EXPLORING THE SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOSITY OF DINKA CHILDREN IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE WESTERN SUBURBS OF MELBOURNE, VICTORIA

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Statement of Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

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Abstract

This research explored the religiosity and spirituality of newly arrived Catholic Dinka children in Catholic schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne. In particular, the study focused on Dinka children's spirituality borne of their experiences of war and trauma and sought to understand their perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer. A disparity was highlighted between the available literature on children's spirituality, (Hay & Nye, 1998; Hyde, 2005; Mountain, 2005), which presented findings from children who were '*untraumatised*', with the predisposition of the Dinka children who were traumatised.

The research aimed to identify incongruities between these and Catholic religious education assumptions in their schools. This qualitative research was guided by an epistemology of constructivism, which aimed at gathering a Dinka community narrative that was subjected to interpretive analysis, specifically phenomenological hermeneutics.

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Finally, I dedicate this work to my late grandparents Maria Therese and Anthony Salnitro.

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ACRONYMS

(ACBPRP)   Australian Catholic Bishops Pastoral Research Projects

(ABS)   Australian Bureau of Statistics

(ACS)   Australian Community Survey

(BCE)   Before Common Era

(CCLS)   Catholic Church Life Survey

(CEOM)   Catholic Education Office Melbourne

(CSF)   Curriculum and Standards Framework

(CMY)   Centre for Multicultural Youth

(CWHSAM) Catholics Who Have Stopped Attending Mass

(ERC)   Edmund Rice Centre

(ERRS)   Edmund Rice Refugee Services

(ESL)	English as a Second Language
(HMSO)	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
(IEC)	Intensive English Centres
(IIEP)	International Institute for Educational Planning
(LRA)	Lord's Resistance Army
(MI)	Multiple Intelligences
(MP)	Machakos Protocol
(NAPLAN)	National Assessment Program - Literacy And Numeracy
(NCA)	National Count of Attendance
(NCLS)	National Church Life Survey
(NCP)	National Congress Party
(NSW)	New South Wales
(OCHA)	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
(OHP)	Offshore Humanitarian Program
(PTS)	Post Traumatic Stress
(PTSD)	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
(SCAA)	School Curriculum and Assessment Authority
(SCDP)	Sudan Cultural Digest Project
(SHP)	Special Humanitarian Program
(SPLA)	Sudanese People's Liberation Army
(UN)	United Nations
(UNESCO)	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
(UNHCR)	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
(UNICEF)	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
(UNSC)	United Nations Security Council
(VCAA)	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
(VCE)	Victorian Certificate of Education
(VSL)	Victorian School of Languages

(WYD)   World Youth Day

ABBREVIATIONS

Old Testament

Ex   Exodus

1Sam   1 Samuel

New Testament

Mt   Matthew

Mk   Mark

Lk   Luke

Jn   John

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Introduction

This study focused on an ethnic group known as the Dinka who were living originally in the south of Sudan in Africa. In this southern region there were about 6 million people and about one sixth are Dinka. Population estimates in this region were especially tenuous due to the population displacement caused by the recent civil wars (1958 to 1972 and 1983 to 2005) and returnee monitoring conducted by the International Organization for Migration (2009). The Dinka constituted the largest group in the south, having cultural and linguistic homogeneity. Their tribes were situated between the Bahr el Ghazal and White Nile Rivers, and the majority lived according to traditional ways. Christian Churches including the Catholic, Presbyterian and Anglican Churches had been tentatively set up in the south since the early 1900s, and Catholics and Protestants initially found it difficult to get established in this area because the people there saw European missionaries as an alien threat and resisted them vigorously. However by 1920 many of the original hardships were overcome and a fledgling Christian movement had begun (Sundkler & Steed, 2001). It would be unlikely for the Christian movement to have made great inroads into traditional ways of living in southern Sudan during the early to mid twentieth century (Lienhardt, 1987).

The Sudanese people claimed independence in 1956 and by 1958 the independent civil government was overthrown and military rule was set up. Political tensions between the north and south Sudan centred on the disproportionately high representation of Arab officials in government office. In an effort to gain political representation, the Anya Nya, the army of the southern revolt, took arms against the ruling power led by Major General Ibrahim Abboud, and civil war ensued (Carney & Butler, 2005). It lasted for seventeen years. Dinka life during the 1960s was disrupted and hundreds of thousands of refugees from the south fled Sudan into the neighbouring countries of the Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and the Central African

Republic (Deng, 1972). A peace agreement was signed in 1972 between the north and the south that lasted for eleven years. In 1983 peace ended and the people of the south, including the Dinka suffered the effects of the second civil war. A peace agreement between north and south in 2005 ended twenty-one years of civil war, but the tension and conflict that was experienced as a result of degraded relations between Arab Muslims in the north and African Muslims in Darfur demonstrated that the peace resolution for Sudan was not absolute. While this conflict did not directly involve the Dinka people, the violent attacks and genocide occurring in the Sudan at that time caused unstable living conditions for the African Sudanese.

With the dispersal and dislocation of Dinka people came the introduction of different languages. To the Dinka people the Dinka language had been a pivotal link to their spiritual understanding of human experience and in turn to their traditional way of living. Cattle had played a major role in the Dinka psyche, and this was demonstrated in their ethnic language. Cattle were the subject of their practical existence and their religious focus. They venerated the beasts that were responsible for giving them a livelihood, and had a literal and metaphorical language that inculcated and expressed this veneration. They centred their being on these creatures and their daily experiences expressed this in word and action. Their attachment to cattle cannot be overstated in relation to their traditional way of living, religious adherences and ethnic language. In Dinka thought cattle were given into human care as a gift. In sacrifice they were considered the perfect victims that offered life to humanity (Lienhardt, 1987).

In the advent of the civil war leading to 1958, Muslim-oriented Arabic schools were set up in south Sudan, and for a brief period during the 1960s Islam made an impression on the southern tribes. Arabic was taught, some of the Dinka adopted Arab-Muslim names and some others converted to Islam, but by the late 1960s the tensions of rising separatism against the Government of the north left the southern tribes looking upon Christian missionaries as

guardians and allies (Deng, 1972). Traditional culture and religion were beginning to change. The relevance and meaning of life was to be viewed through the eyes of war, trauma, suffering and dislocation. The impact of such experiences and of being driven from their homeland would find the Dinka people forming communities in towns, city fringes and refugee camps in neighbouring African countries. For many, the missionary activity of Christian Churches in these places offered spiritual guidance in the absence of their traditional 'spear masters' who equated to the priestly clan within their tribes. Mass evangelisation led to a mix of religious practices, including traditional ways in the presence of an Old Testament theological understanding from Isaiah that offered rescue and redemption in a promise of inheriting the earth (Stancliffe, 2008). Interestingly, Stancliffe (2008) observed that the oracles of salvation, which he cited as text significant to conversion, expressed a Baptismal, rather than a Eucharistic understanding of Church.

For humanitarian reasons caused by political, economic and climatic strife, thousands of Sudanese, including Dinka in particular, were able to make Australia their destination. The Australian Government offered visas to Sudanese refugees from 1982 to 2007. In Melbourne these people set up communities in the western suburbs of St Albans, Sunshine and Footscray, and in the southeastern suburbs of Noble Park and the Dandenong area. Many children from Dinka background attended Catholic schools in these places and brought with them what they knew about their heritage, language, the suffering of the immediate past, their disrupted present and future hopes. In the context of these experiences their spirituality and religiosity have had a significant meaning for them and in the culture of the Catholic schools they have attended.

The Dinka People

The Dinka are a people from southern west of Sudan known as the Sudanic. Other groups in the area belong to either the Nilotics or the Nilo-Hamites living in the central Nile or south eastern Nile regions respectively. Ethnographers have identified the Sudanics from the region of Bahr-el-Ghazal province to generally have cultural and linguistic homogeneity. The Dinka people have organized themselves into separate clans according to familial groupings of agnatic descendency, spiritual ancestry and warrior heritage. The combination and presence of these clans living together within a particular area formed an ethnic tribe. Nine different tribes were identified. They included Malwal, Twij, Rek, Luaic, Agar, Cic, Atwot, Aliab and Bor Dinka tribes following from the north to the south along the White Nile. These clan distinctions were important and Dinka people knew their personal clan despite diminishing traditional practices such as scarification, which identified their lineage. (Carney and Butler, 2005).

Traditional Dinka Living

From the research of Lienhardt, who worked among the Dinka people over a two-year period between 1947-50, a profile of Dinka life in tribal community can be developed. The family was the main unit for Dinka social organization. Men lived in polygamous relationships and had as many wives as they could support. Each wife, in turn, had her own hut and looked after her children. She would have her own hearth and would take turns with other wives in preparing food for the husband. There was also a central hearth for the men of each family and it would be situated in the cattle-byre. This was where the men of the homestead would gather and meet.

Their material necessities were sourced from grass, mud, wood and animal products. Their huts called *tukuls* were circular and made of wattle and daub with conical thatched roofs. Millet porridge, with milk or sauces was a staple food, and meat or fish were eaten as available. Cattle were important for providing food, economic wellbeing and for the Dinka's

spirituality and religious acts. Cattle provided meat, milk and an ointment made from the butter. The urine from the cow disinfected their milk gourds and the dried dung provided fuel and mulch. Dung ashes decorated their bodies and protected them from flies and mosquitoes. Hides were made into rope, sleeping-skins and shields. Cattle provided the currency to pay dowries from the prospective husband's family to the woman's family. Above all, the animal sacrifice of the cow was the central religious act of the Dinka, because "in their eyes [cattle were] perfect victims"(Lienhardt, 1987, p10). Cattle were sacrificed ceremoniously and not slaughtered merely for their meat. The next born child would preserve the memory of the sacrificed beast in name. Cattle were considered gifts, given into human care and not to be numbered by ownership.

The Significance of Cattle in Dinka Thought and Language

Dinka thought and contemplation about the cow permeated their way of life and language. According to Leinhardt (1987) the Dinka language included an extensive metaphorical cattle vocabulary linked to cattle colours and included all colours except for the colour green. Lienhardt (1987) also maintained that if the Dinka cattle colour vocabulary were taken away, then their language would be bereft of ways to visually describe experiences that relied on colour, light and darkness. Thus descriptions of objects and people were recognized according to gender characteristics and colour configurations pertaining to their cattle. The following example is one of very many words like this, and demonstrates Dinka thought in relation to their social structure and concept of divinity, among other things:

> For a black and white ox of the *majok* configuration: 'marking of the creator' *(bung aciek)*, based upon association between Divinity, and white and black, later described; *wel jok,* 'exchange *jok*' after a custom of the Dinka by which the elder brother has first claim on bulls of this configuration in exchange for some other; '*jok* ivory armlet' *(jok apyok)*, emphasizing the whiteness of the white parts in contrast to the black; 'sacred ibis' *(arumjok),* after the black and white markings on the bird; 'spoiler of marriage' *(arec ruai)*, because this is one of the most valued configurations and people want it among marriage cattle, but the owners do not wish to part with it; 'flour' *(abik)*, the reference being to the whiteness of flour spread out to dry against the dark earth. (Lienhardt, 1987, p. 14)

Lienhardt (1987) contended that the Dinka's perception of colour in relation to cattle and the metaphorical associations they attributed to their experiences referred to a colour symbology highlighting their religious thought and practice.

Further to this, men would take on a metaphorical ox name that would be given in praise, and which highlighted the individual's esteem by the community. The identification further connoted commonality between the men and their cattle. Men took pleasure in singing about and imitating certain postures of their cattle. For example, Dinka herdsmen thought it graceful to emulate the flowing curved horns of display-oxen by bending the left arm, or both, in dance. Poetic originality in relation to metaphorical language that could be used to imagine and describe a cow or cattle in the experience of the Dinka life was the measure of a man's intelligence (Lienhardt, 1987). Dinka language metaphorically engaged their desire and will to elaborate the importance of cattle and they honoured its memory through the reception of its perfect victimhood.

Spiritual and Religious Characteristics of the Dinka

In the spiritual and religious tradition of the Dinka the following precepts were understood. The Dinka religion, known as nhialic religion, literally meant that it related to "the sky" or "in the above". Prayer and sacrifice were offered to a "creator" (*aciek*) or "my father" (*wa*). These forms of nhialic address translated easily to the English word for God, although the Dinka understanding of this being was applied variously in their language. The Dinka sense of the word, God, may mean a 'Being' or 'Supreme Being', and also an activity summing up differing activities or multiplicity of beings. In a sense God was viewed as 'One' but also as 'One' materializing as many 'Powers' (*yeeth*), for example, through attributes of different family clans or animals. Dinka spirituality and religiosity traditionally presented itself through phenomenological experiences and interpretation of signs of ultra-human activity (Lienhardt, 1987).

The spear-masters were the priestly clan whose mythology supported their existence and underpinned the religious and political societal framework of the Dinka. These were men believed to have the power of prophesising and were also considered to be the political source of power within a tribe. They presided over the many ceremonies and ritual sacrifices in the presence of their tribe, and provided prayer and invocation as required for such things as the return of lost relatives, aiding in healing of illness, burying of the dead and restoring goodwill to quarrelling members of family or tribe. Cattle, goats, sheep and other animals would also be sacrificed on different occasions. At times the members of the tribe would join in chant and song during these ceremonies. Spear-masters were also expected to be excellent orators at meetings, as well as speak with wisdom and authority in matters that concerned the welfare of individuals, families and the whole tribe (Lienhardt, 1987). This background of traditional Dinka religion acknowledged they believed in a divine creator who was mediated to them through many beings, that they prayed together in ceremony and sacrifice, that they joined in chant and song on such occasions, and that the spear-masters mediated the realm of the spiritual and real worlds for the tribe. These beliefs and practices took place in the presence of Christian missionary activity and the evangelisation that happened as a consequence, laid the foundation for the dichotomy that existed between the Islamic north and Christian south of Sudan.

