, if home associations are encouraged to enter into funding agreements for large scale development projects, what happens to the very valuable work they do that falls outside of formalized development projects yet still contributes to the well being of the community – such as assisting with weddings and funerals, or contributing to local solutions like the plan to share a doctor and midwife with a neighbouring village? Studies of home associations among African diaspora communities, such as the comparisons by Mercer et. al. (2010) of Cameroonian and Tanzanian home associations based in London, have begun to ask these questions, noting that although home association members often adopt the discourse of formal development in order to access funding, many are still focused on work related more to the
general “well being” of community members, such as ensuring the continuation of mortuary and wedding practices, which fall outside of broader development practices.

In the case of the association described above, in addition to the differences over providing short term solutions to the lack of medical services in the village, differences in conceptions of providing for the villager’s well being or participating in formal development projects also arose in relation to the importance of rebuilding family cattle herds. Francis Deng (1998) has pointed out that the previously unknown concept of “development” was whole heartedly adopted by Dinka throughout the 1970’s in the post-war reconstruction period that followed the first civil war. He also notes, however, that for projects to be successful they must be rooted in Dinka morals and values, to which cattle are inextricably linked. A reflection of this is the large amount of money many Dinka home association members send back to South Sudan to assist family members in buying cattle to rebuild herds lost during the war. Non-Southern partners often lectured against this practice, arguing that these large sums of money would be better used if placed in the account toward the official education project. However, for association members and their families in South Sudan, it was difficult to separate both goals, as the construction of a school, and the continuation of relationships constituted through cattle exchange were equally important for the reestablishment of life in the village.

4.2. Conclusion

If there is one point that the majority of Southern Sudanese living in Calgary agree on it is the responsibility they share to play a role in supporting and shaping the future of South Sudan. While John Garang called on them to use their new found unity as “diaspora” to contribute as the 7th Front, the resulting engagement in long distance nation building is much more diverse and
multifaceted than imagined in discourses of a unified diaspora supporting the common vision for an independent South Sudan. Uniting around the common cause of removing Talisman Energy may have laid the foundation for the various Southern groups in the city to come together and speak with one voice when unity was deemed necessary in order to be heard. The divergent opinions regarding the success and continued validity of the SPLM as the “only” Southern political party, or the merit of participating in the referendum on independence however, highlight the role of “the nation” as a “floating signifier – that is it means many contradictory things to people who organize to obtain diametrically different views of the future all waving the national flag” (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2002:28). These differing views of the future are especially prevalent in the work of home associations and their differing priorities for what is needed to build a nation. Steeped in discourses of “sustainable”, “long term”, “holistic” projects, most home associations focus their fundraising efforts on more traditional development projects related to education or health, while others choose sanitation, or agriculture. The intended recipients of these projects in South Sudan, however, may have very different views of what is required to return to a state of well being or as some have put it “make the world right again.” This often includes areas that fall outside formalized development projects, such as providing for the (re)production of social relations through the rebuilding of cattle herds and funding the activities surrounding key events such as marriage, birth and death.

As the relationship between Southern Sudanese living in Calgary, their home villages, and now the new country of South Sudan continues to evolve, it is clear that the call for the 7th Front to contribute to the creation of a new Sudan still resonates and is manifested in actions that clearly move beyond feelings of affinity, nostalgia and attachment. Contrary to idealized models of
migrant engagement in development however, the above discussion demonstrates the diverse, and often diverging visions for the future of the nation that Southerners hold and the variety of ways they attempt to enact them as they engage in long distance nation building.
5. Cattle, Money and the Search for “Good Girls”: Shifting Gender Relations and Transnational Marriage

“It is the chief ambition of a youth to marry and have a home of his own, for when Nuer speak of marriage they speak of home” (Evans-Pritchard 1951:49)

“Dinka consider marriage as the first in the standard of importance….to have married is to have done the main duty in the society” (Deng 1972:134).

Marriage remains one of the fundamental units of social organization among Southern Sudanese communities living in resettlement. In Calgary’s summer wedding season it was not uncommon for there to be two or three weddings within the community every Saturday. This chapter, however, focuses more specifically on the changes to marriage practices and bridewealth among the Dinka and Nuer communities in the city. Marriage in both groups shares many common characteristics, particularly the importance of bridewealth exchange in formalizing the marriage and in building and maintaining relationships within and between families. Marriage is not considered simply a one day event that marks an immediate change in the martial and legal status of the two individuals involved, it can only be fully constituted through an ongoing process of negotiation and exchange where “each transfer of payments and each ceremony….create strong social ties of conjugality and affinity whereby family alliances are strengthened and procreation is ensured” (Grabska 2010:486). Marriage also marks the passage into adulthood for young men and women. It is through marriage, procreation and setting up a household that a young man is
considered to have become a “true man” and it is only through marriage and childbirth that a girl can officially become a woman (Evans-Pritchard 1951, Deng 1972, Hutchinson 1996).

The importance of marriage was felt by young Sudanese men living in Calgary. “Lost Boys” in particular were at the age where they were keen to gather the resources necessary to marry as soon as possible. While there were some community members who chose to marry non-Sudanese partners, marriage within Southern Sudanese communities was still the obvious preference. It was also clear that many men were opting for the more expensive, and time consuming method of choosing a bride from South Sudan instead of marrying a Southern Sudanese girl already living in Canada. Given the great expense, travel and immigration hassle involved (it can often take 2-3 years to complete the immigration process and bring a spouse from Sudan to Canada), I often wondered why so many of these young men, some of whom had spent upwards of 10 years in Canada and had left Sudan in their early teens, were choosing to return to South Sudan to get married.

While some researchers suggest a motive for transnational marriage to be the gender imbalance among resettled Sudanese – in some cities in the United States there are as many as three men for every woman (Shandy 2007), my conversation with Dhieu about his recent trip to Sudan indicates a different reason. I had no idea that he had been thinking about marriage, in fact in earlier conversations he had always pointed out the importance of focusing on his career and achieving financial stability before starting a family. But as we were chatting about his trip in the food court of a Calgary shopping mall he pulled out his cell phone to show me a picture of the girl he had become engaged to on his trip home. He informed me that he had been home for less than two days when his father broached the subject of marriage and his family started
introducing him to girls. After listening to him complain about the high cost of the marriage (100 cows, which is slightly over 30,000 USD), how inflated the price is because he is “coming from away,” and discussing the long difficult process of sponsorship and immigration, I could not stop myself from questioning his decision, “why didn’t you get married here? It still would have made your family happy –aren’t there any girls here for you to marry? You’ve got a good job and a degree – wouldn’t it be cheaper and easier to marry someone here?” His emphatic reply to my questions took me somewhat by surprise– “there are no good girls here, they all just want to live the BET [Black Entertainment Television] lifestyle and are spoiled. They are no good anymore, no one here is marriageable”.

As I started looking more into the idea of what made one “marriageable” Dhiue’s comments were echoed by the majority of young single men, as well as older married men I spoke with, and appeared to reflect the tensions surrounding the renegotiating of gender roles that were constantly occurring within their communities. However, as this chapter explores, men’s desire to marry more “traditional” or “good girls” from South Sudan can also be considered a statement of the important role transnational marriages play in reinforcing kinship and community networks with South Sudan, and one’s place within those networks. Earlier literature on transnational practices among refugees (Al Ali et. al. 2001, Al-Ali and Koser 2002, Riak Akuei 2004, Leng 2006, Sherrell and Hyndman 2006), tends to focus on financial remittances as a means of reinforcing existing kinship and social networks. Research with Pakistani communities in the United Kingdom, and Cambodian refugees in the United States, however, has shown that engaging in transnational marriage is an equally important means of reproducing and reinforcing networks between immigrants and their home countries, while also contributing to the
reproduction of social norms and “local” practices from the home country in the immigrant’s new land (Shaw 2006, Um 2006).

By approaching transnational marriage as a means “through which the gender and generational status quo are reaffirmed and reconfigured in response to the separation of family and clan members due to displacement and the difficulties newcomers face in their places of settlement” (Grabska 2010: 483) this chapter explores the ideals surrounding “good” Southern Sudanese men and women in relation to the renegotiation of local marriage practices in resettlement. Through this process we can begin to move beyond a view of the local constrained to a specific space, to one where it is constituted, reproduced and re-imagined through actions and practices carried out across transnational social fields (Lambek 2011).

5.1. Money has no Colours: Changes to Bridewealth Payments due to Money, War and Migration

Before discussing the motivations and strategies behind transnational marriages, it is important to set the context by exploring some of the changes that the introduction of the market economy and two prolonged periods of civil war have produced on Nuer and Dinka marriage practices, both inside and outside of Sudan, particularly in terms of bridewealth payments and the use of cattle in such exchanges. As discussed in the introduction, the relationships between Nuer and Dinka and their cattle have become classic case studies of East African cattle complexes in anthropological literature. Historic and current descriptions of both groups’ practices focus on their strong bond with their cattle, as well as the role cattle play in the majority of social situations. As Evans-Pritchard (1940) noted at the time of his research, cattle were the “social
idiot” through which social relations, especially marriage was mediated, and the case remains
much the same today.

Hutchinson (1996) provides a detailed description of how the introduction of wage labour
enabled Nuer men to purchase their own cows, thus gaining greater control over their marriages
and tilting the balance of power away from extended kin networks in regards to marriage
choices. As Evans-Pritchard (1951) noted, a sisterless man in the 1930s would have very limited
access to cattle and may remain a bachelor for life, while in the 1970’s and 1980s, “with the
expansion of the market economy, young Nuer men became far less dependent on the good will
of their fathers, older brothers and paternal and maternal uncles in the collection of bridewealth
cattle” (Hutchinson 1996:92). While this represented a shift away from a communal approach to
marriage, Hutchinson (1996) noted that young men providing their own bridewealth was not
always seen as negative, and that many elders took pride in their sons being able to establish
some form of economic independence. Similar changes also took place in Dinka marriage
practices with the introduction of cash and wage labour. During the second period of civil war
(1983-2005), both Dinka and Nuer bridewealth practices were increasingly altered through the
decimation of cattle herds and the mass internal and external migration of people, cutting them
off from their home villages and making the exchange of large numbers of cattle impossible.

During the war Southern Sudanese who were living in displaced persons camps in and around
Khartoum, throughout the south of the country, and in asylum in Egypt, adapted to these
disruptions in the supply and flow of cattle by modifying bridewealth exchanges to include a
“symbolic” number of cows to be paid for in cash (Currie 2007, Hutchinson 1996, Shandy 2007).
While this allowed families separated from their herds to arrange marriages and delay the actual
exchange of cattle, it often led to inflated bridewealth prices. For example, Hutchinson (1996) found among Nuer who remained in areas deep within South Sudan during the war, and where cattle were still being used for bridewealth, prices decreased, sometimes to as low as 7-15 cattle per marriage. In Khartoum where bridewealth was paid solely in cash, however, the cost could be inflated to as many as 100 cows. Currie (2007) also found that bridewealth rates were often inflated as high as 100 to 200 cows when cash was replacing cattle in Cairo. In these cases most families would accept half of the payment in cash at the time of the wedding, agreeing that the rest could be paid in cows when the war was over and families were able to reestablish their herds.

In resettlement countries such as Canada, the United States and Australia bridewealth practices vary by group and appear to be in a constant state of renegotiation. Holtzman’s (1999) research with Nuer in the United States is among the earliest conducted with resettled refugees from Southern Sudan. He found that among his study population, cattle were diminishing in importance in bridewealth negotiations and were no longer returned in the case of divorce. Shandy (2007), on the other hand, found that cattle exchange was still a fundamental part of Nuer marriage and divorce in the United States. A similar trend is present among the Dinka and Nuer living in Calgary - whether marrying a girl in Canada or from “back home” and whether paying in straight cash or a mixture of cattle and cash, the transference of bridewealth remains an important part of legitimizing and completing the marriage.

Rek’s account of his marriage and bridewealth payment arrangement reflects some of the shifts that took place in marriage practices among many southern Sudanese groups during the last civil war. A Bor Dinka, Rek spent the early years of the second civil war in the government-occupied
city of Juba teaching at the University of Juba, before fleeing the country in 1989. When discussing how he arranged to get married before leaving the country he explained:

Cattle were hard to come by during the war. People were separated from their villages and herds…some trapped in government towns and others in rebel held areas. My wife and her family were in Juba and I was at the university there, but I had no cows. All of my family’s cows were in Bor you see. So, the marriage price was set at 100 cows but they let me pay 40 cows with money in 1989 before I left and I promised to pay the balance later, [starts to chuckle] I still haven’t paid and I live in fear of the day my in laws will come knocking on my door.

In a subsequent conversation Rek was less jovial about the balance remaining on his bridewealth payment. Although his sister and her husband were living in Australia, have several children together and were married in a church ceremony several years ago, the marriage had yet to be finalized in the eyes of both families with an exchange of bridewealth cattle in Bor. As the older brother, and head of the family since his father’s death, Rek was expected to receive a large number of cattle from the bridewealth exchange. Aware of his upcoming windfall, his in-laws were now pressuring him to pay the twenty year-old balance remaining on the bridewealth payment owing to them. However, with the war over and families beginning to rebuild their herds, his in laws were not willing to accept cash – they wanted cows.