The Christian Missions

Christian missionary activity had a presence in southern Sudan by the turn of the nineteenth century. The missionary work of the Verona Fathers Knoblecher and Comboni in the mid to late 1800s led to the establishment of Catholic mission stations, schools, a seminary and a Catholic cathedral in Khartoum by the early 1900s. Father Daniel Deng Farim Sorour was the first ordained Dinka priest in Sudan in 1885. Notable also was Caterina Zenab baptised in 1860. She assisted the Verona Fathers at the time in translating biblical texts into Dinka and became instrumental in evangelising Dinka slaves and ex-slaves in Khartoum. The Anglican

and Presbyterian churches were also active in southern Sudan in the early 1900s, providing mission stations and education for girls and boys. The Anglican Church Missionary Society founded its first station among the Bor Dinka at that time (Nikkel, 1992). In 1905 a code of official missionary regulations was issued and it was responsible for dividing the southern provinces into denominational spheres. The Catholics were to have their missionary activities curtailed as a result of this ruling (Sundkler and Steed, 2001).

In summary, there were three main characteristics of Christian missionary activity that affected religious practice among the Dinka in the twentieth century. Catholic and Protestant Churches had initially established Christianity in the south and their spheres of influence were later regulated according to an official prescribed code, which permitted each denomination to operate only in designated areas of certain provinces. This explains, in part, how different clans of the same tribe may have come to adhere to different Christian religions. The spread of Dinka converts to Catholicism in Khartoum was the result of the evangelist activity of prominent Catholic religious missionaries and African lay people, and their efforts burgeoned into a faithful following.

Sudan in Crisis and Conflict

The relationships the Dinka people experienced in community with one another and with their land and livestock in the traditional sense were disrupted in recent times by a series of civil wars. In these wars the people of southern Sudan fought for an independent south with a separate autonomous government.

The history of civil wars in Sudan spanned several decades and it destabilized the country and its people, as previously noted. The first civil war (1958-1972) in Sudan's recent history lasted for sixteen years and saw thousands killed with 700,000 Sudanese internally displaced and a further 200,000 who became refugees. A signed peace agreement ended that civil war and gave regional autonomy to southern Sudan. Between 1973 and 1979 market prices for oil increased and prices for cotton decreased. This had a devastating effect on

Sudan's economy and the International Monetary Fund was called in to help Sudan alleviate its debt. The ensuing hardships on the northern Sudanese population helped empower Muslim fundamentalists to take control in government, concurrent with dissatisfaction that grew in southern Sudan's government. The stage was then set for more civil unrest and by 1983 the *Sudanese People's Liberation Army* (SPLA) vied for southern Sudan's independence. *Shari'a* (Islamic law) was unilaterally introduced in the whole country in that same year and unrest turned to conflict, as the majority of the south's population were not Muslim. Between 1984 and 1989 the country and its people were overcome by drought, famine, food price increases, a change of government, abolition of shari'a law, imposed starvation by SPLA, and a worsening civil war, which led to a *coup d'état* in 1989. From 1990 further famine ensued, and guerrilla infighting in the south led to 5,000 dead in a town called Bor. Shari'a law was introduced once again and 400,000 people were displaced from shanty towns and taken to the desert without food, water or shelter. In 1993 the famine in southern Sudan worsened and over 400,000 people fled to neighbouring countries with 4 million people internally displaced. The mayhem continued as the government proceeded to bomb the camps where the displaced had been exiled (Rutter, 1996). In 1989 Brigadier General Omar Hassen al-Bashir assumed power in a bloodless coup and in 1993 he appointed himself president of the country. Under his rule the army mounted offensives against rebels who persisted with brief intermittent ceasefires allowing for distribution of food to famine victims. Bashir's parliament dissolved in 2000 and the *National Congress Party* (NCP) secured control, only to be ousted by Bashir once again in December of the same year. From 2002, Bashir's government and John Garang's southern rebels began attempts towards peace. Government and southern rebel groups signed the *Machakos Protocol* (MP) in July 2002. This draft treaty was important because in it the government agreed not to make southerners subject to Islamic law and by October 2002 a truce for peace was signed.

Early in 2003 unrest between the Muslim Africans in Darfur and the Muslim Arabs of the north broke out into fierce fighting. Government allied militias in Darfur attacked these African Sudanese, killing 200,000 and displacing 2 million people. The international community levelled accusations of ethnic cleansing at the government, and in July 2004 Bashir promised to disarm the militia, but did not succeed. The rebel group *Janjaweed* continued their brutal attacks creating a serious humanitarian crisis. In 2007 the *United Nations Security Council* (UNSC) sent peacekeeping forces to Darfur along with African Union peacekeepers (Barker, 2008). There have been reports (Oxfam America, 2009) that approximately fourteen thousand troops were not enough to make peace possible. This fighting involved the issue of ethnicity and was separate from socio-political and religious issues, which were responsible for the civil wars in southern Sudan.

In 2005 a peace agreement was signed between northern and southern Sudan and this brought to a close a twenty-one year civil war. However the conflict in Darfur has not been resolved and the mediation process continues as cessation of hostilities were conditional (*Reuters*, 2009, August 1). Thus it is true to say that a litany of insidious calamities, uneasy alliances, government unrest and human abuses has dogged this country and its people. Many Sudanese became refugees in neighbouring African countries where conditions were inhospitable and oftentimes dangerous. Those seeking refuge in Khartoum were marginalised and disenfranchised.

The Second Civil War: First Host Countries and Places of Refuge for the Dinka

It is difficult to know exactly the environment and background for every Dinka child who participated in this study, but an awareness of the various experiences that they may have encountered as refugees is important. The experience of war has brought trauma, dislocation and suffering for these children and the places they may have sought refuge en route to

Australia, warrant some explanation. These places included Khartoum, Cairo, the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya and other isolated refugee camps in Uganda.

The progression of the second civil war, famine and the inter-ethnic conflicts saw an influx of Dinka migration to Khartoum. The south Sudanese were considered migrants in their own country and under the *Passport and Permits Ordinance* of 1922; it was a punishable offence for natives from southern provinces to travel to Darfur or other central or northern provinces.   The population of urban areas in Khartoum increased from 1.34 million people in 1983, to 4 million persons by 1989 and there were claims that up to 75,000 Dinka were among the 1.5 million displaced south Sudanese to arrive in Khartoum in mid-August 1989 (Yath, 1991). No exact figures are known but many of the arrivals were unskilled workers. Housing needed to accommodate this influx of refugees was grossly inadequate with many shantytowns emerging in metropolitan areas of Khartoum. Shelters comprised houses, apartments in multi-storey buildings that were incomplete, and makeshift shelters in squatter settlements. Most of these places lacked running water, sanitary facilities and electricity. Poorly made houses collapsed in torrential rain, and at times the government forcefully removed the migrants from the squatter settlements. These people were dispossessed and suffered from abject poverty. There was official intolerance of their physical presence in places where they sought refuge, and there was little recourse for them to overcome their economic exigencies (Yath, 1991).

The Dinka refugees in Egypt encountered different circumstances from those in Khartoum, however they shared some commonality of experience. Firstly, no accurate number of Sudanese in Egypt had been compiled. The Sudanese refugees to Egypt, especially those from the south of Sudan were refused legal immigrant status owing to the inability of the *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (UNHCR) to process claims. In December 2000 the UNHCR accepted 2,833 Sudanese and had 10,000 remaining to be interviewed. A total of 15,000 had been rejected over the course of the previous three years

(Sperl, 2001). Those denied registration as legal migrants remained in Cairo as illegal aliens. These people suffered enormously. Without government recognition these mainly African Sudanese were on the receiving end of hostile racist attacks from local Egyptians (Johnson, 2002) and police round-ups (Human Rights Watch, 2003). Further to this, government policy limited Sudanese legal rights in Egypt and disallowed them from working legally. The majority were faced with destitution. Inter-ethnic conflict involving the massacring of Dinka and Nuer tribal- based factions in Sudan predominated in 1991, and this politicized the relations of Sudanese communities in Egypt. There were battles between the two ethnic groups in the streets of Cairo during 1991 (Moro, 2004). Student supporters of opposing factions in this conflict in Egypt created unrest, and the police closed their clubs and organizations. In 1991 students studying in Egypt were ordered by the Sudanese government to complete their studies in Sudan. To add to this, poor relations existed between the African southern and Arab northern Sudanese and the tensions created by all these ethnic groups resulted in violent conflict at times. The Sudanese refugees who lived in Egypt were a politically charged and ethnically diverse group.

There are many refugee camps in Sudan and in neighbouring countries where Dinka could have sought refuge during the second civil war in Sudan. The experience of those who lived in the refugee camps of Kakuma in Kenya and some other camps in the northern parts of Uganda will serve as an example of their common plight. Dinka refugees in these places experienced similar acts of alienation and degradation as those in urban squats. In the 1990s approximately 250,000 Sudanese refugees settled in Uganda. Humanitarian assistance was provided by United Nations (UN) agencies. The experience of Sudanese in Ugandan refugee camps situated in the northern parts of the country was one of isolation. The *Lord's Resistance Army* (LRA) was active in many of these camps and the refugees became targets because of their vulnerability. In 1996, 106 refugees were killed by the LRA. This politically hostile group was responsible for the indiscriminate killing of many refugees (Moro, 2004).

The isolation and remoteness of these camps exacerbated the perilous living conditions of Sudanese refugees at that time. These camps were unsafe places.

Kakuma is located in a desolate, extremely hot, scorpion-infested desert in the northwestern region of Kenya. A confinement camp in operation since 1992, it originally catered for the influx of refugees from southern Sudan. Once registered, refugees were not permitted to leave without authority. Population numbers have varied in the camp but a census conducted in 2002 found a combined population of about 220,000 refugees in Kakuma and Dadaab camps, in Kenya (Parker, 2002). During the 1990s and early 2000 refugees in Kakuma suffered from malnutrition. There was also a high risk of sexual violence against women and girls, and daily incidences of attack involving serious injury and death (Crisp, 1999). The SPLA had influenced the camp governance at the time and destabilized its security, especially for the Dinka. Violence and riots occurred and

> crime involving banditry, property destruction and violent clashes between the local population and refugees were common (Parker, 2002, p. 129).

Overall the Sudanese in Kukuma suffered from the effects of the natural elements such as drought, flood and dust storms and also from the ravages of poor sanitation and disease. The living conditions of these camps were indicative of the violence and suffering its people had to endure.

Accommodating Change

Severe political, economic and educational problems caused by decades of civil war, chronic political instability and adverse weather have made life in Sudan insecure and unsustainable. Military dictatorships favouring an Islamic-oriented government have dominated national politics since 1956 and a civil war has embroiled the Muslim majority of the north and the non-Muslim African rebels in the south. This has divided the nation. Recent economic initiatives in Sudan have helped turn around a flailing economy for the better through oil production and export sales, but southern Sudan relies primarily on agriculture and rain-fed

farming, and this has made it susceptible to drought. The population in the south has suffered

greatly due to drought and famine and this further beleaguers a poor people (Hillier, 2002).

Education in Sudan followed a strict Islamic model and was conducted in Arabic,

marginalizing the learning opportunities of Christian Dinka-speaking people of the south.

Civil war left two generations of southern Sudanese children without proper education, and

this fact has spurred a consciousness that hope for a better way in the south lay in Dinka

Christian learning elsewhere. Displacement from the Dinka homeland has introduced the

learning of languages such as Arabic and English among its adults and children. These

occurrences have complicated the maintenance of their cultural heritage and language,

especially among their young. War, dislocation and trauma also brought a new spiritual

awareness for many Dinka as they recognized the failure of the animist gods to preserve

Dinka people and their cattle. In the words of David Stancliffe, Bishop of Salisbury,

> A great bonfire of the *jok*, the traditional idols, accompanied a wholesale
> conversion to the new faith, and Isaiah's language of rescue and redemption
> coupled with an Old Testament theology of the land seemed to fit their context
> exactly. (Stancliffe, 2008, p.40)

The bishop's reference to the Dinka people's faith conversion linked their traditional beliefs

in cattle to a new understanding of redemption, and their experience of war and the

disintegration of their previous way of life to a realisation for change. The Dinka have had to

accommodate many changes. Their experiences of challenge have brought changes in

spirituality, religious practice, education and learning as well as ethnic language acquisition.

Their traditional culture and ways of praying, thinking and acting within community and

society have been challenged to change.

Humanitarian Refugees

In an Australian Government report on refugees and humanitarian issues (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011, p. 7) the following was understood to be the common experiences of refugees:

> Common experiences for refugees include seeing homes and communities destroyed and spending years living in refugee camps or in volatile urban situations. Mobility and opportunities for employment are limited, and displaced people often do not have access to health or education services. Many have been subjected to rape and torture, witnessed friends and family murdered or been separated from family when fleeing their homes. These experiences are impossible to forget…

Australia's humanitarian programme included an offshore resettlement component, which catered for people overseas who were in the greatest need of humanitarian assistance, and from 1998 to 2010 people from the Africa region have remained a priority region for resettlement into Australia. This region included the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Percentages and figures given for government humanitarian programmes relating to the African region include these countries unless otherwise stated.

Figures from 1998 to 2010 representing the proportion of resettlement programme grants indicated that the refugees from the Africa region accounted for approximately 20 per cent for the years 1998 to 2001 for visas granted under the *Offshore Humanitarian Programme* (OHP). From 2001 to 2007 the majority of refugees granted visas to Australia were from the Africa region, with the 2003 to 2005 period representing over 70 per cent of visas granted for that group. In the 2007 to 2010 period the Africa region accounted for approximately 30 per cent of visas under the resettlement programme (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011). In October 2007, Kevin Andrews, the then Minister for Immigration, stated that approximately 28,600 African refugees were accepted into Australia for humanitarian reasons between 1996 to 2007 inclusive (Farouque, Petrie, & Miletic. (2007), p. 2).

A 'Women at Risk' refugee subclass was recognised by the *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (UNHCR). It designated women and their dependents " living outside their country without protection of a male and [were] in danger of victimisation, harassment or serious abuse because of their gender" (Department of Immigration & Citizenship, 2011, p. 36) could be granted special consideration for a visa. For the years 2002 to 2004 inclusive, women and their dependents from Sudan represented a significant proportion of those granted this consideration for resettlement in Australia.

Most refugees from Sudan were granted entry to Australia via a 202 visa. This meant that they funded their passage, and were given rights to live in Australia. Some others were selected to enter via a 200 visa, which was a special humanitarian visa providing them passage and resettlement entitlements at the expense of the Australian government. The emigration of the south Sudanese to Australia began in 1982/83 and they settled in the Melbourne areas of Greater Dandenong, Moonee Valley, Monash and Maribyrnong. Other areas attracting Sudanese settlers were Manningham, Melbourne, Brimbank and Kingston. Initially, two thirds of the refugee intake was young, single men and they came to Australia under the government's *Special Humanitarian Programme* (SHP), which gave priority to those who had suffered substantial discrimination and gross violation. Since then the focus has been placed on family reunion schemes, women at risk and supporting family sponsor programmes (Guilfoyle, 2002).

<p align="center">The Research Purpose</p>

The purpose of the research was to explore the nature of Dinka religiosity and spirituality in relation to the presence of Dinka children and adolescents in Catholic schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria. It also sought to explore the impact of the presence of these children and adolescents in the Catholic schools that they attended, and on the religious education curricula of these schools.

Spirituality

For this research, the term spirituality encompassed several perspectives where the spirit, as opposed to matter, concerned the sacred and religious, and where the soul characterised a refined sensitivity (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1999). The properties of matter having physical presence in the material world related tangibility. The spirit associated with the nonphysical part of a person manifested the soul. The soul according to the Old Testament comes from God, the *nephesh*, Hebrew for "breath of life" (Collins and Farrugia, 2000). St Augustine (354-430 CE) perceived that truth was sourced from the soul, from within the person, and noted that the exploration of this inner-space made known at an emotional level what was to be valued (Wright, 2000). The sacred pertained to reverencing what was valued and in a religious sense the connection was also made to God. The sensitivity of the soul, that was open to the mystery of life searched for meaning and purpose of human existence. Spirituality then was conceived as the search for ultimate meaning in the context of what was sacred and, or religious, through the development of self-awareness and the exploration of one's private inner-space.

In the past conventional meanings of spirituality have been understood in terms of the 'interior life' of the person given to a life of prayer and spiritual exercises, but

> …the term has broadened to connote the whole of the life of faith and even the
> life of the person as a whole, including its bodily, psychological, social and
> political dimensions (Schneiders, 1989 p. 679).

Spirituality once viewed as devotional practices in institutional places of worship now encompassed the meaning of life in terms of human and social functions where sacredness was sourced from relationship and connections that encapsulated the realities of self, others, the world and at times the holy. The meanings of these connections could be sourced from 'visible human' and 'invisible divine' action (Tacey, 2003). Spirituality sourced from the visible human domain connected life experiences to the meaning, purpose and truth of human existence. Expressions from children's spirituality denoted terms such as 'spiritual questing'

(Hyde, 2005a) and 'relational consciousness' (Hay and Nye, 2006) to describe heightened

spiritual relationships in children where 'good' was demonstratively sought and valued.

Spirituality in the invisible divine domain realised the presence of the spirit as a source of

energy for the sensitivities of the soul. The spirit as a source of energy also connected the

human person to the sacred where the common good was valued over the pursuit of

individualism. Religious elements associated with spirituality, such as prayer and ritual,

animated the human spirit and inculcated the mystery of sacred 'otherness' (Tacey, 2003).

This divine sacred otherness has sometimes been named God. Thus, spirituality may be

understood as the experience of sensitivity to the mystery of the world and a spiritual concern

for self-awareness in this mystery (Wright, 2000), where the presence of the spirit has

animated the soul in search of the sacred (Tacey, 2003).

Spiritual Sensitivities

There were various areas of spiritual sensitivity that were pertinent to this research. They

offered psychological and theological understandings concerning life experiences as a modem

for accessing personal spirituality. These were represented in the following schools of

thought: -

1) Spirituality and the emotional responsiveness to valuing life (Donaldson, 1992);

    the *'death of ego'* and *'liberation of desire'* (Moore. 1989); and the *'human*

    fragment' and respect for the sacred (Tacey 2003)

2) Spirituality and positive, mature relationship to God (de Vries-Schot et el., 2008);

    negative spirituality harnessed by salutogenic or pathogenic forces (Antonovsky,

    1999); and spiritual well-being (Fisher, 2009)

From a psychological perspective Donaldson (1992) contended that value sensing

encouraged an emotional responsiveness that valued life. Theologically Moore (1989)

attributed the *death of ego* as significant to liberating the want, created by desire. Both value

sensing and death of ego spoke about an individual's potential and capacity to override

behaviours of self-interest in pursuit of altruism. How a person's self-image directed one's values in life, and how personal desire inflamed the imagination to act, involved a moral rigour, in the first instance that respected altruistic behaviours, and in the second instance, adhered to the model of love and teachings of Jesus Christ. Spiritual sensitivities heightened by a sense of altruism respected the sacred and not the *'human fragment'* Tacey (2003). The human fragment referred to the disproportionate valuing of personal freedom and individuality over the need for people to engage in the mystery and true meaning and purpose of life, which called for community and the stewardship of the environment. "Emphasis on the part, the fragment, can only bring selfishness, greed, immorality and exploitation, the very things that destroy civilisations…" (Tacey, 2003, p. 217). What was called into question here was the detrimental effect that the privileged human fragment had over the sacred whole, which brought with it the estrangement from the mystery of spiritual guidance and the common good. The valuing of the common good, in overriding human fragment, considered the needs of the community and environment before the wants of the individual. The spiritual sensitivities of Donaldson (1992), Moore (1989) and Tacey (2003) highlighted understandings that promoted connections to an emotional responsiveness in valuing life for the common good. Moore (1989) and Tacey (2003) in particular informed about the mystery and spiritual guidance of the divine whole and the presence of the spirit that upheld the sacred. These notions are explained in the literature review. Their theories concerning spiritual sensitivity were relevant in terms of the Dinka children's personal experiences of war, and their evangelisation to Christianity, and provided insight for articulating the ways spirituality was manifested in the psyche and the soul.

Strong positive spirituality was marked by sincere concerns for relationship to oneself, others and God. Characteristically this spirituality was opened to higher values borne of a sense of inner freedom where trust in God pervaded one's life and responsibility for fellow humans and creation was unquestioningly accepted (de Vries-Schot, et el., 2008). In a model

given for spiritual health proposed by Fisher (2009) four domains pertaining to personal,

communal, environmental and transcendental components operate where the inputs of

knowledge and inspiration progressively synergised cognitive and affective information

within the person. These inputs relayed right relationship to self, others, nature and God

through self-awareness, in depth interpersonal relations, a connectedness to nature and faith

expression. An individual who rationalised and perceived life's meaning, culture, stewardship

and a transcendental other or God marked spiritual health. Alternatively when relationships

such as these were absent, a lack of wholeness or spiritual disease existed in the heart of the

person. This occurrence described a spiritual state of ill health (Fisher, 2009). Negative

forces promoting the destruction of the spirituality was also marked by disoriented

relationships to oneself, others and God; and pathogenic forces that brought about the

destruction of the spirit were characterised by aggressive behaviours and depression

(Antonovsky, 1987). These understandings were important for navigating spirituality in

relation to trauma, which encompassed the dimensions of the first aim of this research.

The Spirituality of Children and Adolescents

The spiritual experience of children and adolescents articulated ways they demonstrated their

connectedness to self, others and the world. Categories of children's spiritual sensitivities

(Hay & Nye, 1998) and frameworks for understanding children's (Champagne, 2001 & Hyde,

2008) and adolescent's (Kessler, 2000) connectedness are detailed in the literature review.

These contemporary understandings about the nature of young people's spirituality in general,

focused attention on their spiritual development, and in the context of war-affected Dinka

children and their Catholic education in Melbourne schools, certain understandings about

spirituality in education (de Souza, 2010) may also be examined.

Religiosity

A universal meaning for the term religiosity proved to be problematic. Various academic

disciplines have contributed to the study of religiosity in recent decades. Social sciences,

religious studies and theology each have articulated their terminology for the word religiosity. Examples of these were: diffused religion, mass religion, popular piety and popular Catholicism, and such terms have engendered ambiguity in the term religiosity (Zaccaria, 2010). Anglophone literature preferred the term 'popular religion' whilst Italian (*religiosita popolare*), German (*Volksvrommigkeit* or *Volksreligiositat*) and Spanish (*religiosidad popular*) favoured the term 'popular religiosity' (Panteghini, 1996). The term religiosity was applied in a practical theological sense in this research.

The complementariness of the theological approach for exploring religious beliefs of the Dinka young people and adults was apt because their Christian praxis in general demonstrated strong religious belief. In case studies one and three of this research the sampling foci were religiosity (see Table 3:1). In case study one, Church and Mass participation and the reasons for attendance were sought. Perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer were also sought; bearing in mind their pre migration religious learning was highlighted in their religious participation in refugee host countries. In case study three aspects of religiosity were sourced from adult Dinka perspectives on Church and Mass participation and religious education content and pedagogy for Dinka children and adolescents in refugee diaspora.

For this research the term religiosity was used to accentuate the subjective domain of people's religious experience. In particular it referred to people's attitudes, experiences and beliefs about God, Jesus, Church and prayer, and what they held sacred. In reference to the term religion, it was understood that their expression of religiosity was objectified as it partly adhered to a canonised system of rituals, cannons, theology and hierarchy et cetera (Zaccaria, 2010).

Three concepts from Schilderman's (2007) definition of religion characterised religious participation through *belonging, ritualising and believing.* Religious belonging referred to the parish community and other social networking bodies such as the broader

Catholic community, associations and movements where participation expressed beliefs and religious practices. Groups such as Legion of Mary and Dinka catechist classes for adults and children reinforced belonging through religious devotion and learning. Ritualising characterised religious practices where people related to God or the divine, (Rizzi, 1977) for example in Sunday Mass. Other examples of ritualising were noted in devotions directed to saints and the Virgin Mary. Celebratory religious singing and dancing marked an African propensity for spiritual delight and likened to prayer (O'Hanlon, 1991). The veneration of sacred images evidenced in genuflecting, making the Sign of the Cross and in the display of religious symbols in the home also defined aspects of ritualising. Religious beliefs accounted for what people thought about a religious object or topic, for example, the mental image of God as 'good' or Jesus as the Son of God. Beliefs such as these represented evaluative information about a religious topic (Zaccaria, 2010).

Religiosity taken in these contexts was understood as the religious experience of Dinka people guided by a recently taught Christian religion. This notion of religiosity related especially to the Dinka children's and adolescents' religious experiences. The religiosity of Dinka parents and adults that referred possible previous remnant religious experiences from their traditional and cultural past, was understood in terms of their acceptance of a changing meaning system (Silberman, 2005) that centred on a shift from reverencing cattle and oxen, to receiving redemption through Jesus Christ. While this research accepted that beliefs and rituals concerning cattle and oxen have remained in the psyche of the Dinka people, it was accepted that the sense of belonging to Christianity and the Church influenced their religious participation and practices in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

The methodological and systematic study of the religious beliefs and practice of the war affected Dinka adults and young people pre and post migration to and in Australia was considered important for comparing their religious participation with the children and adolescents not affected by war. Dinka children's and adolescents' interpretation of religious

symbols and perception of God, Jesus, Church and prayer highlighted aspects of belonging, ritualising and believing. Analysing the thoughts and beliefs of these young people from their personal theological perspective aimed at facilitating understanding among syllabus and curriculum planners, teachers and principals involved in Catholic education. Similarly Zaccaria (2010) explored the participation and beliefs in popular religiosity among Italian Catholics and focused enquiry into their beliefs about God, Jesus, Church and suffering. An empirical theological approach was used to gain a hermeneutic of communicative praxis of contemporary Christian communities. In both research projects the beliefs chosen for study represented dimensions of religiosity that engaged scholarly research and debate.

Spirituality and Religiosity

The relationship between spirituality and religiosity described here is symbiotic. These two concepts expressed a union of companionship and their conceptual meanings were not interchangeable. They were separate entities, because the sensitivity of the soul discerned the sacred in the meaning of life, and the human and social functions that were connected, engaged the life of the person in community. It was here where the union could be situated

> The art of community is the art of the soul, and community is what happens
> when deep meanings are communicated between people, especially in the act
> of public ritual and in the presence of the sacred (Tacey, 2003, p. 217).