In concluding her ethnography chronicling changes in Nuer sociality and practices during the 1980s, Hutchinson (1996) was uncertain if the preference for cattle over cash would return among the Nuer once the conflict was over. Several individuals working in the humanitarian and development sector in South Sudan were also skeptical about the return of a preference for cattle, and told me that they believed the desire for cattle would continue to wane in the post conflict
period. They often referred to the need to shift beliefs regarding cattle in order to facilitate the full implementation of a market economy, and thus, as they saw it, a path to development and post war reconstruction. Francis Deng (1998), however, counters this opinion, by highlighting the need for a “Southern Sudanese” approach to development. He argues that unlike other cattle cultures in Africa (Ferguson 1985, Comaroff and Comaroff 1990), the Dinka will never agree to minimize the role of cattle, or use them for agricultural purposes such as ploughing. Stating that although Southern Sudanese groups have latched on to the notion of development, particularly in the area of education, he believes post conflict reconstruction and development efforts will have to take into consideration Dinka concepts of sociality as expressed through cattle exchange and ownership in order to be successful.

Rek’s explanation of his in-law’s preference for cattle over money further illustrates the continued importance of cattle in Dinka society: “You have to understand the importance of cattle to us Dinka - money does not have any colours, people remember and talk about cows, but money just goes.” Other men who were in the midst of, or had recently concluded bridewealth negotiations, regardless of the location of the brides and their families, also noted a renewed preference on the part of the bride’s family for payment in cows. Athian, the leader of the Jieng (Dinka) community in Calgary said the shift back to cattle over cash was even going further as a preference for cows from established family herds whose lineage could be traced was also starting to re-emerge:

People don’t want money or market cows anymore like they did during the war. In the war they would take anything, but now we need cows from the family and to know their grandmothers and aunts and uncles so we know if they are good cows and we know their stories. This changed because of the war and people took
money or market cows instead, but now people back home are going back to wanting family cows for their girls.

Athian’s comment echoes Evan’s Pritchard’s (1940) assertion that “a cow is never just a cow – but a good or a bad one.” Among many of the middle aged men I interviewed in Calgary, the lineages and histories of specific cows were still remembered and discussed through stories and songs. In South Sudan as well, it appears as if colonial and post colonial attempts to fully introduce a market economy and normalize the straight-forward conversion of cash to cattle, along with decades of civil war and displacement, have not eroded the importance of cattle in Nuer and Dinka society. Several Southerners spoke of the fact that as so many herds had been destroyed during the war, cows with an established history that could be linked to a family where worth even more than in the past. Many people I spoke with linked this apparent return in popularity of cattle over cash to the efforts of Southern Sudanese to rebuild their lives following years of devastating conflict. Both Hutchinson (1996) and Deng (1972) discuss the belief among Nuer and Dinka that during both civil wars their world went completely wrong, and note the importance of reclaiming certain traditions “once the world is right again”. This sentiment was echoed by many returnees from camps in Kenya and Uganda, who saw the peace agreement and subsequent independence of South Sudan as a sign that the time had finally come to start rebuilding cattle herds and villages.

The desire to rebuild cattle herds however, is not shared equally across kin groups - many Southerners living in resettlement are less than keen to change from cash back to cows. Some who, like Rek, are paying off old debts, would prefer to pay in cash, as the cash value of his outstanding balance of 60 cows set at 1989 prices would be less than the cost of 60 cows at
market price today. On the other hand, men entering into new marriages sometimes prefer to pay in cattle as they argue it often works out to be cheaper than paying cash,

If you pay in money it is just the flat price with no change, but if you pay some in cows, the total cost of the bridewealth can end up being higher or lower, depending how well you plan it – there are small cows and big cows, and the price of the bull is different, and the cow cost more. So if you pay in terms of cows you will be saving money because it will be a mixture of different sizes, bulls and cows, but if you pay in terms of money, a lot of times you will be paying the same flat rate whether it is big or small, cow, or bull or whatever.

The desire to potentially save money by paying in cows, however, is often balanced by the preference many young men have for the personal autonomy and prestige paying in cash gives them,

When you give money it's tricky, it's harder to ask someone for help. They may say no I’m not going to help you with money, I’ll help with a cow later or something else. So it’s harder to ask for money, but that’s ok because you can save and make arrangements to pay it yourself and then you can marry when you chose and you can say “this is what I was able to do on my own”.

In order to unpack the role cattle play in Dinka and Nuer society as mediators of social relationships, we must further explore the different interests that are involved in maintaining the boundaries and rules around cattle exchange, or in shifting to more a more cash based system of exchange. As Ferguson (1985) notes, while many in the development field may frame a shift from cattle to cash as “modernization” and a move away from “traditional” practices, the decision use cattle or cash often has a greater relationship to one’s position within the power structures in their society and their interests at a particular point in their life. For example, as
Hutchinson’s (1996) work among the Nuer clearly shows, seniors had a vested interest in maintaining cattle as the main form of bridewealth payment as it allowed them to maintain control of their juniors and their reproductive choices. Also, as many of my interviewees in Canada and South Sudan pointed out, it is much easier to hide money received as a bridewealth payment from the claims of extended family, while cows must be shared.

Similar to the migrant labourers described by Ferguson (1985), who sent cash to their home villages to purchase cattle as a “place holder” or retirement plan of sorts, many of the Southern Sudanese men in Calgary saw the purchase of cattle for their family’s herd back in South Sudan as way to strengthen their kinship ties. It was also considered a good way to shore up your social reputation if you were planning on returning to the South in the near future to look for a job or bride. As some of the following examples will show, young men returning to South Sudan to get married were often torn between the autonomy granted by cash, and the legitimacy and authority granted by a bridewealth exchange conducted with large numbers of cattle.

While men, regardless of their stage in life appeared to have varying degrees of interest in maintaining the importance of cattle in bridewealth exchanges, women in Calgary often advocated for a complete move away from bridewealth payments. Some young women did voice an interest to be “married with cows” in order to please their families back in South Sudan, however many said that they wished their families would be satisfied with “symbolic cows.” By this they meant the token exchange of a few money cows in Calgary, and perhaps a cow or two exchanged in South Sudan. The reason most women gave for this shift was their desire to put the money that would have been spent on bridewealth toward items such as education or setting up a home in Canada. Women also spoke of the negative effects of bridewealth on their personal
lives, such as pressure they felt to stay in unhappy, and sometimes dangerous, marriages in order to avoid the complications of returning bridewealth payments, and as mentioned at the start of Chapter 3, the belief that anger and stress related to the risk of lost bridewealth contributed to many incidents of domestic violence.

While a man can try to influence the manner in which he is expected to pay the bridewealth, it is the families back in South Sudan who generally have the final say in the bridewealth price and the manner in which it is to be paid. Even in cases where both the groom’s and the bride’s parents or closest relatives are in Canada, the decisions of extended family members back in Sudan regarding the number of cattle to be paid and the going market price per cow are normally deferred to by family members in Canada.

The negotiations amongst and between kin groups surrounding bridewealth decisions often reveal the shifting relations between family members in Canada in South Sudan. Decisions regarding the amount of bridewealth to be paid, as well as the method of payment, become sites of struggle between family members in the diaspora and those who remained in refugee camps or Sudan. At the time of my fieldwork, unless someone has access to a satellite phone, internet and phone access is still extremely rare in rural areas of Southern Sudan so marriage negotiations can become a drawn out affair. If the couple to be married is currently in Canada, and has sufficient family present, the negotiations are usually carried out here. Once the number of cattle has been settled on, however, approval is still sought from the bride’s family back in her village regarding the number of cows to be paid, as well as the market value for various types of cow. In the case of transnational marriage negotiations, they usually take place in the bride’s village in South Sudan with the groom’s available family members acting on his behalf. It was during these
transnational bridewealth negotiations and marriage arrangements that many of the shifts that have occurred in kinship practices and values between those in resettlement and their family members in Sudan became apparent. For example, in Calgary many families stated that they prefer to receive bridewealth payments in cash when their daughters are married. They argued that cash was easier to move around therefore more suited to transnational marriages. However, many also pointed out that cash was also easier to hide, allowing them to avoid redistributing the total amount paid. Kin living in South Sudan were not unaware of the ease of hiding cash, and often argued vehemently in bridewealth negotiations that the total bridewealth amount should be exchanged in cattle in South Sudan. As one man explained to me after I attended the wedding of his niece in Calgary,

We are kind of a divided people. People back home are one group and we here are one group and if you come here with a little girl and she grows up it is your responsibility, you alone are responsible for her. You did not have the help from the village to raise her. So it should be up to you if she gets married to decide to share the wealth with the people back home. Because now the people back home they don’t give us nothing when there is marriage there….they don’t even think about us. But we have to send them money all the time to pay for marriages. So when you are lucky here and a girl is getting married it is up to you if you want to share the wealth with the people, because expenses are a lot more here. Like me I have to lose $2000 when this wedding happened, so in terms of cows back home people still share but nowadays in terms of money I don’t think people like to share the money. That’s why you get a lot of people here, they bought houses, it’s the money coming from their girls. When you have $20,000 from a wedding of your girl and you don’t have to share it with everyone you can give to the bank and make the mortgage. So girls to us are most important here, because they are a source of income, a source of wealth.
Many Southerners in Calgary echoed the above sentiment, arguing that as they already send so much money home in the form of remittances, they deserved to keep all, or the bulk of, the bridewealth from their daughters’ or close nieces’ marriage. It is also reflective of tensions between fulfilling extended kinship obligations while living in a context that encourages them to focus solely on their nuclear family and shift toward the Canadian “norm” where parents, not the wider community or kin group, are mainly responsible for raising children. As Achuil, a young man who had recently returned to South Sudan to look for work found out, however, the assertion families in Canada make over their individual rights to bridewealth do not go unchallenged. Kin in South Sudan will most often refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of marriages conducted solely with money and without the proper exchange and sacrifice of cattle carried out in South Sudan (see also Grabska 2010).

The people in the village, they have their own way of looking at marriage, to them it might not even count what you’ve already paid, they say “we didn’t see it, we don’t count it – since when do we use money?” The relatives of the girl might try to play with that and say “no we don’t count that cash you paid, that’s between you and whoever was living away there [Calgary] and told you that it’s ok, that’s not us.” They will not recognize it because the immediate family that is away may keep the money and the people in the village think it is another way of trying to cheat them out of what they deserve. They say “it is a deal you made with your father- in- law and we were not part of it” because they know when things are paid in cows everyone can say “it is my right to take this number of cows” so they go there and take what they are owed, but when it is in cash they can’t really tell what was given or know what amount is their right.

Recently married in Canada, during his first visit to his home village Achuil was immediately approached by his wife’s extended family demanding bridewealth cows. Their claims that his
bridewealth obligations remained unfulfilled came as a shock to him as he had made a substantial payment, solely in cash, to his wife’s father who was living in the United States. He soon learned however, that none of the cash had been redistributed to his wife’s uncles and brothers back in South Sudan. In order to maintain good relations between families, and frankly for his own physical safety while in South Sudan, Achuil’s family was forced to re-enter negotiations with his father-in-law in the United States and his wife’s family in Sudan to try to clear up the situation and work out an acceptable additional payment in cows if necessary.

Some families attempt to find a middle ground between demands for cattle back home, the desire for cash in Calgary and changing views on marriage. Rebecca, a Dinka woman who came to Canada in her early teens and married a young Dinka man who grew up in Canada explained how her family handled her marriage:

We tried to combine tradition and Canadian way. My husband is Dinka I wasn’t planning to marry Dinka, my dad was like “you can marry anyone you want” and somehow I met my husband 5 years ago, fell in love, got married two years ago and we did the whole dowry thing but it was just symbolic for me, it was really symbolic, because I’m sure you’ve heard about a Dinka girl being so tall like me and they charge you more and then of course if you are educated they charge you more, but my dad was like “I’m not going to do that whole thing,” so he asked for 120 cows and to him that is considered small…well in the Dinka there are so many tribes and sub-tribes on top of sub-tribes, and my tribe they are known to ask for a lot of cows, while my husband’s tribe, ‘cause he is Dinka but a different sub-tribe, they ask for less, like 80 cows, that’s the most. But anyway, they asked for 120, and then agreed that half would be paid here with money and half back home with cows because my uncles in Sudan want to see their cows, they want to say “Look, this is our brother’s daughter, look how she brought cows to our family”. So normally, like 10 years back they used to ask $100 for
one cow, but now it’s like $300-$600 for one cow, so it’s really expensive. But my dad made it really easy, he didn’t ask for it all before marriage. He said “the most important thing is that you be happy”, because he and my mom got married through love as well, and my husband’s father was very understanding. So we went through the whole church ceremony and they went through the ceremonies in Sudan. So you see we tried to combine tradition with changes.

By viewing Southern Sudanese marriage negotiations and practices through the lens of transnational social fields, networks of relations that are not contained by national borders (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), we can also move beyond an exploration of who families in Calgary attempt to negotiate between “local” marriage practices from South Sudan and changes to sociality and marriage practices in resettlement, towards investigating how by enacting these local practices across transnational spaces, Southern Sudanese living in resettlement countries are shifting perceptions and practices of bridewealth and marriage in South Sudan. For example, research conducted in Sudan, Kenya and Egypt has explored how the influx of large amounts of money in the marriage market from men in resettlement countries has inflated bridewealth and cattle prices in several areas, making it difficult for young men who did not gain access to resettlement to afford marriage (Grabska 2010, Currie 2007).

Grabska’s (2010) research with Sudanese refugees in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, in particular, highlights the effects of transnational marriage on existing gender norms and marriage practices. She notes that as young men return from resettlement countries to seek transnational marriages, opportunities open up for girls in the camp to immigrate to Canada, the US or Australia. The benefits of a transnational marriage can even begin to be felt prior to emigrating as a girl’s fiancé may chose to fund her education while she is still in Kenya. There were more
material benefits to such engagements as well, including the receipt of expensive clothes, cell phones and financial support for one’s family. Grabska found however, that the opportunities and material benefits tied to transnational marriages were balanced by new constraints placed on girls’ autonomy in choosing marriage partners. Past ethnographic research among both Dinka and Nuer indicate that women usually had a degree of choice in their marriage partners. While marriage was ostensibly arranged by a woman’s male relatives, there were mechanisms in place for her to indicate her unwillingness and, all else failing, she could elope or run away, as long as proper bridewealth was paid (Deng 1972, Hutchinson 1996). With the high bridewealth prices that men returning from resettlement were willing to pay, however, girls in the camp were often referred to as “walking millions” because of the large amounts of cash they could potentially bring to families (Grabska 2010). With such large amounts of money involved, it has become much more difficult for girls to refuse their parents’ marriage plans, even if they do not personally agree with the match (Currie 2007, Grabska 2010).