The sharing of deep invisible bonds and meanings in the act of public religious ritual then, spoke about the nature of sacrament and the reverencing of what was to be considered holy. What was deeply valued in the heart and soul of the individual when shared, bound people together in community. Tacey (2003) conceded that this sense of community was not a rational activity, and also inferred that shared religious participation consolidated in ritual was nourished by forces deeper than the rational. The deep invisible bonds within community nurtured the connectedness that the spiritual being had engaged in.

The notion of connectedness in spirituality referred to a relational sense of being. Deep connection to self, others and the world assisted in the development of self-knowledge and facilitated a sense of place in a person's social order. The dynamics of this connection relayed meaning of lived experiences and provided a sense of purpose (Hyde, 2008 and de Souza, 2010). Spirituality reckoned from lived experiences and connected relationship to self, others and the world, highlighted the visible and human side of spirituality where the presence of the spirit connected the individual to the sacred. Connectedness to the invisible and divine was realised in the presence of the spirit and in the union with what was visible and human.

> … all connectedness, invisible and visible human and divine, is based on the spirit and is realised in the presence of the spirit (Tacey, 2003, p. 218).

In the presence of the spirit the connection to the visible and invisible, the human and divine generated a collected meaning of life in faith. The community animated a sense of belonging, ritual and belief. The connections to the sacred were externalised here and transmitted in and through religious participation. The presence of the sacred animated the spiritual and the religious, and their bond cultivated deep meanings for the purpose of life. There is no conflation in meaning between spirituality and religiosity. The relational sense of being that characterised the spiritual person's connectedness to self, others and the world sourced strength in community from the invisible bonds of connection in prayer and ritual to the sacred.

The Research Aims

Firstly, this research sought to discover dimensions of the Dinka children's and adolescents' spirituality, especially the extent to which this reflected their traumatic experiences. The research question arising from this aim was: -

> In what ways have the Dinka children and adolescents' life experiences, including the hardship of war and suffering, affected their spirituality?

Secondly, this research sought to discover the dimensions of the Dinka children and adolescents' religiosity in relation to God, Jesus, Church and prayer. Questions arising from this aim were: -

How do Dinka children and adolescents perceive God, Jesus, Church and prayer?

How have Dinka children and adolescents come to know about God, Jesus, Church and prayer in their country of origin and in Australia?

Thirdly, the research sought to identify incongruities between Dinka children and adolescents' traumatic experiences and Catholic religious education assumptions in their schools. The research question arising from this aim was: -

What are the implications of these incongruities for future inclusive Catholic religious education, faith development practice and liturgy in Catholic Schools?

Information about the Schools

Primary and secondary schools in the western suburbs were used as sites for gathering some of the data for this study. The Catholic secondary college in the area is called Catholic Regional College and consists of five campuses including St Albans, Melton, North Keilor, Sydenham, and Caroline Springs. There were approximately 2,750 students in years seven to twelve at the time data was collected. The St Albans campus catered for the majority of the Sudanese new arrivals, and the Sydenham campus was designated for years eleven and twelve. In 2008 there were 40 students from Sudan and in 2009 there were 55 at the St Albans campus.

Holy Eucharist Primary School is situated in the Melbourne suburb of St Albans South and had approximately 605 students at the time data was collected. In 2008 there were 45 students from Sudan who attended the school. The school had three streams from preparatory to grade six and the staff numbered approximately 40. There was a large cultural mix of ethnic backgrounds and languages. There were 445 families speaking 19 languages with 86 per cent of children at the school coming from non- English speaking backgrounds. Fifty-one

per cent of the students spoke Vietnamese and they make up the largest ethnic background in the school. There were 15 per cent of students who were born overseas and seven per cent were new arrivals.

Socio-economically, the families and children of the school reflected a low-income background with parents having minimal secondary school education. Seventy-nine per cent of parents had schooling to year ten or below, which afforded little or no opportunity for them to attain professional work. It was also estimated that 36 per cent were single parent families. Fee assistance from the government's Education Maintenance Allowance was granted to 60 per cent of families, and a further 15 per cent received fee assistance from the school. Thirty-six per cent of parents are unemployed. Of those who did work, 37 per cent were employed as labourers and related workers, and 15 per cent were employed as sales and service staff. Eighty-eight per cent of parents in the school were unemployed or employed in jobs of very low income. The information for these statistics was collected from the 2005 school census.

Edmund Rice Centre

Edmund Rice Refugee Services (ERRS) operated at the Edmund Rice Centre, St Albans/Sunshine. Since it began in 2001, it has been managed and run by the Christian Brothers, St Patrick's Province, Australia. From 1st October 2007, the auspicing body was Christian Brothers Oceania, based in Brisbane (Edmund Rice Refugee Services Report 2007, unpublished). The researcher was a member of the Board.

The Edmund Rice Centre was an outreach for refugee and migrant youth and their families and it also provided educational, social and cultural support to all youth. It was inclusive of all people. In 2007, 329 students attended the centre and the majority were from Dinka origin. Twenty-seven students came from other countries, predominantly Ethiopia, Vietnam and Burundi. The centre provided free homework help and tuition to refugees and encouraged the students to further education. It catered for students from primary to tertiary levels. Volunteer tutors came from over twenty secondary schools, and also included the

Christian Brothers, retired people, university students, people in the workforce and Sudanese students who helped younger students.

The centre has close working relationships with other agencies including Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning, Refugee Unaccompanied Minors program and Migrant Resource Centre Northwest. It also networked with groups such as Western ESL Transitions Group, Homework Help Network, Refugees' Education Partnership Program and Brimbank Youth Link. The Edmund Rice Centre and its network, along with its many affiliations, provided a valuable resource for this research.

<div align="center">The Researcher's Interest in This Area</div>

For many years the researcher had studied theology part-time and had been working with refugees, teaching new arrivals in Australian schools to listen, speak, read and write English. Teaching literacy skills and utilizing a language experience approach broadened the researcher's perspective of the Dinka young people's every day experiences of their recent past, and an interest in their spiritual wellbeing took hold. It was observed that much of their experience of their journey and survival related to the spiritual life they lived in community with one another in their country of origin. The children seemed to demonstrate a strong sense of 'connectedness' as they related to others, and in the way they operated within parish community life. These young people were Dinka and they came from Sudan. They involved themselves in prayer, liturgy and the evangelising of their own people. They attended Mass and some who had been baptised were becoming confirmed Catholics through their involvement in the Church. As a Christian people coming to resettle in a new country, their spiritual and religious life was in full display within the school community.

The opportunity presented itself to explore the dynamic of the Dinka congregation and in particular, their children and adolescents, who had come to know about Jesus Christ. Questions about their cultural expression of Christianity arose in relation to how Dinka children were receiving a Catholic religious education in their parish or secondary school,

given the context of their previous traumatic life. They appeared to be prayerful people and their apparent resilience attested a spirituality and religious practice that was not necessarily understood or fully known in the context of their new religious environment. These occurrences raised several questions, which are now outlined.

<center>The Research Problem</center>

Since 1996 approximately 29,000 African refugees have been granted resettlement in Australia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics had also indicated that from 2003, 15,000 of these refugees have come from the Sudan. They had fled the crisis and conflict created from decades of civil war and chronic political instability. Many have settled in Melbourne though exact numbers were unknown as *Australian Bureau of Statistics* (ABS) figures had not been released. The Dinka tribe, in particular, have been congregating in Christian Churches, seeking community and learning in Catholic parishes and schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Initially the experience of many of the young arrivals was that they had been on a plane one day and sent to school the next, and prior to this, in many cases their experience had been one of dislocation, terror and trauma.

Dinka refugee numbers have plateaued. Government directives indicated that the intake of African refugees have declined from 70 per cent of the 13 thousand refugee quota in 2004 and 2005, to 30 per cent of the same quota in 2007. Initially, one of the reasons cited in the media for this drop was that African refugees and in particular the Sudanese, were failing to integrate into Australian society. Later counter-claims noted an improved situation in African conflict areas and successful UNHCR repatriation was responsible for the drop in refugees from this area (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). Claims that the Sudanese were not integrating apportioned blame to the Sudanese community and this research aimed to avoid this bias, to give voice to Sudanese immigrants, and to identify the issues and implications for Dinka young people and Catholic schools where they were educated.

The researcher's observation of these children identified some contradictory behaviour from one individual to another. Many of them appeared to be acclimatising to their new environment, and some others were not. Factors that suggested their positive spirituality were their sense of community and connectedness to Dinka parish life. At school, the visible signs of their spirituality were demonstrated in the children's ability to develop relationships of trust with adults and peers and their reverent understanding of Christ in story, prayer and responsibility and helpfulness to other Dinka students. Notable too was their wearing of religious decorations and Christian symbols.

There were also those who seemed disconnected, avoided relationships, were not trusting and were unable to play well by themselves or with others. These children also sought isolation in the classroom and the playground and their actions displayed doubt in work and play. They seemed uncomfortable about what they said and did and in brief they did not connect or relate well in the school community.

These observations begged some questions.

What was it about their specific behaviours that suggested spirituality?

What evidence was there that spirituality was a major factor in their behaviours?

Were their behaviours indicative of a spirituality that was unique to their experiences of trauma?

The researcher's observation of Dinka children's spiritual and religious behaviours led to concerns for the kinds of religious and faith education curricula offered to these young people in the light of their recent life experiences. There seemed to be incongruity between the Dinka student's life experiences, religious beliefs and practices and their religious education in Australia. The apparent vacuum created by the disparity in life experiences between the Dinka children and the general school population highlighted challenges for religious education curricula in which young people coming from traumatic experiences *en masse* were to be educated.

Therefore the research explored Dinka children's spirituality and religiosity in the context of their trauma and the implications these findings had for Catholic religious education. It also sought to understand the impact that the newly arrived Dinka children had on the Catholic schools they attended in Melbourne's western suburbs.

<div align="center">Research Problem Defined</div>

The Dinka children have come from an experience of dislocation, terror and trauma. Some of the young people's stories about their experiences may inform this premise. These personal stories were told to or written for the researcher. The experience of dislocation for one twelve-year-old girl who spoke of a brief settlement in a village and refugee camp was commonplace. She was able to recall violent raids where many were bashed, maimed, injured or killed. For the young girl telling this story, home was a word that she could not readily relate to because she had been constantly on the move for eight years. Her reflection on Australia as her new home led to comment that it was just another place she had come to. For another young girl terror was experienced at close range when witnessing the kidnapping of a playmate in a refugee camp. At the time she saw this happening she was extremely traumatized, and said that she was too frightened to leave her hut for fear of seeing the same thing happen again or of it happening to her. Also for many young Dinka children, trauma came through the experience of leaving family members behind. The constant worry of not knowing the whereabouts or wellbeing of family caused real pain and suffering. The separation felt by these young people was a source of real insecurity.

 Other experiences known to Dinka children included being orphaned, suffering prolonged illnesses, receiving severe beatings, experiencing shortages of food, clean water and having safe shelter. Travelling in constant danger, and living in fear of militia raids were also mentioned. In defining the research problem it is important to note that children's spirituality draws from their lived experience (Champagne, 2003), and what is known about how these particular experiences affect a child's spirituality is relatively unexplored.

Further to this, the Dinka have a particular expression of Catholicism that is different from Australian or western Catholicism. In referring specifically to the Dinka, Carney and Butler, (2005) noted that this tribe believed in a monotheistic supreme being, '*Nhialic*' and that Dinka religion was not focused on the afterlife. Importance was given to important stages of life with animal sacrifice to the spirits, which was then followed by feasting (Carney & Butler, 2005). Awareness of these aspects of Dinka spirituality required definition in the context of Catholic religious education. In regard to Dinka Christian religiosity, it was important to understand what they believed about God, Jesus, prayer and Church.

Overall, in defining the research problem explored in this thesis, there were two points of reference. The first was that the Dinka young people's experience of trauma was not comparable with that of other children in Australian Catholic schools. The second assumption was that the Dinka children's expression of Catholicism and quite probably their spiritual and religious development were different because their cultural background, life experiences and religious learning differed from other children. Since the Dinka students were in the classroom to learn, attention needed to be given to their unique spirituality and religiosity.

The aims of this research, mentioned previously, are reiterated in the following assumptions. Learning about the Dinka children's life experiences searches for the nature of their spirituality, and investigating their perceptions about God, Jesus, Church and prayer informs this research about their religiosity. The question about Dinka young people coming to know about God, Jesus, Church and prayer, inquires into the content of, and techniques used for their religious learning, as well as gaining insight into their religious practices. Implications arising from the incongruities revealed in the nature of their spirituality, religiosity and prior religious learning, raise questions about the future of inclusive Catholic religious education, faith development practice and liturgy in Catholic schools.

The term inclusive Catholic education means accounting for and including students of differing abilities, gender, ethnic groups, ages and backgrounds in accordance with the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act, 1992; the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Disability Standards for Education 2005.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One: Background

Chapter one provides information for this thesis and includes a history of the Dinka people in view of their traditional pastoral existence pre-1950s to their current state of diaspora, highlighting the suffering and dislocation brought about by the second civil war in Sudan. For the latter part of the twentieth century their traditional way of life changed dramatically, and they, as a people with once a homogenous culture, language and homeland, were now facing a new world in urban societies and refugee camps in foreign places. The material of this chapter provides background to an understanding of the Dinka children's current spirituality and religiosity in the context of their education in Catholic schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter two provides a literature review focusing on five key themes. The first theme analyses children's spiritual development in the context of the experiential mode of expression. The second theme explores psychological and theological perspectives that linked spiritual maturity to self-denial. Psychological understandings pertaining to *value sensing* (Donaldson, 1992), and theological thought (Moore, 1990) that connected the different stages of human ego to spiritual maturity, led to an understanding that particular experiences may predispose a child to have a heightened sense of spiritual consciousness which, in turn, guides positive relationships with self to others, creation and God. Thirdly, literature informing children's perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer are considered and provide the basis to view the Dinka child's influences and experiences that may also guide their perceptions.

The fourth theme of this review of literature involves the war experiences of children and its relationship to the prevalence and effects of trauma, namely *post traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD), as it applies to children in general. Finally literature on children's capacity for personal resiliency is reviewed in relation to spiritual growth in children.

Chapter Three: Research Design

Chapter three sets out the research design used to gather empirical data. The research methodology included a multisite/multicase study. Fifty-one participants from Catholic parishes, primary and secondary schools and two Edmund Rice homework tutoring centres, all situated in the western suburbs of Melbourne were interviewed. Interviews with the adults varied from semi-structured to open-ended. There were 13 adult participants comprised of two Dinka elders, four Dinka parents, one parish priest, two Christian Brothers, two Catholic school principals and two Catholic school teachers. Twenty-six Dinka children ranging in age from nine to 16 years, contributed to an open-ended questionnaire. Their responses were digitally recorded and also written down by the researcher. In particular, this questionnaire sought to explore Dinka children's perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer. Five Dinka children, aged between ten to 12 years old took part in a focus group discussion. This group was involved in a themed discussion on "journey", and it was followed by a drawing activity on the same topic. This session was recorded on audio and video equipment, and the children's pictures were collected for the study. In-depth interviews were also conducted with two Dinka adolescents. Questions for this interview were consistent with the parameters of Kessler's (2000) 'seven gateways to the soul of students', which related specifically to foci of spiritual meaning for adolescents. These methods utilized a qualitative approach and data was subject to content analysis.

Chapters Four to Seven: Analyses of Data

Chapters four to seven provide analyses of the data. Chapter four presents an analysis of the questionnaire exploring Dinka children's perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer and their reasons for these perceptions. Chapter five analyzes aspects of Dinka children's war and refugee experiences, identifying characteristics of trauma and its influence on their spirituality. Chapter six, analyses data gathered from interviews concerning resilience. Chapter seven discusses the war-affected Dinka children and adolescents, and the implications of their experiences for teaching religious education in Catholic schools.

Chapter Eight: Findings and Recommendations

Chapter eight presents findings in relation to the research aims of the study, and makes recommendations arising from the data gathered in pursuit of these aims. A summary of reviewed literature, the significance of the research, its limitations and topics for further research are presented. Personal key learnings about Dinka refugees, their culture and tradition, Dinka children and adolescents' spirituality and religiosity, and their Catholicity and Catholic religious education are also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review seeks to inform the following contention. Children are capable of

expressing themselves spiritually, and there are different ways to discuss this. Spiritual

models that centre on articulating the realities of children's experience are especially pertinent

when exploring the spirituality of children who have been influenced by the trauma of

suffering and war. The Dinka children refugees from the south of Sudan who go to Catholic

schools in Australia have been influenced by such traumas, and have realities which include

their African culture and personal experiences. From this it would follow that these children

have a particular worldview, and that their conscious awareness of whom and where they are

in the cosmos would influence their spirituality and religiosity, in contrast to those children

who have not been affected by similar circumstances.

Thus the following areas formed the basis for the review of literature. Literature on

children and adolescents' spirituality provided in frameworks and schemas (Hay & Nye,

1998; Champagne, 2001; Hyde, 2005a and Kessler, 2000) informed the *experiential* mode of

spiritual expression (Keating, 2000). Literature concerning young people's religious practice

(Rymarz, 2005) and their thoughts about God (Duffy, 2005), Jesus (Aylward, 2005), Church

(Dixon, 2005) and prayer (Mountain, 2005) provided a spiritual and religious landscape to

compare the Dinka children's perceptions in the same area. Research considerations such as

the Dinka worldview (Deng, 1972), the effects of war on children and adolescents (Machel,

2001), and resilient behaviours in young people (Anderson, 2004) offered a context to focus

the Dinka children's culture, tradition (Lienhardt, 1987) and personal experiences of war

(Yath, 1991; Moro, 2004; Johnson, 2002; Parker, 2002 and Crisp, 1991). The implications

arising from these considerations for teaching religious education in Catholic schools

highlighted issues of effective literacy based learning programmes for students from non-

literate backgrounds (Sangster, 2002, Oliver et al., 2009 and Dooley, 2009). A theoretical

examination of spirituality in education (Wright, 2000) highlighted contrasting spiritualities

between young people from Western cultural backgrounds (Eckersley, 2008 and Rossiter,

2010) and Dinka children and adolescents. Considering these, good practice interventions

(Matthews, 2008) accommodate refugee students affected by war.

<div align="center">Expressions of Spirituality in Children</div>

<div align="center">*Hay & Nye; Hyde; Mountain*</div>

Spirituality in children has been variously defined and may be characterised as an innate

aspect of human experience. The theories of Hay and Nye (2006), Hyde (2008) and Mountain

(2005) were important to this research because from their hermeneutic of phenomenology

they offered a way to study the spirituality of Dinka children. Given the trauma within their

lived experience, these children presented with personal realities that challenged the

boundaries of expression of spirituality in children per se.

Children's spiritual sensitivity has been demonstrated through *awareness sensing,*

mystery sensing and value sensing (Hay & Nye, 1998). Awareness sensing focused being

aware of one's awareness and noted in heightened aesthetic experiences. Mystery sensing

involved the awareness of what was to be known about the unknown, and this aspect of a

child's spirituality may be explored through their imagination, and enlivened via play, stories

or artwork for example. Value sensing sought responses that expressed the measure of what a

child valued delivered through their heart-felt feelings like those of delight or despair,

goodness and its meaning (Hay & Nye, 1998). These ways of sensing promoted relationship

with humanity and the environment.

Hay and Nye (2006) coined the term relational consciousness to express an important

feature of spirituality. It described the intrinsic relationship that existed between the self,

community and world in seeking and valuing what was good. They contended that spirituality

was an awareness of self in relationship with the rest of reality, and maintained that the

welfare of all relied on it. Relational consciousness in children then was said to be mediated

through the reality of their lived experiences which initially focus on awareness of self, the

world in which they lived, their thoughts of wonder and ultimately the measure of truth

demonstrated by what they valued.

There was a connection too, between the child's cognition and their spirituality. What

they knew about life and who they were was expressed through relationship with self, others

and the world. Four aspects of Hyde's (2008) research encompassed the ways children

demonstrated what they knew in relation to how they expressed themselves. The *felt sense,*

described as a characteristic of children's spirituality involved the child by their sourcing

knowledge through bodily activity. The ontological awareness assumed in being physically

involved derived connectedness to the particular activity. The notion *of integrated awareness*

described an evolving of consciousness, in so far as what was felt and became known in a

collective activity, scaffolding as it were a free-flowing conversation, from which a new wave

of consciousness emerged. The term *weaving the threads of meaning* involved children

making connections between their ontological experiences and their sense of wonder.

Meaningful connections depthing self, others, the world and in some instances God, were

sustained through this thought process. Spiritual questing affirmed altruistic thoughts and

actions of empathy and compassion. In this mode, children sought knowledge about what was

important for life and living. Comparatively speaking, the visceral dimensions of Hay and

Nye's (1998) spiritual characteristic of relational consciousness took on cognitive

perspectives in the light of Hyde's (2005a) studies. Relational awarenesses became the

products of corporeal and sensorial experiences and culminated in a spiritual sensitivity that

was ultimately oriented to doing good and living well. What was noteworthy about this

supposition was that for both value sensing (Hay & Nye, 1998) and *spiritual questing* (Hyde,

2005a) there were common factors, claimed to inhibit the flow of altruistic behaviour.

Materialism, promoting a sense of disconnection and the trivializing of authentic values,

which masked true feelings were the hallmarks for disintegrating children's spirituality. The relevance of this connection for the research was that the Dinka children came from a very poor and needy background and they also have witnessed serious attacks on authentic values such as the primacy of life. The effects of this environment on the Dinka child's spirituality were discussed in the light of any pertinent findings.

The studies of Hay and Nye (1998, 2006), and Hyde (2005a, 2008), spoke of children's spirituality primarily in the absence of "God talk." While collectively children from different religious backgrounds participated in these studies, findings on children's spiritual expression pertained to the range of ways the reality of their experiences manifested spirituality. These studies provided frameworks about children from Western culture and their spiritual dimensions reflected backgrounds from non war-affected children backgrounds. These offered information for comparative analysis and supported the first research aim.

The research of Mountain (2005) on the other hand referred the relationship of prayer to spirituality in the following way. She viewed the meaning and function of children's prayer as acting as a conduit to imaging God as a "good." What flowed from this image was the value and quality of hope and resilience in the recipient respectively. For the study of the Dinka child, their image of God in relation to prayer and praying also presented avenues to explore their resilience. Prayer, as an expression of spirituality, also offered ways to explore what to listen to and listen for in relation to the spiritual life of children. This notion was built on the understandings of Champagne (2001), who contended that it was possible for children to reveal their spiritual selves through conversation as well as through listening for what was spiritual in their daily lives. How children prayed, and what they prayed for, became significant then in this understanding of spiritual expression. Literature outlining children's hopeful expressions in prayer provided ways to explore and discuss a dimension of their spirituality. Further details about Mountain's (2005) study were featured in the section on prayer.

Foundations in Children's Spiritual Development

Experiential Development

In the past, spiritual formation was guided by principles that saw the presence of spiritual

ideas as preceding the growth of an individual's spirituality. Keating (2000) has noted a shift

in this thinking. About the formation of children's spirituality in particular, he contended that

their life experiences came first in providing the basis for their spiritual formation. Factors

such as culture, education, social politics and the environment affected a person's experiences

in life and personal experience guided spirituality. The different ways experiences were

internalised were depicted in three spatial metaphors. They were the biological world where

consciousness was involved through senses, the psychosocial world where individual self-

identity was established and the inner realm where the spirit was nurtured through active,

creative, participatory consciousness. For Keating (2000) spirituality equalled the ability to

understand the world and to act or perform within it constructively. In this way, order was

created as the human spirit acted as a creative force for developing its own spirituality. It was

important to this research to recognize also that not all participatory action in relation to life

experiences was a precursor for positive, creative spirituality. For if life were void of active,

creative, participatory consciousness then it would follow that personal life would be guided

by chaos to a certain extent. The notion of positive spirituality is expanded later in the

literature review.

Literature concerning the experiential mode of spirituality in children was informed by

research on spiritual development. The work of Champagne (2001), Hyde (2008) and Kessler

(2000) claimed that children's meaning was realized through their personal experiences.

These experiences in turn contributed to the child's spirituality. Champagne's studies from

Canada focused on early childhood spiritual experiences, Hyde's studies focused on primary

school age children in Australia and Kessler's research pertained to adolescent spirituality in

America. Their work was used to inform a suitable framework to explore the Dinka children's spirituality in the context of data gathering methods.

Champagne (2001, 2003 & 2008) studied the spiritual dimensions of young children. Her initial work (2001) revealed two important ways to locate children's spirituality. She contended that one needed to listen to what children spiritually revealed about themselves in conversation, and also to listen for the spiritual dimensions that revealed themselves in children's everyday living. The *listening to* and *listening for* such spiritual expression was demonstrated by the quality of conversations and experiences that spiritually connected the child in relationship with self and others to the "Ultimate Other," namely God. Within this synergy of relationships the integrity of what the child valued was bound by who they were, and what they did, and this became an attribute of their spiritual growth.

Champagne (2003), elaborated on these characteristics by viewing children's spirituality as a link to their concept of "being." Three spiritual modes consisting of the *sensitive, relational* and *existential*, were used to describe the ways children operated spiritually. The sensitive mode referred to the way young children perceived their environment through their senses. In this mode the way children thought about where they were and what they did were linked. Thus influences and interactions of the physical, social and cultural environments had significant bearing on their spirituality. For the study of the Dinka child in particular, it was important to correlate these variables with their spirituality. The relational mode was accentuated by the quality of relationships that arose from the interplay of these variables within the sensitive mode. In the existential mode children made sense of their lives as they internalised the experiences of their existence and they did this especially through play. When they played they engaged their whole self in time and space and by this involvement related their existence to the rest of the world.

As previously noted Hyde (2008) offered four ways that a child's spirituality may be observed from an experiential point of view. These were: - felt sense, integrating awareness,

weaving the threads of meaning and spiritual questing. The key to observing the felt sense in children was demonstrated in their total involvement in a particular activity. The activity could involve music, art or playing games, for example. The alert and concentrated application to the given task was sustained by their sensorial engagement. The children's senses were the mechanism for engaging different awareness about time and space, and the felt sense was one that had a way of making time fly for a child who was engrossed in a particular activity. In this relational space also, they worked in a collective as one mind or operated as an individual, insulated from what was happening around them. The felt sense in children was observed through the harmony and unison they demonstrated within a group or as an individual.