This pressure that young women feel to accept proposals from resettled men often leads to unhappy home situations once the couple is united in Canada. Scandalous marriage breakdowns involving newly arrived brides happened on a regular basis in the city. For example, one young woman stayed with her husband for less than a week after arriving in Calgary. Although the quick breakup of the marriage caused quite a stir in the community, similar cases were not rare. As an elderly woman who had attempted to mediate between the spouses explained,

“the match should never have happened in the first place. The bride loved another man who lived in Sudan, but was pressured by her family to accept the offer from the Canadian man. She went as far as to run away with the man she wanted on her wedding night, but they found her and brought her back to her
husband. Maybe in Sudan in the old days they would have let her have her choice as long as he could pay something, but when immigration is there, there are more important things.....they are more strict and it changes things”.

The men returning to Sudan to marry were often very aware of the effect their actions and the money they were bringing into their very economically depressed and underdeveloped home areas were having. As Paul, a recently engaged man put it,

Back there (Sudan) they think you have a lot of money. If I lived back in Sudan and was getting married no one would ask me for a lot of money. They know I am a common man, they know the source of my income, so they wouldn’t be asking me for that, but if you are coming from here they think you are making too much money. Because some people from here paid a lot in the beginning they expect it now, they say “So and so paid $40,000 and now you are coming with $10,000?” Even your family will say “We are ashamed to come to your wedding with $10,000” (laughs). So they will say “did you see so and so last year he came with $40,000 what about you?” Even your dad will not go to the wedding; he will say he doesn’t want the embarrassment. So that drives the price of the animals up, and it is actually one of the insecurity issues. Like if you go from here with a lot of money, maybe someone there was looking at that girl too, and you took her because you have a lot of money and you pay a lot of cows. So the young men there they say “I don’t have money, but I have a gun” and the young men there go to the neighbouring communities to raid more often and get more cows because they can’t afford them now but they want to get married too. So it’s actually escalating the level of insecurity for us to go home and pay all of this money to get married.

Despite the higher costs involved, and the acknowledged potential for negative effects in Sudan or camps in surrounding countries, however, the majority of young Southern Sudanese men still
preferred to engage in transnational marriages. The overwhelming majority of them echoed Dhieu, that despite the difficulties it was worth it, as the majority of Southern girls in Canada were simply "unmarriageable."

5.2. Searching for “Good Girls”

The idea that southern Sudanese girls in Canada were unmarriageable was often linked to the high cost of bridewealth and the perceived financial risk of marriages in Canada. Among the Dinka and Nuer I interviewed, bridewealth payments ranged from $15,000 USD to $40,000 USD. Prior to resettlement, and disruption caused by the civil war, a young man could depend on support from his father and uncles to collect the required bridewealth payment. In resettlement however, it is much more common for young men to be responsible for the bulk of the fee themselves. Many men argue that in the past the whole fee did not have to be paid at the time of marriage - the agreed upon amount could be paid at various stages including; the engagement, the ceremony in South Sudan, the bride’s arrival in Canada, the birth of the first child and second child and so on. However, perhaps due to the uncertainty many people faced during the war and the ensuing difficulty of tracking down remaining bridewealth balances, many young men now find that their bride’s families expect a large amount to be paid up front. This, in combination with their increased personal responsibility for collecting the amount, means that in order to get married most young men incur a large debt through credit cards and lines of credit.

This large financial investment is considered risky in the face of the very high divorce rates among the Southern Sudanese population in Calgary as well as the Canadian system of family law, which tends to award custody to mothers and does not allow for the reimbursement of bridewealth payments in the case of divorce. In light of these risks, many men felt that by
marrying a girl from “back home” who was not too “free” like the girls in Calgary, they could hedge their bets in favour of a more stable marriage. By having their marriages sanctioned by the community in South Sudan men were also able to draw on the authority of elders, kin networks and other members of their community to reinforce their own authority in their Canadian households. Moreover they could resort to renewed connections with home to seek advice in times of marital crisis, thus increasing the chance that their household will remain united. As one young man put it,

Like 90% of my friends do go back and get married in Sudan. You know there are so many explanations. And one of the best I can say is that life where you are brought up determines your behavior – so most of the young men who grew up in Sudan are so conservative. So when we come to see the Sudanese girls that grew up in North America, we see them as spoiled and we think we can’t live together, so we’d rather go back to our conservative women there instead of getting married here. And the other thing is most of the women here are unmarriageable in terms of Sudanese culture, because there are certain criteria - if a girl is going to married she has to show a certain amount of discipline in her life, she has to be responsible, she has to be doing some good things for you to pay like $30,000 or $40,000 to get married to her, because it is very expensive. So you need a good investment, you don’t make an investment today for it to be lost tomorrow and just go into court for divorce…There are few Sudanese girls here in Canada that I would spend $30,000 on, they are few in number, and the proportion of men wanting to get married is very high. So there are few good ladies, especially here in Calgary, and a good number of men who want to get those ladies, and there can’t be enough for all of us. So most prefer to go back home. (Mau, 30 year old Dinka man, recently engaged to a girl from his home village on a trip back to South Sudan.)
Young women were aware of the men’s preference for marrying from home. Many of them linked the practice to men’s unwillingness to accept the reality of new gender roles in Canada,

They all think the girls there [Sudan] are good. Maybe it’s because the girls there know how to pretend better. Here [in Calgary] some of us don’t know how to pretend well. Let’s say you come to my house after 9pm, I’m not going to get out of my room to come say hi to you. Back home even if it’s 11pm or 12am you’ve got to get up and say hi and if there’s food you have to prepare it. So if you don’t do that you’re seen as bad. There are no limitations here to hold you back from being who you are, but back home you have to pretend. You see you cousins are doing it, your neighbours are doing it, all of the people are doing it, so even if you are outspoken you pretend like you are not outspoken, if you get angry fast you pretend like you don’t, if you don’t like kids – and there are people who don’t like kids – you have to pretend that you like kids so they see that nurturing part of you, yet you are not being true to yourself…. So they all want good girls. It’s so depressing for me. We have so many strong willed women out there [in Calgary] and all they need is a chance. We need these men to give us a chance so we can show what we can do! But I don’t know if this is going to happen anytime soon (Alom, Sudanese woman in her mid 20’s, recently married).

The desire of many men to marry girls from “back home” served as a rallying point for women who were actively engaged with women’s groups in the community. They argued it represented the backwards thinking of their men – that they were only interested in marrying young, uneducated “village girls” who would come to Canada, cook and clean and not challenge their authority. This discourse was then taken up by many of the settlement workers in Calgary who

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47 Throughout my fieldwork I only encountered 1 young woman who married a man who was not already in Canada or the United States – he was a family friend who was still in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.
worked with the community. They often blamed the patriarchal nature of Sudanese society for what they considered as unfair and even forced marriages. As one settlement worker put it “what could they even have in common, one of these older educated guys with some uneducated young girl from the village?....it’s not right”. This idea that marriages arranged transnationally by families were somehow “not right” reflects the unease the practice caused for many settlement workers. To them, such marriages fell outside the Canadian normalized discourses surrounding romance and marriage, and therefore cannot be “right”. Similar opinions surround arranged transnational marriages in South East Asian communities in the United Kingdom, where public discourses often equate arranged marriages with forced marriages (Shaw 2006). Similar to the “breaks” in the expected scripts discussed in Chapter 3, transnational arranged marriages and the challenge they presented to the receiving society’s normalized views of marriage, tended to push the limits of the multicultural tolerance espoused by many in the immigrant serving sector.

Many young women in the community linked the pressure to be “good” in order to remain marriageable with the barriers they face voicing their opinions in public community meetings and finding a space within Southern Sudanese community groups. They complained that it was often only older women, who had already had children and grandchildren, or were independent heads of households, who could openly voice their opinions.

I think the community groups are really closed to young women. Like in our culture, if you are a girl you only get more courage after you get married. Because before you get married they tell you “you are a girl and you don’t know who you might marry so you need to behave in public.” Like there are elders and uncles at the meetings and you might shoot down their ideas and they’ll get angry with you and then some years later you may be in love with their nephew and
they’ll say to him “no, you cannot marry this girl, she is rude so I don’t want you to marry her.”

Because in our culture being outspoken and being a female is a no-no. That’s one of the biggest things stopping women from participating. I know there are girls that are so fired up, they are intelligent and doing so well, they are in universities and colleges, even some of them who don’t have higher education are so smart and so fired up about helping the community yet when you start to think about all the possibilities and you go out there and talk you may be looked at as rude. Because there are times you may not agree with everyone, you have to speak for what is right and there may be a time you have to speak against somebody who is older and that is a big taboo.

Like even to say “hi” to a man who is older you have to look down and not make eye contact if you don’t want to be rude. And then here you are trying to have a respectful conversation and give your opinion and be strong but you can’t look at him eye to eye in a meeting. It’s a big challenge! Right now we are always dreading that whatever we say, if it rubs them the wrong way, we’ll be seen as rude. So that is the biggest challenge when it comes to women participating in the community. Some women say childcare stops them from going to meetings, but I think that is an excuse – that they are really afraid. They are afraid that people will say “so and so’s wife is rude, or so and so’s wife thinks she’s all that.” Some of the men think because they have gone to colleges and universities that they are all that, and that the women are nothing.

Our women are belittled in many ways – but not directly in public. They always say – “no we love women, we respect women” but you can see from the meetings and who is always there that it is not true. They say it is because women are not interested, but that’s not it. It’s because women are scared what people will say about them. For me, I’m scared but I don’t care anymore – I think I’ve started to get that whole Canadian attitude of “let them talk because they are going to talk
anyway”. That’s how a lot of us young women feel now, and some older women feel that way, but a lot of women aren’t that strong, or they have children they need to think about so they have to keep their husbands happy. So our people aren’t ready to let women really take their place in the community groups – the men will always judge, and our women are afraid of their reputation, we have a saying that says “your reputation is the most important thing,” and that is still what matters most in our community (Nyal, Nuer woman in her late 20s who arrived in Canada as a teenager).

While the prevailing opinion among young Southern men looking to get married appears to be that the girls in Calgary are just “not good enough” to be a safe investment, James’ thoughts on the lack of marriageable Sudanese women in Calgary help problematize the discourses of good and bad girls surrounding this issue. As an unmarried man in his 30’s who has been in Canada for eight years, James is facing increasing pressure from home to marry a girl from his home village. While he prefers to marry a girl already living in Canada, he says he understands why so many men return to South Sudan to get married:

There are some good girls and there are some bad girls. But not as many bad girls as some people will tell you. It’s like with any group of people - good girls are girls who are in high school and go to university. Those are the types of good girls all my friends would like to marry. But when you marry here you have to marry at your level, so if a young girl is in university she can get friends from the university who are at her level, so you cannot go to her and say “I am going to marry you”. Maybe she is 20 and you are 30 and you don’t even go to school at all and you’ve never gone to school.

So you start to question yourself and feel that it is you who are not good, and that’s why people say they are bad girls - so that they feel good about themselves. Most of them like to marry back home because they are older, like in their 30s,
and they know the system there. So they can go to Sudan and whoever they see they can say “yea I want to marry you”, it doesn’t matter if the girl is like 14 or 15, she will be happy and her family will feel lucky to have you marry her. And also when you go from here people see you as a very important person and you feel good. So it’s not because the girls are bad here, but we just don’t fit with them.

James’ statement helps move us beyond the notion expressed by many that young Sudanese men are simply looking for a young spouse they can exercise complete authority over. The idea that the educational and social success of many young Sudanese women may lead young men to begin questioning their own worth and standing in the community reflects the anxiety many men feel regarding the shifts gender roles have taken upon resettlement to Canada. Research with various immigrant and refugee populations has consistently demonstrated that women tend to adapt quicker than men to the often downward shift in social status that occurs upon resettlement (Indra 1999). In Calgary, Southern women are often able to find, or more willing to accept, widely available jobs in the service sector, while many men felt those positions were below their qualifications. This has led to a shift in many households, were women have become the primary income earners. Also, among the younger generation in the city, girls have been far more likely than boys to complete high school and continue on to post secondary education. This is in large part due to the responsibility many young men bear to send large amounts of money back to South Sudan in the form of remittances, along with their need to work in order to raise large sums of money to get married. Therefore many men have been in Canada for almost ten years and entered their 30’s without achieving their original goal of continuing their education.
Thai (2003) found a similar trend among low-wage working Vietnamese men in the United States who returned to Vietnam to marry. She noted that along with hoping for a more traditional bride, the men were seeking to counteract their relatively low status in the United States by making use of the bump in status they receive in Vietnam, as a result of their American citizenship, to find a wife from a good family. Among Southern Sudanese, Grabska (2010) also found that resettled southerners did not only benefit from their increased status upon return to Sudan, but that marrying a “proper” Sudanese girl and bringing her to North America also increased their status within their community in resettlement. A similar trend exists in Calgary, where many men mentioned the prestige associated with marrying a “real” Sudanese woman and raising a proper family in Canada.