Integrating awareness (Hyde, 2005b) incorporated a sensorial activity with meaningful conversation. Through involvement in an activity, children immersed themselves in another's story and identified their self with others. An example when this was demonstrated for the researcher was whilst working with a small group of girls and boys in the making of a soft toy. All the children in the group were refugees. There were high levels of concentration and application to the set task. During the course of the activity a child began to speak about how her grandmother had passed away recently in their homeland, and with that, the other members of the group without exception offered their experience and feelings about separation and loss. In other words at a particular point in the activity another wave of consciousness overtook their previous involvement without detracting from it in any way. Each child in turn accommodated the emerging level of consciousness without cessation of the initial consciousness. The content and context of the dialogue were respected. The children continued their set activity without being distracted by the conversation that emerged and developed. The levels of consciousness that were integrated, and the collective space the children had created to enter into dialogue with one another, was relational and cohesive. In effect the sewing activity laid foundation for the conversation. Integrating awareness was

about the engagement of sensorial activity acting as a prerequisite for engaging another wave of conscious awareness.

For children to weave the threads of meaning, their sense of wonder needed to be engaged. Hyde (2008) observed that children drew meaning and connection from significant frameworks that made contributions to their life such as "… media, their own experience, their prior learning, mythology, other faith traditions as well as the Christian story" (Hyde, 2008, p. 116). These frameworks of meaning helped children construct their worldview. Their knowledge of the world and the feeling this knowledge generated related in part to their spirituality. A consistent finding that Hyde (2008) expressed as a result of his study was that children had an awareness of kinship especially with those family members who were deceased. In some cases this kinship extended to feelings that deceased relatives looked after them during difficult times. Examples such as these drew meaning from experiences that could not easily be explained. Children drew meaning from life's mystery through their sense of wonder and certain frames of reference contributed to their overall worldview.

The spiritual indicator of weaving of the threads of meaning (Hyde, 2008) correlated with Hay and Nye's (1998), mystery sensing. In Hay and Nye's reference, mystery sensing denoted wonder and awe, which helped the child to make meaning of what was mysterious in the life of each individual child. The inclusion of awe in this understanding was important for the purposes of this research because it acknowledged those experiences in particular that also inspired dread or reverence. Thus feelings such as fear, terror, fright and trepidation became important in a dialogue of children's spirituality where war, loss, separation and refugee status were instrumental frames of reference for children who made meaning of such experiences.

For Hyde (2008), spiritual questing in children presented itself in many different ways. His studies revealed that children sought meaning through a connection with the Transcendent, deceased or divorced members of family, overcoming of evil, affirmation of

self and doing of good to benefit less fortunate others. From this he maintained that for some children, these quests explored relationship with God and Jesus, and their 'being' was reliant on being part of a unified familial group. This was significant for the way they viewed themselves as individuals. In some instances, the notion of the supernatural acted as a way for children to explore good overcoming evil in their spiritual questing. Further to that Hyde contended that the perception of self worth was important for guiding intrinsic value to their existence in the world. The ability of children to empathise and show compassion expressed in good works, demonstrated their spiritual awareness. Their quest to explore values such as love, freedom or human rights was indicative of a child's ability to connect with concern for others. Large issues such as these revealed the spiritual resource for accommodating the larger themes of life significant to young children. The notion of spiritual questing as an indicator for spiritual acuity in children was important to this research because it pointed to the potential value refugee children had in terms of the connections they made in their search for meaning. Given that their experiences had challenged their health, family life, living conditions and the overall peace and stability of their lives, it followed that the connections they made reflected their spirituality. This contention supports research aim number one and it is crucial for appreciating the breadth of Dinka spirituality.

Kessler

Rachael Kessler (2000), an educator from America was concerned with what adolescent children thought with regard to the meaning of life. The language and framework of Kessler's (2000), 'seven gateways to the soul of students' described experiences where young people connected with their inner life and fed their spirit. These understandings of spiritual portals pinpointed feelings and experiences that generated wonder and awe for people in this age group.

Key experiences cited for young people to develop an authentic sense of spirituality were: to develop deep connection; to have silence and solitude; to explore their meaning and

purpose; to experience joy and delight; to be creative; to come to know about transcendence and to be equipped for their transition and initiation into adulthood (Kessler, 2000). The culmination of these experiences led to depthing life's mysteries with personal and creative energy as the child made the transition from adolescent to young adult.

In this sense Kessler (2000) spoke about ways to discover the soul of students through the following perspectives: a) personal connection through belonging and relationship; b) a place for the mind to reflect, contemplate and pray in 'calm or fertile chaos'; c) confronting questions about personal existence; d) use of play and celebration or showing gratitude to delight in life's pleasures as well as to want to encounter love, beauty, grace etcetera and be humbled by it; e) exceeding perceived expectations in a chosen activity, for example, in art or science and realize the mystical realm; and f) coming to know what it means to be an adult.

Identification of these key experiences and their perspectives highlighted the special needs and areas of importance in dealing with the spirituality of this age group. Kessler's work had a curriculum focus and an applicable methodology appropriate for engaging different life expressions for resourcing spirituality. Of special interest for this research was Kessler's exploration of the perspectives of adolescent children about the purpose and meaning of life, in particular their notions of joy and humility, awe and wonder and reverence for life. The stimulus questions that Kessler offered (2000) for all of the key experiences provided a focus for highlighting adolescent spirituality. The line of questioning pertaining to these key areas, and in particular those of transcendence, suffering and sharing the mystery (Kessler, 2000 pp. 124-130) offered fertile ground for this research. The background these themes provided assisted in formulating questions relevant to the experiences of Dinka adolescents. For example questions like:

In what ways do you feel close to Africa?

What are some of the 'big questions' in life you would like answers for?

What is the most difficult thing you had to live through?

Do you know why some Dinka have patterned scars on their faces?

Key experiences that articulated *deep connection, wonder and awe, transcendence and initiation* (Kessler, 2000) respectively for Dinka young people was not necessarily applicable to other adolescents who were not Dinka and had not experienced trauma. The rationale for framing the set questions is covered in the description of the research design in Chapter three. The key experiences noted and the questions they generated explored the various dimensions of spirituality and traumatic experiences for adolescent Dinka, and these referred to research aim number one.

Keating

The researchers and the literature cited for informing the experiential mode highlighted the significance of the personal, creative and participatory consciousness that was required for engaging children's spirituality of all ages. For Keating (2000), spirituality was viewed as a creative personal act that offered the experience of self to manifest meaning and interact with the world. He adopted the term *sapiential insight* from Merton[1] and afforded spirituality a quality of wisdom where the senses made meaning of our will to live. Champagne (2001, 2003 & 2008), Hyde (2005a &2008), Hay & Nye (1998 & 2006) and Kessler (2000) attested the importance of the understanding that a child's spiritual development within the realm of personal experience created a consciousness that was marked by connecting and making meaning of the world in which they lived. In effect the realm of life experiences was the "engine room" of spiritual development and expression, and it was where this research sought to explore spiritual meaning in the Dinka child.

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[1] See Merton, T. (1966). *Redeeming the time.* London: Burns & Oates

Donaldson, Moore and Tacey

Spirituality described as a, "heightened awareness to ourselves and our intimate relationship with everything that is not ourselves;" followed from the work of Hay and Nye (1998). Three interrelated themes of spiritual sensitivity encompassing this notion were awareness sensing, mystery sensing (Hay & Nye, 1998) and value sensing (Donaldson, 1992). Value sensing was used by Hay and Nye but was first offered as a mode of thinking by Donaldson. These indicative areas related to heightened sensorial experiences, such as the awareness about the limits of self and the universe, and the "depthing" of moral meaning respectively. They pointed to the spiritual focus of the child and were demonstrated in the things that really mattered to them. Ultimately it was the child's experiences that led to questioning and depthing, and contributed to a movement away from personal activities that were motivated by self-interest to ones that transcended personal concern.

Psychologically Donaldson (1992) explained a mechanism of thinking that searched for and sensed the value of being, within individuals. Persons were motivated to intellectualise about what really mattered to them and in doing so images promoting the self usually characterized their imagination. Donaldson (1992) observed from studies by Milner[2] that when an individual became disassociated from their fear or loss of personal identity, then her imagination fed by altruistic desire promoted a healthy emotional life. She concluded that when individuals were able to consistently think in this way, that is,

> … become better attuned to some 'reality of feeling', [if I] grow more emotionally responsive to values that transcend the personal, then no one else need pay a price for my gain (Donaldson, 1992, p. 244).

Thus in effect, if a child showed emotional responsiveness commensurate with the demonstration or articulation of altruistic behaviours or thoughts, then they could also demonstrate a spiritual sensitivity that made meaning of their life experiences in a favourable way. This kind of spiritual sensitivity was of particular interest to this research because it

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[2] Milner in Donaldson, Chapter 14, *Human Minds*, 1992, London: Penguin Press

offered a way to link the experiences of children traumatized by war, to their personal purpose in life and in so doing, to their spirituality.

A study by Moore (1990) called to mind an important question about Dinka spiritual sensitivity. The question was: What was it that the Dinka people valued in life and how did adherence to Christianity intuit their spiritual sensitivity? This question was important because the Dinka were in a process of Christian evangelisation and their coming to faith in God through Jesus Christ was relatively recent. Sudan has a history of Christian missionary activity dating back to 1647, but the last 128 years especially have seen a small growth in Christianity and it was important not to overstate the five per cent adherence to this religion by people in Sudan.

Moore (1990) claimed that, psychologically individuals were in tension between being 'one with' and 'separate from' others. We may want to be in fellowship with others, but not at the expense of losing our personal identity. In effect the tension occurred where the human ego operated. Ego projected self- interest and pursued desires. Christ, in perfect humanity and perfect divinity, was perfect also in ego, and his authentic human expression exemplified the possibility of how humanity liberated itself from the self-absorption of the ego. Beyond motivating a person to act principally in regard for the good of others, belief in Christ had the ability to transform people to seek what was good for the glory of God. During the course of Jesus Christ's life he associated with and spoke in defence of the victims of society for example, in the stories of Zaccheus (Lk 19:1-10) and in the Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12). He was a religious teaching authority and at times a political protagonist who taught that God's unconditional love for all was experienced through the renunciation of control of others. Christ's renunciation of control challenged the legalism and religious observances of the day, and his life and the events leading to his crucifixion exemplified the love of God. There were powerful meanings in these examples of scripture, and exploration of Dinka spiritual sensitivities in regard to their belief in Christ and response to hardship demonstrated Moore's

theology as psychologically apt. Theologically, Moore contended that death of ego, nurtured *true self*, offering effective meaning in our relationship with self, others, the world and God. His psychological perspective on Christology expressed the notion of the transformative power of Christ to liberate human desire (1989). Moore's theology was useful for articulating spiritual sensitivity from the spiritually experiential and psychological viewpoint. The extent to which parent and adult guardians, as well as the Dinka community, have influenced Dinka children's thinking in Christianity will be subject to interpretation.

Characteristics of current spirituality informed perspectives concerning Western culture (Tacey, 2003). Tacey (2003) contended that there was a lack of connectedness in contemporary life and that it was important to name the spirit in our midst. Within this realm he noted that respect for the sacred was crucial for the existence of civilization and highlighted the detrimental privilege that had been given to the 'human fragment', which he coined to denote the prominence of individualism in Western culture. Modernity needed a sense of community where people were able to share deep meanings that they communicated in public ritual in the presence of the sacred. He situated the notion of religiosity in the presence of the sacred to spiritual connectedness and presented a two dimensional representation of this. He included the action of the invisible as well as the visible, concomitant with the divine and the human interaction respectively. Here in the presence of the spirit, the role of the human person in response to their lived experience was where the true expression of spirituality materialised. These understandings about spirituality linked psychological and theological perspectives of spiritual acuity to the presence of the sacred in Western culture. Indicators for the meaning of life and spirituality have been offered in Donaldson (1992), Moore (1989) and Tacey (2003). Their perspectives have situated the suffering of the war-affected Dinka and the current spiritual direction of Western culture on contrasting paths, and these understandings have presented ways to consider the relationship of life experiences, and their effect on spirituality as inquired by the first research aim.

Elements Contributing to a Dinka Worldview

A worldview is the overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world

(Erricker, Erricker, Ota, Sullivan & Fletcher, 1997). The Dinka children's perspectives of

people, environment and religion influenced their worldview. Thus what they believed about

the world was focused through their experiences with people, the world and religion. The

elements that were significant in their relationship to people were their family, community,

culture, tradition and language. The Dinka children may have lived in urban, bush or desert

environments and the physical elements of their environments were significant. Their

experiences of extreme rain, wind, heat and cold were realities, which contributed to their

worldview and drought, famine and flood were the realities of their previous living

conditions. Dinka experiences relating to religious beliefs included a deep respect for, and an

understanding of the purpose and influence of the spear master. Their religious beliefs also

linked the importance of cattle and oxen to notions of divinity and the ways of prayer for

placating divine beings. Christian influences highlighted the evangelisation and catechising of

the Dinka and their church going. The factors affecting the Dinka child's worldview were

complicated and not homogeneous.

The following references made a contribution to a body of knowledge that informed

the Dinka children's worldview. Lienhardt (1987) provided a social anthropology of the

Dinka and his research from the late 1940s informed the traditional and cultural background

of these people, especially as it pertained to systems of belief in divinity. As has been covered

in some detail in Chapter one of this thesis, polygamy was practised and family clanship was

significant to the make-up of a tribal community. Substance farming included pastoral and

animal husbandry, and cattle were pivotal to the Dinka sense of material existence as well as

their spiritual life. The masters of the fishing spear had a profound influence on the people of

their tribe. There were many myths about their existence as a priestly people for placating

divinities. Symbolic actions conducted in the presence of the spear master included bloodless

ceremonies and also bloodletting animal sacrifices. Spears and gourds used for invocation were consecrated for such ceremonies. Shrines that were constructed either out of mud (*yik*), or others that were signified with the placing of a forked branch in the ground (*ghoro*), called to mind the association of their sacrificial offering to their human survival and to the divinities and ancestors to whom they prayed. Sacrificial symbolic acts and ceremonies were performed for the dead, for the wellness of sick people, for averting calamity and for peace. It can be said that the Dinka's myths and stories, sacrificial ritual and ceremony, consecration of objects, their singing of chants and hymns and their dancing in ceremony, presented…'a drama of human survival' (Lienhardt, 1987, p. 287).