The link between a real "Southern" wife and the establishment of a proper household in resettlement highlights the importance of women's role in cultural reproduction and as holders of tradition. This role was alternately accepted and rejected by women in the community, depending on the situation. At public community and political meetings, women often called on their role and authority as mothers and keepers of the household in order to add legitimacy to their opinions, particularly when addressing issues related to morality such as domestic violence, divorce and drinking. They are often resistant however, to having this role thrust upon them by the men in the community. For example, at a meeting in preparation for the fundraising event described in Chapter 2, it was decided that all men would wear "Canadian style" suits, while women were expected to appear in "traditional " African dress in order to represent their culture to the non-Sudanese who were invited to the event. This was bitterly opposed by the women present, who bemoaned the fact that they were always expected to dress in a certain fashion at
public events, and were not allowed to dress "Canadian." After a lengthy discussion it was agreed that older women who were married would dress "traditional" but they would allow the younger women to dress how they pleased.

By unpacking James’ comments on transnational marriage and good girls, it begins to become apparent that questions of who is marriageable are not just related to a straightforward desire to recreate proper Southern households or gender hierarchies in Canada. By returning to South Sudan to marry, and playing up the boost in prestige granted by their status as Canadian, regardless of their actual employment or economic status in Calgary, men are also attempting to manage and negotiate shifting gender roles and feelings of disempowerment brought about by the social and economic marginalization that comes with resettlement.

5.3. Conclusion: Can Finding a “Good Girl” Make You a “Good Man”? 

Southern Sudanese men in Canada often find themselves in the position of negotiating constantly shifting expectations for their role as sons, fathers and husbands. Many of the men now seeking marriage abroad left Sudan in their teens, and my conversations with them where often peppered with the advice they had received from elders before travelling to Canada – “without your language and culture you are nothing,” “if you lose your traditions you are lost,” ‘Without your family you are no better than a street person, you are nothing.” The expectation that they would maintain what their families considered to be proper households often led to tension between men in Calgary and their families in Southern Sudan,
It causes big trouble with your family if you allow trouble to enter your home, because marriage is not only you and your wife, it is the whole family. So they start to distrust you and feel you are not doing that they expect you to do as their son. That stresses a lot of us Sudanese men. When we have that kind of strong connection with our parents and family in Sudan and we are told “you are not doing well and we expect you to bring up your children like we brought you up and act like we taught you to” it gives us a lot of heartbreak because we try to do our best.

The emphasis on retaining cultural and family ties to South Sudan and reproducing those structures in their Canadian households reflects the importance of social networks, and one’s place within them to Dinka and Nuer ideals of manhood. Because belonging and personhood are constituted within extended kin and community networks (Deng 1972, Evans-Pritchard 1951, Hutchinson 1996), losing one’s place within the family and community is often compared to completely losing yourself - a kind of social death (Lim 2009). One young man described what happens if you do not live up to your family’s expectations, or behave in a shameful manner while in Canada,

They will target every network you have and then they will all pressure you and tell you you are wrong until you correct it. And if you don’t change they will completely dismantle any source of connection you have and then you will become nothing.

While men are able to ensure the reproduction of their kinship and community connections through financial remittances, reproductive obligations are equally important to fulfilling their kinship obligations. Through transnational marriages, Dinka and Nuer men appear to be creating a space where they enact archetypal ideas of manhood, while simultaneously challenging “local”
marriage practices. They negotiated a balance between autonomy and local practices by using the independence granted by cash earned in resettlement countries, as well as their new-found higher social status as Canadian citizens, to establish their independence in terms of marriage choices. At the same time they rely on the strengthened ties created with elders and their communities in South Sudan, through their "local" marriage to a good girl to strengthen their authority and the unity within their own household in Canada.

These ideals of “proper Sudanese” manhood are challenged however, by western ideals of personal autonomy, the normalized definition of the Canadian family as a nuclear family, and feminist discourses that refugees are presented with upon arrival to Canada. The pressure coming from settlement, legal and educational institutions to conform to normative Canadian gender roles, often couched in discourses of “primitive” or “tribal” versus “modern” and “civilized” approaches to family life, left many young men attempting to negotiate their desire to live up to family and community expectations of remaining a proper Southern Sudanese man with their hopes for social and economic integration into what they considered to be “mainstream” Canadian society.
The arrivals room in the Juba, South Sudan airport was hot, crowded and chaotic. I had given up scanning the crowd for Michael, whom I had never met, but who had agreed to watch over me while I was in Juba, the capital of Southern Sudan. I assumed that as the only non Southern Sudanese left standing in the room it would be easy for him to find me. However, to my surprise, as well as his, I was able to pick him out of the crowd before he introduced himself. Although I would never admit it to him, he stuck out in the crowd almost as much as I felt I did. Dressed in cargo pants, a hiking style shirt, a fishing hat with a Canadian flag prominently pinned to it, and carrying a large reusable water bottle in a thermal bag, he looked less like the other Southern Sudanese men milling about the room in suits, military uniforms and jalabiyas, and more like the tourists I had seen about to go on safari in Nairobi the day before.

I had been put in touch with Michael by a mutual friend from Calgary, who had insisted he was the only person who could properly look after me in Juba. Michael moved to Canada in 1998, and returned to Southern Sudan in 2009. Juba was his home town, and as a member of the Bari tribe, which lives in and around Juba, he had served as a state politician and union organizer prior to the war. He described himself as a “big man in Juba” in the 1980’s before he fled and, despite his different manner of dress, he seemed to have slipped comfortably into retirement back in Juba after 20 years away. He liked to compare himself to seniors in Canada who spent their winters in Florida. He planned to spend the bulk of his time in South Sudan, returning to
Canada for summer visits with his children, who had been born there and still reside in the country.

My first few weeks in Juba were spent mainly with Michael, and the ease with which he had reintegrated into Juba life gave me the initial impression that returning “home” was a relatively straight-forward process. He had been back in Sudan for less than a year and was already busy running a guest house, conducting daily “business” meetings with fellow Bari politicians, and was a regular participant in political debates with other retired big men conducted over large trays of roast goat every Sunday on a local street corner. As I spent more time with Michael, however, and spoke with other returnees, I learned that coming home was not as easy as it first appeared, and the more I investigated, the clearer it became that coming home meant vastly different things to different people.

Refugees’ experiences are often viewed as linear processes - moving from flight to asylum, and then on to one of the three durable solutions listed by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR): local integration, repatriation or, in a small minority of cases, third country resettlement. Michael’s story, however, shows that that linear characterization is often inaccurate, and the growing body of literature exploring the transnational nature of refugees’ lives demonstrates the need to move beyond perceptions of the refugee process as a linear path marked by distinct phases finalized by durable solutions (Al-Sharmani 2006, Shandy 2007, Sherell and Hyndman 2006, Um 2006, Van Hear 2006).

The increased focus on transnational movements of migrants and refugees has also led to a reconfiguration in our understandings of the related issue of return migration. Earlier studies of immigrant and refugee populations in North America have tended to mask the transnational
aspects of migrants’ lives. When return or repatriation was discussed, it tended to focus simply on the "myth of return" - the dream that many migrants had of returning home once they had achieved sufficient economic success in their second home (Guarnizo 1997). Studies of migrants who had returned to their countries of origin often treated their movements in the same linear manner as they had treated their original migrations - concluding that return was final, or the end result of their migratory journeys. Such linear approaches to return migration are limited by the either/or assumptions they make - labeling returnees' experiences as a success if they chose to return home permanently and settle, or a failure if they continue to move between their country of immigration and home country (Horst 2007).

By discussing the experiences of individuals who have attempted to repatriate to South Sudan after living in third country resettlement in Canada for several years, this chapter explores how the durable solution of resettlement is often not so durable, and that individuals’ experiences of return blur the lines between the often taken for granted categories of “resettlement” and "repatriation”, "country of origin" and "host country”, as well as “Southern Sudanese” and "Canadian”. In an attempt to highlight some of the complexity, and diversity of experiences, surrounding the concept of return, several examples are explored. These stories highlight three major themes examined in my research: loss, struggles over kinship obligations, and the attempts to (re)define what it means to be Southern Sudanese, a resettled refugee, and Canadian.

6.1. Dimensions of Return

Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, the repatriation of the over two million refugees living outside Sudan has been a priority for the semi autonomous Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) and the many international agencies involved in the
reconstruction and development of the region. Returning refugees are broadly classified in two categories by the UNHCR and International Organization for Migration (IOM), the two key agencies working with GoSS on repatriation, those in asylum in neighbouring countries and those in third country resettlement. Returnees are further divided into Assisted Returnees, who make use of available repatriation programs offered by the IOM and UNHCR in conjunction with GoSS, and Spontaneous Returnees, who return on their own and are not usually recorded. To date the majority of initiatives have focused on repatriating refugees from neighbouring countries including Egypt, Uganda, Congo and Kenya through Assisted Returnee programs. The repatriation assistance provided includes a “look and see” program where refugees are transported to their home regions for short visits in order to make an informed decision regarding return, transportation to their home region if they decide to return and repatriation packages which include some basic housewares, tools and food supplies. In an attempt to reduce conflicts between repatriated individuals and those who stayed in Sudan during the war, subsequent financial and food aid is provided to whole villages rather than to individual returnees (UNHCR Sudan Repatriation Operation, personal communication, 2010). At the time of my fieldwork in Sudan, conducted during the fall and winter of 2009/2010, returns from neighbouring countries appeared to have reached a plateau, with a total of 328,118 people returning since 2005. However in preparation for the January 2011 referendum on independence, returns have picked up with over 250,000 returning in 2009 and early 2010 (UNHCR Sudan Repatriation Operation, personal communication, 2010) See Figure 9 for planned refugee returns from neighbouring countries in the lead up to the 2009 election and referendum and Figure 10 for numbers immediately following independence up to summer of 2012.
Figure 9: Planned returnee numbers from neighbouring counties for the year before the election and referendum.
Figure 10: Returnee numbers for the post-independence period (Oct 2010) to June 2012.

Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
While the majority of returnees repatriating from neighbouring countries arrive through the Assisted Returnee programs, the vast majority of individuals returning from Canada are classified as Spontaneous Returnees, and therefore there is no official record of their numbers. In fact, while conversing with the head of UNHCR’s southern Sudanese operations, he was surprised to hear that there were any Sudanese-Canadians in the south, despite the presence of dozens of Sudanese-Canadians in high ranking positions in the government in Juba alone. There are a small number of programs set up to assist refugees in resettlement to repatriate, however they appear to be rarely taken advantage of. During my time in Juba I only encountered one individual who had made use of the IOM’s returning professional program. He was a professor at the University of Juba before the war, and was provided with a laptop, travel money and start up living expense to return and teach at the university. The United States Government also provides a professional return program, which is also rarely accessed. The underutilization of the programs seems to stem from the fact that they are poorly promoted – I only met a few individuals who had heard of either program – and tend to benefit professionals with higher levels of education and jobs lined up for them in Sudan.

When I first conducted research among the Southern Sudanese population in Alberta in 2004, the civil war had been raging in Sudan for 20 years. While many people spoke of the desire to return home, and referred to their stay in Canada as temporary, the actual possibility of return

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This earlier research was conducted in 2004, as part of a research project under the auspices of the American University in Cairo.
remained a far off dream. Six years later, in 2010, when I returned to the Southern Sudanese community in Alberta, the war had been over for five years and the country was moving toward independence in the summer of 2011. While many regions of the South were still far from secure, the ability to return home was no longer a distant dream - for many it was a very real possibility. Along with politics and the upcoming referendum and election, it was the dominant topic of conversation among men during my fieldwork. Those who had returned and were now back in Calgary were in high demand at social events, and community members hungry for information would flock to Tim Hortons or the social club to hear them tell their stories over and over again. Even as a non-Sudanese, when I returned to Calgary from fieldwork in the south, I was overwhelmed with invitations to parties, BBQs and meetings where I was asked to give speeches updating people on everything from the condition of the roads, the food available, how the government seemed to be working, what people where wearing, and even my opinion on how the fruit tasted in comparison with the fruit in Canada. Those who had made the trip back to Sudan also appeared to hold a greater position of authority in some ways - in discussions regarding politics their arguments were often given more consideration and listened to more carefully as they had been back to see “home” with their own eyes.

While talk of return often dominated most social settings, it would be misleading to give the impression that the vast majority of southern Sudanese were flocking to Sudan, or even wished to go. Many in the community mentioned a desire to visit but not to return, mainly due to family responsibilities in Calgary and the lack of development in the country (Figure 11, Figure 49).

While there are no official numbers, based on anecdotal evidence from my fieldwork, I would say several hundred southerners have returned from Alberta.
Figure 13 and Figure 14 demonstrate the extent of underdevelopment and infrastructural issues in South Sudan at the time of research. There are also a large number of men, especially those who participated heavily in the fighting as youth, who do not even wish to go back for a visit due to the painful memories they have of their time during the war. The largest group of people who did not want to return were by far, however, those who pointed out the unrealistic nature of what they referred to as “the dream to return.” Several people who made this argument where men who had returned to Sudan and then come back to Canada disappointed in what they found there, while others were younger men frustrated with what they saw was their elders’ inability to let go of the past:

The older men can’t settle here because many people don’t see this as a permanent place. They see they are living here now and tomorrow they will be leaving this place. But they will not, they will stay here until they retire – they don’t think that right now, but they need to realize this is our home we will not get away from this country. You can go there [Sudan] for visits, but most will come back here. I know this one guy; you know he was stressed here. He went to Catholic Immigration telling them “I don’t have ticket but I want to go to Sudan with a one way ticket and I don’t want to come back”. And he was just crying, “I don’t want to stay here, I want to go back, I want to go home.” So those people, they called the elders but they could not convince him to stay either. So they said to him, “ok, we’ll give you a ticket and if you want to go you can go.” So they gave him the money.

He went to Ethiopia and from there he went to Sudan. He stayed there, but soon he said “this is not a very good place for me”. He went back to Addis and he went to the Canadian embassy and borrowed money and he came back to Calgary. And when he came here we were shocked to see him, he looked terrible, skinny and sick. So we said “what happened to you?” He said “you know, I have my
purpose now. I will counsel those guys who want to go there, because it is not a good place to be. When I went there I can spend like two days without food at one time, and there was nothing for me.”

Because you know, he has no education and no connections with politicians so there was nothing for him. So people are thinking that this [Canada] is not a good place for us, but they just don’t realize that Canada is the best place for us now.

Figure 11: Map showing primary school completion rates in South Sudan as of 2006.
It is also important to note that women’s experiences and ideas of return differed greatly from those of the men in the community. While the end of the war, coupled with increased ease of communication and movement between Sudan and Canada have led to more frequent travel between the two countries, it is only men who seem to be benefitting from the two way movement back and forth. While women are travelling one way from Sudan or camps in neighbouring countries as brides for men in Canada, very few are making the return trip back to Sudan. There are several factors involved in limiting the return of women, the key one being the lack of facilities and development in the south.

With hardly any functioning schools, and very few clinics or hospitals, few men or women are willing to take their children back with them, and as primary care givers for their children very few women were willing to leave them in Canada for extended periods of time. Many mothers also see more opportunities for their children here in Canada and therefore wish to keep the family rooted in Calgary. The majority of women I spoke with also noted the importance of increased opportunities for themselves in Calgary, and most voiced their unwillingness to return to Sudan where they felt they would experience less freedom socially and restricted access to education and employment. It is also a reality that the majority of women, unless travelling with a well connected husband, do not possess the financial or social capital required to return to the south and access basic necessities including housing and employment. This gendered division in return movement between the two countries reflects well established trends in refugee flight and resettlement patterns, that often lead to gender imbalances present in resettled populations. Men, who often have higher levels of education, greater freedom of movement, and a wider network of connections with male relatives, are often able to move further afield in times of conflict in order
to seek out resettlement opportunities more readily than women, especially women with children whose movements are limited (Indra 1999, Guarnizo 1997, Shandy 2007). It appears that factors similar to those that limit women’s access to resettlement also limit their return migration.

Figure 12: Map showing percentage of households with “poor” food consumption.
Figure 13: Map showing death rate of children below 1 year of age per 1000 live births.

In an attempt to highlight some of these complexities and the diversity of experiences surrounding the idea of the return, the following three stories explore three individuals’ experiences of return. While by no means covering the dozens of returnees I met in Sudan, they do represent three major themes that arose in my discussions with them.
Figure 14: Map showing percentage of Sudanese population with access to “improved” water and sanitation.

6.2. “It’s like Becoming a Refugee All Over Again”: Return and Loss

As my stay in Juba lengthened, it became clear not all returning Southern Sudanese-Canadians experienced the relatively easy transition Michael enjoyed. The narratives of many Southern
Sudanese-Canadians were filled with the joy and excitement of returning to their country of birth and reunions with family and friends, but also with underlying senses of loss - loss of remembered lives that no longer existed, loss of all that was destroyed during the war, and loss of the lives they had established in Canada. The majority of returnees I spoke with in Juba had never set foot in the city before the war. They were from villages in remote areas of the country, but upon return found the only job opportunities were in Juba, as were basic amenities such as running water and electricity that they had become accustomed to in Canada. Most, therefore, found themselves not simply returning to their country of birth, but also attempting to integrate and settle into a strange city.

Paul’s experience of return exemplifies the mingled sense of joy and loss many returnees expressed. We initially met in the first weeks of my field work in Calgary, and he soon became one of my closest contacts within the community. As the director of one of my main field sites during the first half of my research, an underfunded and overcrowded, afterschool program for Southern Sudanese youth, he was a passionate man who was very involved in the community, both politically and socially. A fabulous story teller, he positioned himself as my teacher of all things “Southern Sudanese”. We would sit and chat for hours before the children arrived at the centre, and after they left, discussing whatever topic related to South Sudan and the community in Calgary he felt was important for me to know that day. Our conversations covered everything from the difficulty of raising children in Canada, to who to see in the Azande community to have a magic spell cast to make someone fall in love with you, to the horror of his time as a rebel soldier in the bush during the war. He always came back to one topic, though, the beauty of Southern Sudan and the perfect nature of his home village. He often described it in such minute
detail that even I had vivid images of the sights, smells, and sounds of his distant home. Several of our discussions centred on the excitement he felt for an upcoming four week holiday to South Sudan. I knew he was ecstatic about returning to South Sudan, but, because of his apparently strong connections to the Calgary community, it came as a surprise when I received an email the day he was due to fly back to Calgary, announcing he would not be returning to Canada.

We met up when I arrived in Juba a month later. He came to pick me up at the guest house in which I was residing, and the first thing I noticed was that he looked fantastic. He even seemed to walk differently – standing straighter, taking longer strides - like he owned the place - he appeared more comfortable than he ever had been in Calgary. When I mentioned his transformation he laughed and told me “I even feel better in my skin! I breathe better, I eat better and I walk better on Sudanese soil!” He was definitely different from the tired, stressed, sometimes angry, man I had come to know so well in Calgary.

As I spent time with him over the next few months, however, it became increasingly clear his return was a significantly different experience from Michael’s. Still dealing with the breakup of his marriage in Calgary, and struggling to settle in to Juba, Paul began having mixed feelings about his return. While Michael had returned to his home town, Paul had never been to Juba before the war. First as a soldier, and later in exile in Egypt and Canada, he told me it had always remained a far off dream of his to see the inside of the city that had eluded the SPLA for so many years. Upon his arrival he described feeling an unimaginable sense of joy and accomplishment when he stepped off the plane in Juba. After a few days he was eager to return to his village in the Bar el Ghazal region. He discovered, however, there were no opportunities for business there, so ended up back in Juba. Due to the lack of development and high cost of construction,
housing in Juba was hard to come by, and the majority of residents still lived in mud huts, or tukuls. Paul was lucky to find a place in a house built by a fellow Southern Sudanese-Canadian, from Edmonton, which they shared with six other Southern Sudanese-Canadians.

On the last day of my stay in South Sudan I visited him at his house for lunch, and during a tour of the home and compound the owner and Paul were quick to point out how “Canadian” the place was. The courtyard contained a flag pole bearing Southern Sudanese and Canadian flags, and they had planted a small flower garden and a tree in the dusty yard (complete with fence to protect the plants from wandering goats), to make the place look more like “home” in Calgary. The “Canadian” decor was an interesting change from the houses and apartments I had visited in Calgary. These had been decorated to reflect Southern Sudanese homes, replete with heavy drapes, an abundance of plastic plants, the smell of burning incense, and homemade embroidered seat and couch decorations every woman was expected to decorate her home with. Paul’s house in Sudan, however, was very consciously “Canadian”. There were no plastic plants or heavy drapes. The walls were instead adorned with "dream catchers", a Calgary Flames poster, and pictures of the Rocky Mountains.

As we sat in the yard after lunch gossiping about mutual acquaintances in Calgary and how various people who had returned to Sudan were faring, Paul spoke of his experience returning to his village. Frustrated by what he described as an unexplainable sense of loss and anger that overtook him upon his return to his home village chipping away at the optimism and joy he had initially felt upon return, he wondered if too much time had passed for him to ever feel at home again:
It was amazing, because I had to ask where to go. Because streets had changed....maybe the same houses but they turned the street this way and that way, and maybe added a house here and there ...I didn’t even know my place. I was walking with my dad at that time and he said show me where is our house, and where was your home. I couldn’t’ know it. And even 5 mango trees that were in our house - they were cut down during the war, so I didn’t know it. It looked like a desert or something. He said “you used to play here and your room was here and this and this”, but it was not making me feel anything, because....to me that house was broken. He said this is the place but I could not feel anything ...I couldn’t’ believe that I felt nothing and I was not happy.

I thought maybe I could feel something if I could find a piece of something to hold so that I could remember my childhood....so I asked him about my pictures from when I was young to help me remember and he said “my son that time when we had to run away we lost everything, even the pictures” so the family pictures are lost, it was very bad....I don’t have any pictures from my early life, I don’t have anything (he begins to cry here, and continues to be very emotional for the rest our talk).

And I don’t know anyone. I know my close relatives and people in my age group, but the rest are like when you travel to a different country you have never been to. These people were born when I was not there. And they have grown up and when they see me they are like “who is this?” They own the place, this is their country, this is their area, they know they belong there, and they know I don’t. They are surprised when I say I am the son of so and so. They say “where have you been all this time, we didn’t hear about you?” I feel like how can these people treat me like this...this is my country and I am from here, but no one knows me.

People from their 40’s up, these are the only ones I know. But they are different too, especially the girls that I used to know. Some of them they are going with a stick like this (mimics a bent over person with a cane). They got older too fast
because of the situations that happened in the war. You find somebody and he is an old man...very old man but we are the same age group. We are the same age but they got older! Their experiences, the trauma from the war...I don’t know. When you talk to them they just talk like old people, and when you ask them what happened they don’t tell you anything. This is where the connections between me and them....they were broken by war....it is terrible to have no connections. Being away a long time you find a lot of things different.

It is not easy, it is very hard. It seems now like the same as when I left Sudan the first time – I left Sudan just going where I was going - I didn’t have a bed, didn’t have a house, I didn’t have anything. It’s the same thing now that I came back to Sudan. I went to Wau, and my dad has 4 houses and all my brothers are there and my sisters, but because I am the eldest son I should have one plot. But I told them “no, I can’t take it from one of you, you guys are coming from years in the bush, so I can’t take it.” So now it’s like becoming a refugee all over again - I don’t have a house. So I have to stay in my dad’s house if I go there like I am still a young boy. So it is the same experience again of making me have to start from the beginning. Start getting a place, build it, start my new life.

So this is what happens. And you know I have problems with my wife in Calgary, so I’m here now like somebody never married. When I think about kids, think about what happened in my life... it’s like someone built a house and then something comes and demolishes it...this is what happened. I had a happy family, and now I don’t know what happened. Is it me that was not good, or the woman that was not good, I don’t know.... (beginning to cry). I miss my kids, but I don’t want them to come and see me staying in somebody’s house like this. So for me I want them to wait. I have to get my place to show them this is Daddy’s place, so I don’t hope to see anyone here for a while.
Paul's narrative of return to South Sudan is a poignant example of the loss of place and affiliation many Southerners felt upon their return. It was often expressed by men who had become disillusioned with life in Canada, disappointed with employment and education opportunities, or facing broken marriages - for them return became a dream, but a dream unrealized. Similar feelings have been recorded for Jamaican returnees who, disillusioned with racism and lack of belonging after immigrating to the United Kingdom in the 1960s, began to construct ideals of return, but were disillusioned by the difficulty of re-adjusting to life in Jamaica when they retired there (Horst 2007). Abusharaf's (2009) account of Southern Sudanese women living in internally displaced persons camps on the outskirts of Khartoum also describes the difficulty of return. In an allegorical story told to her by a Dinka priest, returnees' home communities are characterized as lizards that shed their tails when in danger, and grow new ones when the danger has passed. People who fled the war were the discarded tails that could not be reattached to their communities (Abusharaf 2009: 49). Paul, and many others, are the discarded lizard tails. Return for them becomes just another form of displacement, forcing them to once again rebuild, recreate, and renegotiate their conceptions of home and their places within it.

6.3. “I felt like I was being pulled between two countries across the ocean and I couldn’t stretch anymore”: Return and Kinship Obligations

While Michael's and Paul's stories provide insights into the emotions many feel upon returning to South Sudan, Mau’s experience sheds light on the complex network of kinship obligations stretching between Canada and South Sudan that many returnees must also negotiate. As an active member of the South Sudanese community in Calgary, Mau often spoke against return
because of the “brain drain” it caused within the South Sudanese Calgary community\textsuperscript{50}. Despite these reservations, he returned to South Sudan to visit his ailing brother, and then stunned the South Sudanese Calgary community a few months later when, upon his return to Calgary, he announced he had accepted a Finance Department job in his home state in South Sudan. He was excited by the opportunity to put his degree in accounting from the University of Cairo, which had never been recognized in Canada, to use. His decision to return permanently was even more surprising since he had a wife and several young children, and had always spoken of the importance of developing the Calgary community, and criticized men who returned to South Sudan and left their children behind in Canada.

When I met with Mau in Juba a few days before Christmas he also appeared transformed to me, but not in the same way Paul had. Instead of the confident man who had left Calgary six months earlier, he was nervous and on edge from the relatively high levels of insecurity still plaguing his state. He had returned to the capital, Juba, desperate to arrange for a ticket to get “home to Calgary and my children” for the holidays. The longing he felt for his family was obvious, as was his disappointment with his job. He complained about the low salary that made it impossible to support his family in Canada while also meeting obligations to family in South Sudan, and the rampant corruption in his department that made it next to impossible for him to do his job properly. When we parted at Christmas he spoke of seeing me again in Juba when he came back

\textsuperscript{50} Interestingly, this also one of the main arguments people make against resettling refugees in the first place. The head of UNHCR in southern Sudan blamed the lack of post war development in the South on the fact that too many of the “good refugees were scooped up by greedy western countries” and that resettlement policies greatly contributed to “brain drain” in war torn countries.
in January, but I was not surprised to hear a few weeks later that his ticket to Calgary had been one way, and that he had decided not to return.