The contribution of Deng (1984) offered scholarly information backed by personal anecdotes and understandings about the Dinka of Sudan. In particular, his documenting of post-colonial religious change offered insight to this research. The religious life of the Dinka became prominent after the British seceded their rule of Sudan in 1956. The established Christian missionaries who had operated in the south saw many Muslim-oriented schools established in that region and the Arab-run government of the north promoted their proliferation. The Missionaries Societies Act of 1962 detrimentally curtailed the Christian missionaries' religious activities and stopped them from providing social and health services, and by 1964 the government had expelled all foreign missionaries and priests from the South (Deng, 1984). This highlighted the changing religious influences in the South during the late 1960s and 1970s as education and missionary activity during this time was dominated by Islamic evangelization. Deng (1984) contended that in spite of the Christian missionaries' exile, the Dinka continued to view them as guardians and allies, and that as tensions escalated between the North and the South, the southern tribes' lack of interest to promote any particular religion, polarized the Islamic-backed government. Thus various religious influences that predominated in the lives of the south Sudanese at the time would have had a bearing on the worldview of the current Dinka refugee children through their parents' and

grandparents' religious preferences. The religious changes and the effects on their traditions and culture were notable in current practice.

The context of Dinka tradition and culture in view of the recent past was significant for understanding the Dinka worldview. The Dinka children may have received knowledge and practice of these activities first or second hand, either through lived experience or from the influence of family observances. For example, in Carney and Butler (2005, p. 284) a photograph depicts the slaughter of a young bull on a wedding day among the Dinka in Rumbek in recent times. The bride for that same wedding was dressed and veiled in white regalia (Carney and Butler, 2005, p. 286 & 287). The significance of the wedding was marked by the unchanged symbolic sacrifice while the customs of dress indicated an adoption of some Western culture. There was evidence that traditional Dinka ways in relation to the practice of their symbolic sacrificial action occurred in Dinka community in Sudan, and children who came from the regional area where Dinka lived were culturally aware of its significance. While it was difficult to ascertain the grasp of knowledge some Dinka children had regarding the practice of symbolic acts, their experience of animal sacrifice taught them that animals were victims to be venerated for the good that their death was meant to bestow.

The impact of war and dislocation of Dinka children viewed in reports and articles highlighted the conditions of these people in places where they had sought refuge since the onset of the second civil war. These places were Khartoum (Yath, 1991); Cairo (Moro, 2004 and Johnson, 2002); Kenya (Moro, 2004; Parker, 2002 and Crisp, 1999) and Uganda (Moro, 2004). A detailed account of the conditions suffered by the Dinka people has been given in *The Second Civil War: First Host Countries and Places of Refuge for the Dinka.* This text noted the experiences that contributed to a worldview for the Dinka children given their various refugee backgrounds.

Before coming to Australia these children may have encountered many of the following situations: the fear from the threat and attack of wild animals and or hostile native

peoples in the countries where they sought refuge; the subjection to the dangers and hardship involved with wind storms, drought and flood; the violence that came with being at the coal face of "at risk situations" such as riots, taking unaccompanied dangerous journeys especially in the case of females trying to secure food and fuel, and living in isolation in unsafe places. Overriding these were common experiences they shared of prolonged hunger, thirst and of living in impoverishment, degradation and constant insecurity. These experiences accounted for a worldview marked by fear and hostility and in response to these dehumanising experiences the Dinka carried within themselves a great personal dignity.

The relationship Dinka children developed with their environment depended on the place or places to which they travelled or lived in. The studies of Yath (1991) and Moro (2004) indicated that those Dinka children coming from Khartoum and Cairo respectively experienced living in poor, unsanitary makeshift shelters in urban squats where torrential rain created havoc by washing away their houses. Poor sanitary conditions in the presence of rain left the way open to water borne diseases. In this case, the experience of physical danger and disease was related to the immanent effects of a deluge of rain. Moro (2004) described the living conditions in refugee camps such as those in Kenya and Uganda. These places were noted for their desolate terrain and isolated environments. Kakuma in Kenya is dusty, arid country that is extremely hot, with no vegetation. Here the children became aware of how vulnerable human beings were in a land that was void of water, developing an understanding of how dependent people were on the right balance of natural elements that was required to support a basic quality of life. Thus Dinka children's worldview, based on their experiences, would be guided by an awareness of the environmental conditions that were needed for it to sustain life.

According to the descriptions given in the Sudan Cultural Digest Project (SCDP) (*Revised Research Report 2*, 1998), environmental conditions in Ugandan refugee camps varied. Some areas were more habitable than those in Kenya but hostilities between warring

factions in Uganda made living conditions extremely dangerous. Camps and settlements in northern Uganda where the Dinka people mainly sought refuge during the late 1990s and in early 2000s were located in the Adjumani district and Gulu Town. Other internally displaced sought refuge in camps in south Sudan near the Ugandan border in the Yei and Kajokeji counties. These areas were green and forested, and some agricultural activities may have been undertaken during the rainy seasons, but they did not provide self-sufficiency. These places were unsafe and were often the scene of deadly ambushes, shootings and fighting.

There were 20 permanent settlements and five transit camps in the Adjumani district, and living conditions varied from one camp to another. Some camps were located in rocky areas and could not sustain agricultural activities and others were fertile. One particular camp named Mireiya was a church-run settlement designed specifically for the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups. It was considered a clean camp and had a low death rate among the elderly and children. Gulu Town is situated on the south Sudan border. Many displaced south Sudanese travelled into this area where the Lord's Resistance Army's hostile activities were being supported by the Sudanese Government. In Yei County there were five refugee camps. Khor Levi is a forest village in the Kakwa area of Yei where multi-ethnic inhabitants including the Dinka sought refuge. The Dinka people here took care of the cows belonging to the Kakwa. There were three settlements in Kajokeji County and the Dinka people were the main inhabitants in two. They were the Bamurye and Mangalotore camps. The SPLA controlled these parts of Kajokeji County and this accounted for the heavy planting of land mines by the Sudanese Government Army in this area. The Bamurye camp was heavily treed and the land was fertile, but large planting of crops were not grown because the trees also provided much needed shelter and camouflage from aerial bombardments by the Sudanese Government Antenov aircraft. The near by settlement of Mangalotore was the exclusive refuge of the Bor Dinka and impoverished living conditions were experienced here as well as in Bamurye. Poor water, education and health services were experienced in both camps (*SCDP Revised*

Research Report 2, 1998). Humanitarian aid was required to provide food as malnutrition, in varying degrees, was experienced in these camps, especially if crops had failed or production was very low (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Humanitarian Update*, Uganda, July, 2005). Thus Dinka children coming from Ugandan settlements or south Sudanese camps experienced environmental conditions that linked the seasons and soil fertility to their food security. They may have witnessed atrocities or lived in fearful conditions for their safety.

There has been an increasing movement towards Christianity among the Dinka in Sudan and the diaspora. The missionary work and preaching that the Dinka have encountered contributed to a change in their spiritual orientation (Stancliffe, 2008). To access the spiritual and religious focus of Dinka children in transit, some observations about the education they may have received were relevant.

The *International Institute for Educational Planning* (IIEP), (Sommer, 2005) published a study exploring the schooling of the southern Sudanese during the civil war period, from 1983 to 2004 inclusive. The IIEP is the research division for educational planning for the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) and was established in 1963. This study provided in-depth information about the teaching and learning of pupils and teachers of the southern Sudanese in Sudan, and the diaspora. It included the examination of education in the predominantly Dinka region of northern Bahr el Ghazal, and southern Sudan refugee education in Khartoum, Kenya and Uganda, and provided excellent background information on the occupation, conflict and living conditions for each of these areas. It also provided a valuable insight into the Christian background received by southern Sudanese children in schools of their first host countries, or other places of refuge.

The role and responsibility for the education of refugee children in these areas were also highlighted in this report and its findings here indicated the involvement of the following

among others: Diocese of Khartoum, Jesuit Refugee Services, Sudan Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, Church Missionary Society, Action by Churches Together and Don Bosco. Literature informing the Dinka people's experiences in host countries and in diaspora were important for identifying the exact nature of the lived experiences for these people. It acknowledged living conditions, highlighted impoverishment and the hostilities experienced, which informed understanding about the nature of trauma experienced by Dinka children and adolescents. These insights supported the inquiry into research aim number one.

<center>Children's Thoughts About God, Jesus, Church and Prayer</center>

Literature related to children's thoughts of God, Jesus, Church and prayer concerning those who have not been affected by the trauma of war, provided a spiritual and religious landscape to compare Dinka children's perceptions in the same areas for the purposes of this research. Literature pertaining to children's spirituality has been discussed in an earlier section of this chapter. Literature that pertained to aspects of religious practice were reviewed in this section and drew from surveys and research mainly from Australia, as recommendations for Catholic religious education with regard to Dinka religiosity were offered in the light of their findings. These were sought in support of the second research aim.

<center>Children's Thoughts About God</center>

In *The Spiritual Life of Children,* Coles (1990) wrote of his work in seeking children's thoughts about God. The children came from different countries and religious backgrounds including Christian, Islamic and Jewish religions. They ranged in age from six to thirteen years with most participants being between eight and twelve years of age. Coles used interviews, discussion, drawing and story-telling to explore their thoughts. Some of his key findings relating to children's thoughts about God were that: a) God was very important to most children; b) Christian students identified Jesus with God; c) children's images of God were strongly influenced by family, significant adults, and religious and cultural background. The participants who offered their thoughts about God in this research demonstrated clear

areas of commonality between religions.

Duffy (2002) explored the images of God of adolescents. This research presented findings that mainly concerned thoughts about God, but also included analysis of these thoughts in relation to aspects of Jesus, Church and prayer. Duffy (2002) cited 82 per cent of her research participants who were 15 years old, came from happy homes. To this, 74 per cent of participants and their parents were predominantly Catholic and a large majority rarely attended Mass. Young people from this cross section of Australian society mostly believed in a loving God and their principal images included Jesus, nature and the Trinity. For these adolescents God was thought of in terms of a powerful protector whose place was heaven and whose presence epitomized love. Predominantly anthropomorphic imagining depicted God as male and was expressed exclusively in masculine language. A key factor for adolescent participants to think about God was reflection on death, and notably parents were an important influence on the participant's images of God. These insights informed this research in relation to the analysis of adolescent participants' input mainly about God but also including Jesus, Church and prayer. These insights pertained to the second research question.

In 1996 the *Catholic Church Life Survey* (CCLS) conducted a study of parish life in association with the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. Authored by the *Board of Management of Australian Catholic Bishops Pastoral Research Projects 1996* (CCLS, ACBPRP, 1996) it represented statistically parishes from every diocese in Australia. Pollsters comprised Catholic Church attenders aged fifteen years and above. The survey contained questions and statements of a religious nature (sometimes specifically Catholic) and required participants to select their preferred alternatives. The study explored participants' ideas about God revealing that 99 per cent believed God existed, with 50.2 per cent indicating a Trinitarian image of God. The images of "master", "father" and "judge" were preferred by the majority of participants in reference to prioritising contrasting images of God. For factors affecting participants' faith, mothers at 75.7 per cent and fathers at 58 per cent were chosen as

the most significant persons for faith. In response to the effect of ordinary events on the awareness of God, nature ranked 30 per cent and the birth of a child, 15.7 per cent respectively, had special meaning. In another set of events offered for strengthening awareness of God, significantly the death of a family member with a 46.2 per cent response, was notable. The CCLS, ACBPRP, 1996 survey informed this research study as to the thoughts about God of Catholic adolescents and adults in Australia in 1996. The significance of the responses and the factors noted from the survey of images of God that affected the participant's images, pointed to the strong influence of parents in terms of their children's faith. This in turn provided a point of reference to compare the influence of Dinka parents and elders.

<div align="center">Children's Thoughts About Jesus</div>

Studies into young people's understanding of Jesus date back to the 1960's and the majority of them involved adolescent participants. Conclusions from these studies indicated that young people conceptualised Jesus in positive terms, focusing simplistically on Jesus' humanity and overlooking aspects of his divinity (Cox, 1967; Claerhout and Declercq, 1970; Savin-Williams, 1977; Astley & Francis, 1996; Francis & Astley, 1997; Francis, 2001 and Copley, 2005). Home, religious background, frequency of attendance at a place of worship, school and peers were also considered key indicators in shaping children's attitudes in this area. Other significant studies were those of Madge, 1971; Kay and Francis, 1996; Duffy, 2002; Rymarz 2006 and Alyward nee Walshe, 2005, 2006, and 2009 and their work was used as references in this area.