Back in Canada, several months later, I spoke with Mau about his reasons for returning to Calgary. He stressed it was not the corruption or insecurity that finally made him leave, but the stress of dealing with competing family obligations. The majority of men I encountered who returned to South Sudan, and have chosen to stay, were single, or divorced or separated from their spouses in Canada. The few that were not were older men whose children were at least teenagers, and who had managed to obtain positions that allowed them to meet obligations to family in Sudan while still sending significant remittances back to their families in Canada. Mau however, was in a stable marriage, had several young children at home and, shortly after his return to South Sudan, had an older brother pass away, leaving him with three young nephews to support. At the same time he was still expected to maintain a level of financial support to family members in Sudan comparable with the remittances he had been sending from Canada prior to returning. Meeting those obligations on his limited government salary left little money to remit to his wife in Calgary to assist in supporting his young family there.

In addition to the pressure to fulfill financial obligations, he spoke of the pressure from family to fulfill reproductive obligations once he was back in Sudan. His current wife, whom he had married while in asylum in Egypt, was from a different tribe, and upon his return to South Sudan his family hoped he would take a second wife from his tribe in order to provide the family with children in Sudan, a suggestion that did not sit well with his very vocal wife back in Calgary. The combination of pressures to support his wife and children in Calgary, support extended family members in Sudan, and fulfill additional reproductive duties left him feeling as if he were
Mau was not the only returnee I spoke with to experience pressure to fulfill family reproductive obligations. Several Dinka men I interviewed were under considerable pressure from their families in South Sudan to marry “ghost wives” for their brothers who had been killed in the war before having children. The practice of marrying "ghost wives" in the name of deceased relatives is intimately linked to Dinka and Nuer beliefs in the role of cattle exchanges in establishing kinship connections and paternity. It consists of the collection of bridewealth cattle so that a male relative, usually a brother, can marry and reproduce in the name of a male family member who died childless (Deng 1972, Lienhardt 1967, Evans-Pritchard 1951). While Hutchinson (1996) notes SPLA efforts to stop the practice during the second civil war, evidence from several men I spoke to indicates it is still relatively common, and now that the war is over is becoming a priority for families who lost sons during the conflict. While the men I spoke with were reluctant to take on numerous spouses due to the potential conflicts it would cause in their own households in Calgary, as well as the added financial obligations, many felt unable to refuse their families’ requests. As one man, a university professor with five grown children and a wife to support abroad said,

What can I do? I myself I don’t believe in this, but my family does and I loved my brothers...they fought and died and I did not. I loved them and could do nothing for them, so if I can do this for them then I will probably do it. My wife will not like it, and I would rather not, but we have no choice once your family decides. If the marriage is a family marriage, then the girl they chose for you is the family’s wife, not really yours, so you have no choice and you must marry her and your first wife must understand, because she has no choice either.
The struggle to balance kinship obligations is a common one. Leng (2006) found a correlation between feelings toward kinship obligations and the length of time couples had resided in Calgary. Men, whose prestige and position within the community depends upon their kin network, often wished to continue retaining strong extended kinship ties by sending remittances back to South Sudan. Women, however, begin focusing more on meeting the needs of their immediate family in Canada. These shifting priorities leave many men trying to balance maintaining a stable household in resettlement and maintaining proper kinship ties in Sudan. As one man explained, many see it as a struggle between the North American definition of family as nuclear, and the Southern Sudanese definition as extended:

We believe in the extended family, so you feel like being here [Sudan] you will help your family. Because if you are [in Canada] there is no way you are going to be able to sustain yourself and sustain your family here. It’s too hard because life there is defined around you and your family and the definition of your family is nuclear - you, your wife and kids. Here the definition of family is different it is extended - you, your wife, your cousins, everyone - and they depend on you. If anyone from my family or even my area comes they can just say “hey I need this” and there is no way I can say no. If I say no then I risk my reputation. So people will come back to Sudan based on that because you want to do something to help and there is no way you can back there [Canada]. That is the main reason people come back.

Mau’s solution was to return to Calgary to be with his immediate family and attempt to increase his income in order to continue to support his family in South Sudan. Others, however, attempt to meet their obligations by staying in South Sudan. Akol, a doctor who returned to work at the government hospital in Juba, spoke of the constant pressure from his family in Canada to return;
I love Canada and it is my second home, but they have to understand, I went with no intention of staying. I left not by my choice but because of war and knew as soon as it was over I would be back. My colleagues in Canada thought I was crazy and my children don’t understand. They miss me and one is angry I am here, but I have other family too – like my father - and I have responsibilities to them too.

The issue of men returning to Sudan and leaving wives and children behind in Calgary has become a hot topic of discussion between men and women in the community. As mentioned above, very few women return to Sudan, so many are left behind in Calgary for months, or even years at a time when their husbands go back. The increasing number of men returning, and the prolonged periods of separation that ensue, have led to considerable stress for women in the community. While men at parties often gathered to talk about return and plan out business opportunities in Sudan, the women in the next room tended to be discussing the latest tragic case of a woman who had been abandoned by a husband who had returned to Sudan and remarried, or simply refused to give any indication of when he would return. The stress of finding themselves suddenly single parents, and the uncertainty surrounding their marriage and financial situation was taking its toll on many of the women whose husbands had returned to the south.

I’m crying all the time, just crying. I’m not crying because Mario is away - I’m crying because of my responsibilities. I don’t sleep ever. When I go to work at night I come to the house at 7:15 in the morning, then I have to wake the kids up, prepare them to school, then I go to bed around 8 or 9, but I have to get up at like 12 noon to get all my work done. And that’s that. Because I have to clean, I have to cook, I have to take care of the little ones. I have to do work, go out shopping and be back when they come from the school. And then with the homework….oh my god! I have to help with homework, then I give them shower, feed them and
put them to bed. When they go to bed at 9 or 8:30 sometimes I sit with Urulu [her eldest son who is in junior high] until 10 because his work is so hard and I don’t know exactly how to help with his homework - it’s difficult for me, even the terms are so difficulty for me. Mario always did this - he knows English more than me, he has a degree....this was his job. Some times he explains the terms to me and we laugh and he says “who is helping who now?” But that’s my life now - when the kids go to bed I don’t have any time to go to rest, so I just make my tea or coffee and go back to work and that’s all I do.

I always get worried when I reach the middle of the month. I start to think about the bills. And the rent. I start to think what to do. I will calculate in my head all the time starting on the 15 or 16th of the month until the end of the month… calculating all the time - I have to draw the kids’ money, move them from this account to that ,and it will always not be enough. So I have to call Mario in Sudan and ask “do you have 600 please?” But he is hard to get in contact with and he never has much to send us, so I have to go to the food bank and that is a shame for me to have to do that. He said going back would help us, but I have less for the kids now. All of his money there goes to his family there and we see nothing here. We never have enough….I am so skinny now….. because I am crying all the time. I pray I cry, I pray I cry. How long will life be like this? How long before Mario will come back? (Mary, Latuka woman in her mid thirties with 4 children. Her husband had returned to South Sudan for a visit, taken a job and at the time of this interview had been away for over a year).

Settlement and social workers in the city noted that after the peace agreement was signed there was a marked increase in the number of women accessing services for the first time, even though they had been in the country for several years. Due to the gendered division of responsibilities in most Southern Sudanese households, a large number of women had been in the country for five
to ten years, but never had the opportunity to learn English or familiarize themselves with services such as the banks, or how to pay bills. When their husbands returned to South Sudan, however, they suddenly found themselves responsible for the household, despite having little experience at many day to day household tasks.

Several women whose husbands were in South Sudan spoke of feeling abandoned and unprepared to look after their homes and children. One woman, who worked night shifts at a chicken processing plant and had four children, told of how her husband left her responsible for the car payments and mortgage. He had promised he would be gone for only six months, but two years later had yet to return. To add to her frustration, although she was making the car payments, he did not trust her to drive, so locked the car, put an anti theft club on the steering wheel and took the keys with him to South Sudan. While she finally managed to gain access to the car, rumours that her husband had taken a second wife only increased her stress.

Another woman spoke of the financial stress she was enduring due to her husband’s decision to take a second wife upon returning to South Sudan. While ostensibly exploring business opportunities in South Sudan he contacted her and instructed her to take out a $15,000 line of credit and wire him the money so he could invest it in what he described as a fantastic business opportunity. After sending the money she did not hear from him for two months, and it was only upon calling his house in South Sudan, and having another women answer and introduce herself as his wife, that she learned he had used the money, not for a business opportunity, but to pay the

51 It is very common upon resettlement for Southern Sudanese wives to relatively quickly enter low paying jobs requiring only minimal English skills in order to support their families financially as their husbands pursue English training and education.
bridewealth to marry a second wife. The threat of husbands remarrying weighed heavily on many women’s minds in Calgary, often weakening their positions within their own households. They were too frightened to oppose their husbands for, as one woman said, “if you disagree with him he will just tell you to stop bothering him, and if you continue he will tell you to be quiet or he will just go back to Sudan and get a better wife”.

Some Southern Sudanese women attempted to use the increasingly difficult position many women were finding themselves in as the impetus to advocate for increased women’s independence. Women in positions of authority within their respective communities identified the increased number of single-women headed households as an opportunity to push men and women to focus on the importance of education and language training for women. Aguok, a senior woman in the Dinka community, had firsthand experience with the stress a husband’s return to South Sudan could place on a household. Her husband had returned to the South to take a position within the government. Since their children were older, all three in university, and her marriage “old”, she said she did not initially object to his return. He would be making a good salary, and sending an agreed upon amount home to help pay for their children’s schooling, and their mortgage. At first everything proceeded as planned. A few months later, however, the phone calls and money transfers stopped. She eventually received a phone call from a family member informing her that her husband had taken a new wife. After much negotiation they eventually agreed that her husband would still send money to help support their children, but would not contribute to the mortgage for their house. He told her she could find a job to pay for the house if she wanted to keep it. Aguok had a post secondary degree from Khartoum, and had worked in Sudan for many years, but had put her career on hold in Canada in accordance with
her husband’s wish that she remain home with their children. When he remarried in South Sudan she suddenly found herself trying to find work in her mid 40s, with no Canadian experience, just to pay for her home. She found employment as an immigrant women's councilor, managed to keep her home, and now spends most of her days counseling other refugee women. She works primarily with young Southern Sudanese wives and mothers, attempting to emphasize the importance of pursuing at least a basic education and learning to function independently outside of the home:

Some of our community members kill their wives by keeping them at home. Not really kill them you know….but kill any chance they have for a good future. They don’t send them to school, they don’t let them learn how to survive here. If you stay at home and you don’t go to school, what will you benefit from? Nothing. This year you will have baby and next year another one and then this become your permanent life - you don’t write or read, you don’t know how to shop, you don’t know how to do anything because you’re just staying at home.

Sometime this is from the lady who wants to stay at home, but most times she is getting some restriction from her husband. They say “if you’re going out, you see and hear about money and want to spend too much”. Or, “if you are going to school you will find a boyfriend. Your eyes will open, you will know more and come and kick me from our home”. This is very bad concept for the men to have, a very bad concept. The future should be for both of you, education should be for both of you.

The benefit of the school is for yourself and your kids, and when only the man is carrying the house - doing homework with kids, going to work and learning about life here and you are just sitting and cleaning and cooking you are doing nothing….you will never be able to help your kids. You have to share the responsibility and you need some finances, some independence. You cannot beg your husband all the time, “give me money please - I need lotion, I need hair, I
need a dress, I need some underwear, I need socks I need this and that…”. These are my own needs and I shouldn’t have to beg someone give them to me.

So you see in this situation when the men are going back to Sudan, how many difficulties will face this kind of lady? First of all she doesn’t drive, she doesn’t know how to shop, she doesn’t know how to use her bank card, she’s been here for 6-7 years and imagine that she cannot help her kids with their homework….so she will be more stressed. Then the husband will not call and this is another stress, and she will keep this stress from her kids….from her house because it is a shame that he has left them with nothing….that she cannot even feed her kids. But she cannot go to work because of kids, because childcare is too expensive and even if she has someone to watch her kids she cannot speak a level of English to get a good position. But some of us are start to get awake. We send are sending our ladies to school…we are helping each other to learn how to do everything. It’s a little late, but it’s still ok, we can still learn to go a different way.

The decision to return to Sudan or stay in Calgary is not easy, with either choice often leading to increased tensions between spouses, parents and children, or with extended family members in South Sudan. The back and forth movement of men between South Sudan and Canada, as they attempt to negotiate competing kinship obligations, emphasizes the importance of family considerations in migration decisions. The "mirage" of permanent return as a viable possibility often leads to the reality of a transnational life, stretched between two or more countries, becoming the only way many men see to balance their extensive social obligations.
6.4. “It’s like I’m finally home”: Return and the search for a Sudanese Identity

<<I met up with Arek at Queen of Sheba, one of the three trendy places to be in Juba where all the expats eat. She was sitting in a back dark corner with Deng. Both of them were chatting away in Spanish and dressed more for the club scene in Calgary than for Juba. As the evening progressed, and more wine was covertly drunk out of coke glasses (“out of respect for my uncles I can’t drink in public” she explained), Arek became more and more passionate about the need she had felt to return home to Sudan and how she feels “comfortable here even though I don’t remember a thing about it”. She talked about the undercurrent of racism she always felt in Canada and the “unequal value placed on white people’s wisdom”. Telling me,

What do you have? A Masters? A PhD? And how much do you know here? Do you know more than Deng there? Of course not. He can survive here, he can survive in Wau, he can even survive in Cuba...the only place you can really survive is Canada, even with your PhD, but people would assume that he is the ignorant or simple one because of his colour, because of his accent– that’s the problem in Canada, that’s why we don’t fit there.

As I drank my wine and listened to them discuss a funny YouTube video they had downloaded that day in a mixture Spanish and English, I closed my eyes and felt like I was back sitting in a club in Calgary. This was a different sort of return than Michael, Paul and Mau were experiencing - there was no return to an idealized village or cattle camp, or sitting on a dusty street corner with old friends having tea, talking politics and eating goat – were both groups coming back for the same reasons? What brought someone like Arek, who had left so young, back “home” to Sudan?>>Excerpt from field notes November 2009.
Travel between Calgary and Juba became increasingly common during my stay in South Sudan and I was surprised by the number of acquaintances from Calgary I ran into while in Juba. One night, while out for dinner at the "Queen of Sheba", an Ethiopian style restaurant frequented by foreign aid workers, I heard a familiar loud laugh. Before I could mentally place it, I was in the process of being hugged by Arek, a 22 year old woman from Calgary, whom I had worked with on several community initiatives. I had no idea she had been planning to return to Juba, and we were both shocked to see each other. She was the first young woman I had met who had returned, so I was interested to hear how her stay had been going.

Arek’s father had been a high level commander in the SPLA and she was closely related to several very highly positioned officials within the Government of South Sudan (GoSS). She had left Sudan at the age of three as part of the group of youths sent to Cuba during the war. Through Arek I was introduced to a group of young Southern Sudanese-Canadians, the majority of whom had also lived in Cuba, who had returned to the South after hostilities with the North had been officially terminated. While the majority of returning Southern Sudanese-Canadians tended to avoid expat hang outs like the "Queen of Sheba", Arek enthusiastically referred to it as her “home away from home”. She, and her friends, spent most of their time in Juba either there, or at "The Havana", a Cuban themed restaurant run by two fellow Cuban South Sudanese Canadians catering to the expat crowd.

I spoke with Arek several times over the next few months. She often referred to the social and economic marginalization she had felt in Canada and her desire to return to South Sudan to find her sense of self and a feeling of belonging. Although she often grew frustrated with the slow bureaucracy and rough living conditions, she remained convinced that if she remained in Juba
long enough, and eventually travelled to the village where she had been born, she would finally be able to, as she stated, “know all of myself” and to “understand the part of me that is Southern Sudanese.”

Shortly before leaving Juba I met with Arek one final time at "The Havana", and found her enthusiasm to connect with her “Southern Sudanese self” had begun to wane. When she arrived at that meeting the first words out of her mouth were “I’m ready to go home, I just need a bathroom, a good shower and some clean water...I want to leave.” I was surprised by her change in attitude, as just a few weeks before she had seriously been considering accepting a job and making her return to South Sudan permanent. She explained that a frightening encounter with the police a few nights earlier had precipitated her change of heart, and convinced her that, although she hoped to find a place to belong in South Sudan, “I’m just as much an outsider here as I am in Canada”. She went on to explain that she had been leaving a restaurant with her cousin in the early hours of the morning when she was propositioned by a couple of police officers. Her cousin reacted angrily to their comments; they were then grabbed, handcuffed, beaten and taken to the police station,

I thought I was in a movie – they were beating me, they were beating my cousin. They thought I was a Ugandan prostitute and kept saying “why do you come here? You are not a good woman out drinking.” They only stopped when they heard me speaking Nuer to my cousin. They realized then we were Sudanese. But then they got angry again - they took all of our money and said “we are starving and have no food for breakfast and now you come back and spend all your money on drinking while we suffer and have nothing!” They only stopped when they read our IDs and knew who my uncle was, and then they were scared and let us go. My cousin wanted to tell my uncle, but I said no, I know the type of justice
they give here – it’s not like what we are used to in Canada - and I don’t want to be the cause of that.

Arek’s story illustrates the struggles many young Southern Sudanese Canadians face when trying to find their place in Canada and South Sudan. Many had high hopes that, upon their return, they would find a way to move beyond the marginalization they felt in Canada. While some did find success in business, or through government appointments, they tended to remain isolated from the larger South Sudanese population, socializing only with each other and preferring to work with western Non-Governmental Organizations or the United Nations rather than in the local government. As one young woman who came back to work with the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) said, “I only lasted a month there. No one would listen to me because I was young and a woman. And the corruption was unbelievable! I couldn’t handle it. It was stressing me out too much. As soon as I could I moved into a position with UNDP [United Nations Development Program], and I’m much happier now”.

The difficulties that younger Southern Sudanese-Canadians returning to Sudan had fitting in did not go unnoticed. Older returnees were saddened by the fact their youth seemed unable to fit in in Canada or Sudan. One older returnee commented,

You pity the young. When they were taken away they were very young....and when they went to Canada they could not fit in there because of problems with race and all that....so they have a lot of trouble with the law, and alcohol and conflicts with the community. So they try to come back here and still don’t fit and have problems.

One of the primary differences between young Southern Sudanese-Canadian returnees and those who did not leave was their desire to move beyond relying solely on tribal affiliations for
establishing and maintaining social networks. While South Sudanese youths in Calgary were encouraged to socialize with those beyond their tribal community, including non-South Sudanese, this practice often led to tensions within communities and between family members in South Sudan. One young man observed that,

It is normal to go to your tribe sometimes, it is your tribe and you should. But for us young people, if there are any conflicts or something like that, those who will protect you will be your friends, not your community or your tribe. This can make people angry sometimes, they will say, “why are you spending time with so and so, they are not from us.” They don’t understand that doesn’t matter for us anymore.

Older returnees also noted a shift away from purely ethnic or tribal affiliation. They were surprised to find that the new associations and forms of affiliation they had developed in resettlement continued to evolve and shift upon return to South Sudan. While many had expected to return to spending the majority of their time with members of their tribe, or extended kin network, they found themselves associating more with Southern Sudanese-Canadians regardless of tribe. That is not to say that ethnic or tribal divisions present in Canada disappeared completely. Tensions between tribes from Equatoria and Dinka and Nuer tribes continued to surface in as Calgary; however, returnees still noted a marked difference in who they were associating with on a regular basis:

It is different how we group here. Like if I go with some people who were never away, never in Egypt or Canada, and we talk I don’t’ fit with them. Like if I say “Canada has snow” somebody who has never been there and doesn’t know snow will say to themselves “this person does not belong here,” because of this most of us from Canada, we become like one body. Like in this house now there are 7 of
us, all Canadian, and another house there (points down the road), they are 6, all Canadian, and another house on the next street, there are 6 more, all Canadian. (Peter, Dinka man in his 40’s).

The relationships between those who stayed in South Sudan during the war and those who fled were a touchy topic for returnees. While some were reluctant to talk about any conflict or tension at first, it was clear they existed. When the topic was first broached people would say that job discrimination did exist, and they felt that their resumes often went to the bottom of the pile when it became known they were from Canada, but that people where justified in doing that, since the feeling was it was “their time now. After so long in the bush they deserve to get something good.” While many older returnees seemed prepared to accept that, and wait for a position, it bothered many younger returnees. They were indignant that their skills and abilities to contribute to the reconstruction efforts were being ignored by people who they felt were under-qualified for their posts. Many also felt the contributions they had made to the war effort, such as sending remittances and lobbying for international intervention were ignored and undervalued by their family members and the community in South Sudan. A story relayed to me by Michael during my first week in Juba painted a clear picture of these tensions. He and a friend, who had resettled to Australia during the war and who had also recently returned to Juba, both owned land in the city prior to the war. They were currently engaged in efforts to reclaim plots of land illegally claimed by SPLA commanders in their absence and rented to tenants at the end of the war. While Michael pursued his claim through the court system, his friend decided to try and talk to the commander occupying his land in an attempt to reach an amicable compromise. Michael accompanied him to the meeting, and upon his return told me angrily how the commander had pulled a gun on them before they had even had a chance to talk, and warned
Michael’s friend not to return or pursue a land claim because “I don’t care when you bought it or how much you paid for it, I fought while you ran…I paid for this land with a bucket of my blood!”

Tensions between returnees and those who remained in South Sudan for the duration of the conflict are not limited to those who attained resettlement. Efforts to repatriate thousands of Southern Sudanese from neighbouring countries also raised tensions relating to resources and land claims, as well as aggravating differing responses to changing values, and norms related to marriage, family and gender. For those who were in third country resettlement, as Arek unfortunately discovered when she was arrested, such tensions often result in the redrawing of boundaries, identifying some who are considered “Southern” in ways that often exclude those who have spent significant amounts of time outside the country. Subsequently, many returning Southerners driven back by a yearning for home and a connection to the “Southern Sudanese identity” they feel they have lost in Canada, find themselves once again negotiating and producing new forms of association and group affiliation born out of forced migration and resettlement.

6.5. Conclusion

The above narratives add complexity to discussions of exile and return by highlighting the displacement many returnees feel as they attempt to reconnect with the ideals of a home they have imagined, but to which they often no longer feel they belong. The chapter illustrates the need to address the inadequacy of simplifying what are in fact complex and fluid refugee experiences, and has demonstrated some of the problems in characterizing those experiences in linear terms. In every case examined, whether Paul’s successful reintegration into Juban society,
Mau's aborted effort of return, Arek's struggles to find belonging, or any of the other examples cited, in no instance could their experiences be characterized as linear. As Southern Sudanese Canadians continue to inhabit increasingly transnational social fields, their experiences of return migration highlight the fluidity and contextual nature of the meaning of many traditional labels employed to describe their circumstances. Rather than presuming a directional finality to their movements, as exemplified by UNHCR’s use of the term “durable” when laying out solutions for refugees, the experiences of Southern Sudanese refugees moving between Canada and South Sudan point to the “circularity of movement and the multidimensionality of connections” (Um 2006) inherent in forced migration. As many Southern Sudanese begin exploring the option of living transnationally, third country resettlement and repatriation often blend into indistinct phases, becoming parts of an ongoing process of identity negotiation and renegotiation.

The simplistic labeling of returnees’ experiences as successful if they return permanently and unsuccessful if they continue to travel between two or more countries is clearly problematic. While it may be valid to suggest that Mau's experience of return was unsuccessful because he returned to Canada prematurely, or that those who had thriving businesses in Juba and so stayed permanently were successful, generalizing such conclusions would be grossly premature. Following that rigid bifurcate division would lead one to conclude Paul's experience of return was unsuccessful simply because he decided to not only reside in Juba, but to also regularly return to Canada for extended periods, and that Michael's was successful because he made a permanent return to South Sudan. Such conclusions, however, clearly ignore the obvious complexities of those individuals' experiences. The diversity in how return is practiced and enacted, as illustrated by those examples, shows the need to move studies of return migration
beyond the dichotomous categories of returnees and those who stayed behind (Horst 2007). Individuals’ varied flight and resettlement experiences, kinship obligations, and expectations for return often lead to vastly different experiences. The increasing ease of transnational movement has allowed many Southerners to attempt to fulfill their obligations to kin in both Canada and South Sudan by straddling the space between both countries. The manner in which individuals fulfill those obligations, however, can vary dramatically, and further illustrates the complex and contextual nature of return. It was kinship obligations, for example, that ultimately led Mau to return to Canada, yet very similar obligations that resulted in Akol choosing to stay.

Gender relations also factored into experiences of return migration, and perhaps most clearly illustrated its transnational character. Because men usually returned to South Sudan alone, leaving the women behind, the two sexes experienced return very differently. Gender norms often left women secluded in their homes, looking after children and unable to access education and valuable life experiences. Expectations of men to take second wives upon return then resulted in women in Canada being forced to face difficulties for which they were unprepared, leaving many, such as Mary and Aguok, having to adapt quickly just to ensure the well being of their families. As a result women and children were frequently left vulnerable and with few options. The often unrecognized gender dynamics of Southern Sudanese return migration illustrate that increasing the focus on the fluidity and frequency of refugees transnational movements should not also obscure recognition of factors that limit movement of specific groups within the population.

Perhaps the one commonality all returnees shared was their desire to find a way to balance multiple ways of belonging across the variety of identity categories they negotiate on a daily
basis. Whether challenging the bounded identities associated with their “refugeeness,” tribal affiliations, or nationality, in all cases presented, the complex and contextual nature involved in this balancing act played a major role. Some, such as Paul and Akol, seemed to have found what they were looking for while others, such as Michael and Arek were still searching. Unpacking returnees’ experiences surrounding themes such as loss, kinship obligations, and the search for a "South Sudanese" identity problematizes the often taken-for-granted categories of national and tribal affiliations, as well as assumptions surrounding return and home. Chol, a Dinka man who spent over a decade in Canada before returning to South Sudan to work for the United Nations Development Program, summed up the feelings of many returnees when he stated:

How can someone say one place is their home over the other? They are both our homes, and that doesn’t have to conflict. It's absolutely possible to have loyalty to two homes, to two nations. We are all Southerners and Canadians. I go everywhere for meetings and I tell people internationally and locally, “I am a Southern Sudanese Canadian.” Government can have problems with this sometimes, but it's really not governments that have the problem, it is really only people with the conservative mindset, who think only about borders that think it is only possible to have one home.

As Chol and other Southern Sudanese Canadians continue to inhabit increasingly transnational social fields, it is clear that the often taken for granted uniformity, or stability of the boundaries established by the categories “Southern” “Sudanese” and “Canadian” is blurred and continuously shifted as Southern Sudanese Canadians continue to negotiate ways of belonging across them.
7. Conclusion

I moved back to Calgary as I neared the completion of my dissertation. It had been about a year and a half since I had any sustained communication with any of my informants and I was reluctant to reestablish too much contact until I had a draft of my dissertation in hand that I felt confident taking back to the groups who had contributed to my research. While attending an unrelated event at City Hall one Saturday morning soon after I returned however, I noticed a large crowd of Southern Sudanese waving flags and signs on the sidewalk in front of the building. Their signs and chants made it clear they were protesting the inability of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to arrest Omar Bashir and the international community’s inability to address the current conflict in Kordufan which was spreading across the Southern Sudanese border into Unity State. As I approached the group I noticed several familiar faces and excitedly went over to catch up with old friends. After the obligatory handshakes, hugs and enquiries into families’ health and wellbeing were over, I quickly fell into my old fieldwork habits and started quizzing those around me about the state of community relations and the efforts to form an umbrella Southern Sudanese group, how people were feeling about the current situation between Sudan and South Sudan and if anyone I knew had returned to the South since I had left. My questions were met with amusement, and one man laughingly said “you know us…everything has changed since you were here!” Since independence the loose grouping of regions or tribes that had been working together in the city under the label of “Sudanese” had shifted once again. It was decided that the group should be solely a Southern one, and reflective of the power of the common sense understanding of the ‘national order of thing’, be limited to communities which fell within the geopolitical boundaries of newly independent South Sudan.
This meant that the Nuba, Blue Nile and Darfurians were no longer part of any formalized joint representative effort with the Southern groups. When I questioned the motivations behind this move, as many leaders from those communities had been some of the strongest members of previous efforts to gain formal recognition as one unified group, my friends quickly reminded me that although they are no longer formally organizing together, they will continue to support each other when necessary. The demonstration at which the conversation was occurring appeared to be a good example of this cooperation, as the group consisted of members from almost every tribe in the city, coming out in support of their “brothers and sisters” in Kordufan.

The continued failure to gain official recognition and attain funding had also started to shift group relations and strategies to deal with community issues. As immigrant serving organizations and the city appeared to tire of the complex nature of working with Southern Sudanese groups and began to shift their focus onto other “high needs” groups in the city, such as the Somali community\(^5\), and Southerners’ struggled to reform their “unified” association post-independence, smaller groups have increasingly taken steps to address their community issues on a tribal level. The Jieng (Dinka) community for example, has opened a community centre where they intend to offer language courses, tutoring, counseling and other community services.

\(^5\) Despite frustration with lack of desired results in their work with Southern Sudanese groups, agencies and government departments working with Somali groups in the city appear to be approaching the issue from the same perspective – lumping all groups into a “Somali community” and insisting that a single representative body come together to address issues such as gang involvement and domestic abuse, while simultaneously denying any form of self determination or agency by withholding funding until they so unite.
services. They have yet to receive funding however, and to date the centre is completely funded by community members.

In terms of return migration to South Sudan, I was informed that it seemed as if the rush to repatriate had slowed down. Those who had been marked for important posts in the new government had all returned. The initial post war influx of donor and investor cash, while not dried up, was also flowing less freely and subject to more scrutiny and accountability checks, limiting the number of business opportunities open to the more entrepreneurial minded returnees. Now three years into independence, which became official in July 2011, those who had returned and chose to stay, as well as Southerners who remained in Calgary, were in the process of sorting out the nature of their transnational relationship with South Sudan- visits, engaging in development projects, continuing to search for a way to go back permanently etc. The uncertainty of the situation in Southern Sudan however, has left many Southerners in Calgary still waiting, watching and talking about return “someday when things are finally quiet again.”

My conversations at the Saturday morning protest emphasize the continuously shifting nature of Southern Sudanese conceptions of belonging among diaspora members in Calgary, and their relationship with South Sudan. As the situation between Sudan and South Sudan, as well as the internal conditions within South Sudan continue to fluctuate, Southerners living in the diaspora will continue to reevaluate their relationships with each other and their home country. This ongoing negotiation of relationships and forms of belonging highlights the creative space opened up by exile and forced migration. Often considered to represent a break with one’s culture and past, forced migration is here seen as the catalyst for the forging of new identities and ways feelings of emplacement. The focus on the newness of these conceptions affiliation however,
often masks the creative ways in which refugees renegotiate and re-imagine previously held “local” ways of belonging. While their new locality may lead them to define new ways of association or conceptualize difference in new ways (Abusharaf 2009), the preceding chapters demonstrate how Southerners also engage in the reproduction of home and belonging through the performance and renegotiation of “local” practices in Calgary. The following five sections draw on the experiences presented above in order to highlight and summarize the ways in which Southerners renegotiate and reproduce home and their respective local practices - through community organization, performing as refugees and multicultural citizens, engaging in long distance nation building, responding to shifting gender norms through transnational marriage and managing shifting ideals of home in return migration.

7.1. Community Organization and Belonging

Forced migration and resettlement has contributed to the enhancement, and sometimes even development of new forms of affiliation and association among Southern Sudanese. Categories such as gender, class, education, second language and shared experiences in country of asylum often cut across previously established categories of tribe, home village or lineage. However, to suggest that the boundaries between previously held categories, especially those based on tribe and lineage, have disappeared in resettlement and allowed for the creation of a unified Southern Sudanese community, denies the complexity and diversity of Southern Sudanese relations. While Southern Sudanese groups living in Calgary recognize the salience of new means of affiliating and belonging, they continue to organize themselves in very “local” ways which reflect the segmented and fluid nature of the majority of group relations in South Sudan (Evans-Pritchard 1951, Hutchinson 1996, Liendhart 1967, Southhall 1976). As Chapter 2 demonstrates, while
recognizing the need to form a unified umbrella community organization in order to attain formal recognition from government and immigrant serving institutions, they have organized in a way that reflects the flexibility and fluidity inherent in the system of fission and fusion commonly used to describe African political organization (Comaroff and Comaroff 2011). Through the use of this very local form of community organization they are able to come together as “Southern Sudanese” when required for official recognition or to address broad ranging social issues such as family violence and intergenerational tension. At the same time, they remain organized in such a way that the village or sub-community level remains the foundation of affiliation, feeding through various contextual layers of sub-tribe, tribe, region, state, and finally to the loosely formed representative group of Southern Sudanese. By adapting this local form of political organization to the Canadian context they are able to meet institutional demands for a representative Southern Sudanese organization, while at the same time maintaining the autonomy of sub-communities as well as the shifting and contextual scale of relations between various groups.

7.2. Performing Refugeeness and Multiculturalism

The path the majority of Southern Sudanese took to Canada involved an intense bureaucratic process, first of proving their refugeeness and need for resettlement, and once in Canada of conforming to the guidelines set out for proper multicultural subjects. In responding to the roles of good refugees and good Canadians set out for them, Southerners often found themselves in the position of trying to fit incommensurable conceptions of family, community, nationality, conflict etc. together. Countering discourses presenting refugees as passive victims, Southerners actively engaged in “flipping the script” (Carr 2009) in order to perform proper refugee experiences or
multicultural difference thereby maximizing the choices and opportunities available to them. This often involved reimaging and performing local practices in acceptable ways – adjusting marital status or age in order to attain resettlement, framing the desire for a community center in terms of a presentation of Sudanese cultural sharing - with a conscious effort to perform based on their anticipation of what their audience expects to see (Goffman 1959). However, it is not always possible, or desirable, to stick to the approved script, and ruptures, such as a man’s questioning of normalized discourses surrounding child soldiers, or an outburst surrounding the complexities and difficulties that arise when bridewealth practices collide with Canadian divorce law, occur. Whether a planned form of resistance, or an unplanned outburst, these ruptures offer glimpses into how Southern Sudanese actively engage is performing and reframing local practices in a manner that is “doable” under official multiculturalism (Povinelli 2001).

These ruptures, as well as the script flipping, performed by Southern Sudanese in Calgary contribute to larger discussions currently happening in the area of forced migration and refugee studies regarding the long held distinction between forced and voluntary, or free, migration. The implied lack of agency or choice embedded in the category of “forced migrants” affects not only the research produced around the subject of the refugee, but also the political and humanitarian discourse and interventions designed to deal with refugees. Moving away from the binary distinction between forced and free/voluntary migration, and recognizing the choice and agency that occur throughout the “intertwining of subjection and subjectivation” (Mezzadra 2013) that occurs throughout a refugee’s experience, can lead to new research pathways in forced migration and refugee studies, potentially shifting discourses surrounding the figure of the refugee to one
more reflective of the active negotiations, resistance and reframing engaged in by those encompassed by the category.

7.3. Long Distance Nation Building

The engagement of Southern Sudanese in long distance nation building has shifted over time. During their early years in Canada in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s efforts were primarily focused on advocacy, drawing attention to human rights abuses inflicted on the south by the Omar Bashir’s government, as well as the involvement of oil companies, such as Canada’s Talisman Energy, in contested areas. While sending financial remittances back to Sudan was a constant priority, the end of the war in 2005 saw many people shift toward a focus on more long term development and reconstruction projects in their home villages. Finally, as the referendum on independence grew closer many Southerners engaged more directly in nation building, returning to look for work or participate in the newly formed Southern Sudanese government.

While the majority of Southerners in Calgary agreed that the diaspora had a role to play in the creation of an independent South Sudan, the type of nation they were imagining was often varied and contradictory. These differing visions for the nation were not only debated in Calgary, but often caused tensions between those in the diaspora and Southern Sudanese who remain in the south. Whether they were working toward a similar vision of an independent South Sudan, or on a smaller scale, toward an independent and self-sufficient home village, the home they were imagining differed from person to person, and often between those in diaspora and those in South Sudan. These differing images were apparent on the national scale in conflicts over participation in the referendum, or the role of the SPLA in Southern Sudanese politics. At the village level, the experiences of the home association from Unity State discussed in Chapter 4
highlighted the divergent priorities for development and well-being that arose between the home association, their partners and villagers in South Sudan. By engaging in long distance nation building, whether though advocacy and supporting the war effort, remittances or development projects they are recreating ways of maintaining kinship ties and obligations, while at the same time working to (re)produce what it means to be Southern Sudanese through development projects and building their new country.

7.4. Negotiating Gender Expectations and Transnational Marriage

Forced migration and resettlement have led to major changes in gender relations and norms among Southern Sudanese groups. Both men and women spoke of struggling to live up to expectations for “proper” behaviour held by their families and community members, while trying to balance these local ways of being with new gender roles and norms they were encountering in Calgary. One of the ways Southern Sudanese men have attempted to negotiate this balance is by engaging in transnational marriages through which they attempt to (re)produce local Southern Sudanese ways of being in resettlement. In attempting to manage changing gender dynamics in Canada, and in responding to pressure from family members back in South Sudan to reproduce proper households, many young men feel that by returning to South Sudan to marry they are able to find a wife who is more amenable to the household dynamics they are trying to reproduce in Calgary. They also feel that due to the strengthened connections with kin and community in South Sudan their authority over their household is reinforced and they have stronger kin networks to draw on in times of marital conflict.
At the same time that Southerners are attempting to (re)produce what they consider to be local Southern Sudanese marriage and gender norms in Calgary, those idealized local norms in practices their home villages in South Sudan continue to be remade and renegotiated. The influx of young men from western countries looking for brides has led to a substantial increase in bridewealth expectations, which many argue has contributed to the instability and inter tribal hostility in the country as young men without ready access to cash and cattle are pushed into conducting cattle raids on neighbouring communities in order to compete for wives. The ongoing repatriation of those who spent years in camps in neighbouring countries, where they had greater access to education and various NGO programs geared toward gender equality, as well as the return of families who spent many years in Khartoum adapting to different gender norms, has also shifted local gender norms and practices (Abusharaf 2009, Grabska 2010). Therefore, while Southern Sudanese in Calgary engaged in recreating idealized views of home through enacting local practices, the local which they worked to (re)produce was constantly shifting, often in response to the transnational relationships stretching between “home” and the diaspora.

7.5. Return Migration and Shifting Conceptions of Home

The large number of Southern Sudanese choosing to return to South Sudan - whether permanently, part time or for short visits - problematizes the refugee regime’s notion of durable solutions for refugee situations. The end of the civil war in 2005 and South Sudan’s subsequent independence opened up the option for many Southerners to expand their transnational activities beyond remittances and communication toward physical movement back and forth between their
two countries. The experiences of those who return are varied however - whether going back to a home they once new, or like Arek, returning to one they only remembered from stories, their experiences show that conceptions of home are always shifting and mean very different things for different people. Paul’s story in particular highlights the difficulty of return. When he found the home he was returning to did not match his view of home, he and several others in the same situation were forced to conceptualize their idea of home and ‘the local’, in South Sudan, as well as Calgary. For Arek as well, being arrested forced a harsh realization that the home she had imagined, and the Nuer identity she longed to enact, was very different from the home and local reality that former SPLA soldiers who arrested her were living in.

7.6. Conclusion: Performing the Local through Global Acts

The experiences of Southern Sudanese living in Calgary problematize reified conceptions of belonging and the local as bound to a specific location. Combined with a growing body of research related to protracted and fluid refugee situations (for example Tibet, the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and more recently Iraq), they allow us to move beyond a territorial conception of the local and to step away from the dichotomous representation of global vs. local, or even translocal activities. Instead we can begin to conceptualize the local as “a structure of feeling, affect, temporality and relatedness” (Lambek 2011: 197). Through this lens it becomes apparent how refugees’ actions, such as community organization, long distance nation building, transnational marriage and return migration become recreations of the local although they are carried out on the global or transnational stage. While these actions do not always involve the crossing, or straddling, of physical borders - they can also exist though relations with fellow
refugees in their country of settlement, their friends and relatives in their country of origin as well as first country of asylum, or their (re)production of certain practices - they all work to (re)create the place “there” in the space of “here.” Therefore, for Southern Sudanese living in Calgary, and other refugees and migrants, the local becomes a place constituted through memories and actions as they work to re-imagine and (re)produce ways of belonging on multiple levels - South Sudan, tribe, village sub-tribe etc. - far removed from the space of South Sudan.
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