Madge (1971) engaged 200 children from primary schools in the United Kingdom. They were aged between four and ten and the research method involved informal observation of classroom talk. The purpose was to explore young children's understanding of Jesus. Her research found that these children considered Jesus' humanity more than his divinity and that they had difficulty understanding the relationship between Jesus and God. She observed that

for some children Jesus and God were one and the same. Madge's study also revealed that Christian thought about Jesus' humanity and divinity presented in early primary schooling appeared acceptable, whereas upper primary children had difficulty reconciling intellectual anomalies that presented themselves, for example, in occurrences such as miracles and the Resurrection. From an eight year old this question begged an answer, "If Jesus was God how could he have made the world before he was born?" (Madge, 1971, p. 4). Madge's studies indicated that children presented with questions about the relationship between Jesus' humanity and divinity from an early age.

Kay and Francis (1996) conducted a longitudinal study beginning in 1974 and continuing for a twenty-year period. It involved twelve to sixteen year old young people and explored their changing attitudes towards God, Jesus, Church and prayer. Samples were gathered from the same two non-church-related state maintained comprehensive schools in England in 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990 and 1994, where the same questionnaire was administered six times. From that study, the four perceptions about Jesus put forward for consideration were: a) I know that Jesus helps me; b) I know that Jesus is very close to me; c) I want to love Jesus; d) Jesus doesn't mean anything to me.

The study enquired into children's feelings about Jesus rather than asking them for religious knowledge about Christian beliefs. Table 2:1 lists the findings.

Table 2:1 *Percentage Agreements to Attitude Items for Children's Feelings about Jesus in 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990 and 1994 (Kay & Francis, 1996, p.205)*

Attitude item	1974 % Agree	1978 %Agree	1982 %Agree	1986 %Agree	1990 %Agree	1994 %Agree
I know that Jesus helps me	42	30	22	23	20	22
I know that Jesus is very close to me	36	28	20	20	18	18
I want to love Jesus	39	34	26	23	18	22
Jesus doesn't mean anything to me	16	17	21	23	20	23

The studies of Kay and Francis (1996) showed a gradual decrease in positive attitude towards Jesus over a twenty-year period. Between 1974 and 1994 the percentage of children who said that Jesus did not mean anything increased by 7 per cent, and overall there was a significant decrease for young people having a sense of closeness to Jesus or having a feeling that Jesus was able to help them. This longitudinal study seemed to support the view that adolescents experience growing distance from Jesus. Kay and Francis (1996) contended that the twelve to sixteen year old participants from the 1994 study, demonstrated pre adult attitudes earlier. This was marked by the increase in negative responses for feelings about Jesus and a decrease in the positive ones as compared with the first study in 1994.

Duffy's (2002) research into 14 to 17 year old images of God also explored their thoughts about Jesus. Participants responded according to the frequency specific descriptors applied to Jesus. For example, the terms "never", "hardly ever", "sometimes", "often" and "always" were used with ten descriptors for Jesus. They were friend, healer, miracle worker, forgiver, teacher, friend/outcasts, concerned/women, Lord, Son of God, and Son of Mary. Table 2:2 depict the first five choices in order given under the "Always" category.

Table 2:2 Descriptors *of Jesus*

Descriptors	Always
Son of God	62%
Son of Mary	58%
Forgiver	46.9%
Lord	44%
Miracle Worker	43.6%

Thus 62 per cent of participants always thought of Jesus as the Son of God, this being the highest response in this category. Percentages for the descriptors were given in descending order of response and interestingly three out of the five main descriptors highlighted acceptance of Jesus' divinity. In regard to images of God presented in Scripture and theology,

Duffy (2002) found that direct references to Jesus Christ were made in terms of Saviour, Messiah and the Cross. Duffy (2002), also contended that the participants' understanding of Jesus supported the Church's teaching of the Incarnation of God and that their favourite image of God, as Jesus, was consistent with biblical images, ministry, suffering, death and Resurrection.

Overall their images of Jesus and God were said to be doctrinally orthodox and conventional, as the study indicated that the participants were familiar with religious terms and had the ability to use religious language. There was some confusion, however, with participants' understanding in regard to the nature and identity of Jesus. Duffy (2002), found that they had difficulties differentiating Jesus as being separate from God, or identical with God. This cohered with previous studies cited in this review of literature as well as other studies that were not presented here for review (Cox, 1967; Claehout and Declercq, 1970 and Astley and Francis, 1996). The finding was that for young children and adolescents alike, thoughts about Jesus' humanity and divinity had a tendency to be uncertain and/or conflicted.

Qualitative studies exploring young people's thoughts about Jesus have attempted to analyze participants' understanding of the central figure of Christianity. Rymarz (2006) conducted a study involving 32 year 11 and 12 students from eight Catholic secondary colleges from Victoria. Students who were selected had to be regular churchgoers, involved in parish life through parents and display faith commitment through involvement in, for example, a prayer group. To participate they also had to demonstrate a willingness to describe themselves as Catholics. Notably the young people who were selected for this study happened to be in the top third of students in the year level academically. The interviews with participants were semi-structured and were conducted for no longer than an hour.

Rymarz (2006) found that thoughts about Jesus could be categorized into "ambiguous", "naturalistic" or "orthodox" responses. He also maintained that there was a general inability for participants to articulate their beliefs about Jesus. He noted that

ambiguous responses were ones where interviewees when asked about their beliefs about Jesus, found it difficult to express them. Their answers were inarticulate. Naturalistic responses were a description of Jesus in human terms such as he was a "great teacher" or "role model"; and this category delivered the strongest return with responses from this genre characterized by personal views in the absence of theological language. Orthodox responses contained references to traditional descriptions of Jesus and Church teachings, for example, Son of God and Virgin Mary. In relation to the orthodox responses, Rymarz (2006) observed that when the adolescents were questioned further they had difficulty explaining the theological concepts they had used. Their use of theological language could not be supported by conceptual sophistication required to meaningfully explain the understandings.

Firstly, Rymarz's (2006) study provided a frame of reference to reflect on the kinds of responses young Dinka people may have about Jesus. The categories of response about Jesus, that include, "ambiguous", "naturalistic" and "orthodox" were suitable for identifying what participants in the current study had to say about Jesus. Secondly, the findings from Rymarz's study also provided insight into young Catholic adolescents' conceptual understanding of the nature of Jesus' identity. Rymarz (2006) maintained that given the centrality of Jesus to Catholicism, young active Catholics did not present with a strong understanding of Jesus. This cohered with Aylward nee Walshe (2005) and others in supporting the view that, conceptually, Jesus was identified only as a human figure.

Aylward (2009) has conducted several studies in the United Kingdom (including her thesis) into young people's conceptions about the person and nature of Jesus. Most studies have been conducted on year eight students aged 13 and 14 years old, with the majority of participants from Christian, and the remaining from Muslim backgrounds (Aylward, nee Walshe 2005, 2006 and 2009). One other study investigated similarly young children ages ten and eleven (Aylward and Freathy, 2008). Data was collected via a questionnaire investigating

pupil's knowledge and understanding of the life of Jesus. A twenty-minute interview asking open-ended questions was also conducted to discover participants' attitudes towards Jesus.

Findings from these studies revealed that the young people thought Jesus was a historical figure who was a special man capable of healing people and helping people believe in God. The following table is a compilation of results from Aylward nee Walshe (2005) and Aylward and Freathy (2008) depicting young people's thoughts about Jesus.

Table 2:3 *Young people's thoughts about Jesus*

Statements about Jesus 2005 from 13 and 14 year olds	Statements about Jesus 2008 from 10 and 11 year olds	Percentage of Pupils who agreed: 2005	Percentage of Pupils who agreed: 2008
Tried to help people	Cared for people	86.4%	84.3%
Helped people believe in God	Told people about God	82.7%	77.7%
Healed many people	Healed people	77.4%	57.2%
Makes prayer come true			23.0%
Son of God	Son of God	53.9%	49.5%
Jesus was/is God			9.4%
Saved people from sin		58.0%	
	Died for me		31.1%
	Tried to bring peace		75.4%
	Willing to lose life for others		56.8%
	Rose from the dead		43.8%
A special person			77.2%
Loved everyone equally	Loved everyone	76.1%	73.5%
Was a great teacher	Told stories to make us better people	70.2%	62.2%

Overall the majority of students in these studies thought of Jesus mainly in terms of his humanity. The interviews with the year eight participants revealed that they had difficulty in beliefs and understandings concerned with Jesus' miracles, the Virgin birth and the Resurrection. The study that was done with the 10 and 11 year old participants revealed that

assent to the historical Jesus and ethical and humanistic characteristics of his nature were accepted, however this particular study presented some anomalies in children's thoughts about Jesus compared to previous studies. For example, nearly half of the pupils agreed that Jesus was the Son of God but less than ten percent agreed that Jesus was / is God. Aylward and Freathy (2008) contended that for the subset of pupils who gave assent to Jesus as the Son of God and then negated his divine relationship, these pupils demonstrated a contradiction in their understanding. Thoughts about Jesus came from the understandings of mainly Christian participants. Their contribution to the data collected accounted for between 58 per cent and 72 per cent for the abovementioned studies. Other contributions came from students from Islamic, Hindu, Sikh and non- religious backgrounds.

In all, the literature reviewed supported the following views about children and young people's thoughts about Jesus in the context of a religious education received in western culture, free from war: a) Jesus was thought of mainly in positive terms and assent to the historical Jesus as well as ethical and humanistic characteristics of his nature were accepted; b) Young children and adolescents were known to question the relationship between Jesus' humanity and divinity; c) Terms such as the Son of God and the Incarnation, presented children and young people with theological concepts they did not fully understand and found difficult to articulate; d) Some Catholic school adolescents were able to support their understandings about Jesus with orthodox images of Jesus; e) Longitudinal studies between 1974 and 1994 investigating young people's attitude to Jesus noted that there was an increase in adolescents presenting with a negative attitude to Jesus; and that overall positive feelings towards Jesus were decreasing at an earlier stage of adolescence. These studies explored the dimensions of children and adolescents religiosity and provided information about the perceptions of young people from Western culture concerning God, Jesus, Church and prayer. These contributed to a body of knowledge that informed comparative analysis between Dinka

Western cultural backgrounds for children and adolescent's perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer. Issues raised here respond to research aim number two.

Children's Thoughts About Church

The Australian Surveys

The *Pastoral Projects Office* under the auspices of the *Australian Catholic Bishops Conference* have undertaken several research projects in recent years concerning Church life, Catholic profiling and Mass attendance among other things. In 1991, *The National Church Life Survey* began providing surveys and results for church planning for the Anglican and Protestant Churches. From 2001 it represented Catholic, Anglican and Protestant denominations working co-operatively to research and resource congregations for mission.

The Pastoral Projects Office conducted the National Count of Attendance (NCA) on the four Sundays in May in 2001 and again in 2006. A simple headcount was taken of attendees in all parishes and Mass centres throughout Australia. Attendance figures for 1996 were based on assorted diocesan counts conducted with different methods and at different times of the year.

The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) was a joint project of the Uniting Church Board of Mission (NSW), Anglicare (NSW) and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. Catholic parishes have participated in the last two surveys in 2001 and 2006.

The Catholic Church Life Survey 1996 (CCLS) was designed to give 250,000 Catholic Mass attenders the opportunity to tell the Catholic Bishops what it was like to be a Catholic at that time. It was a separate but parallel project to the NCLS of the same year. In that year the NCLS surveyed 324,000 attenders from 6,900 congregations in 20 Anglican and Protestant denominations and worked in partnerships with the Catholic Church in Australia and the churches in New Zealand.

The Australian Community Survey 1998 (ACS) surveyed 8,500 Australians from diverse regions across Australia and explored the values, religiosity and the image of the

Church in the 1990's. It was conducted in co-operation with Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia.

The objective of the qualitative research project entitled Catholics Who Have Stopped Attending Mass 2007 (CWHSAM) was to discover reasons why some Catholics aged 25 and upwards who were once regular Mass goers stopped attending regularly. A total of 41 people from seven dioceses participated in one interview. Two thirds of the participants were aged 50 to 69 with almost half aged between 50 and 59.

The surveys about Church life and Mass attendance provided relevant information about the thoughts of those children who have not been affected by war: a) 11 per cent of children aged up to 14 years of age and 10 per cent of young people aged 15 to 19 in Australia attended Mass for the year 2001 (Dixon 2005, p. 96); b) An estimated 13,000 less young people aged 15 to 25 attended Mass in Australia from between 1996 to 2001 (CWHSAM 2007, p. 3); c) The most important reason given for infrequent and non-attending Catholic parents of children attending Catholic schools, was that they no longer felt that being a committed Catholic required going to Mass every week (CWHSAM 2007, p. 5); d) The three main feelings about the experience of liturgy by Mass attenders were, in descending order, a sense of God's presence, a sense of fulfilling an obligation and gaining growth and understanding of God (Dixon 2005, p 106). These studies provided visibility of children and adolescents from Western cultural backgrounds and their religiosity in terms of Catholic learning, frequency of Mass attendance and their reasons for either attending or not attending Mass. The presented literature informed the second research question.

Summary

Percentages regarding Mass attendance of children and young people for the 2001 revealed that 89 per cent and 90 per cent respectively did not attend Mass regularly. Statistics collated from ABS 2001; NCLS 2001 and NCA 2001 supported the Mass attendance rates by age for this selection set. Fewer young people aged 15 to 25 years were going to Mass in 2001 than in 1996, and falling attendances have been experienced in all age groups except for the 75 plus, which saw an increase of 14,000 attenders for the same period. A negative change in attitude to Mass by parents and or influential adults was almost certainly indicative of the decline in Mass attendance for young people. The CCLS (1996) revealed that the prominent view held by Catholic parents was that commitment to Catholicism did not require Sunday Mass attendance. These had children attending Catholic schools and were said to attend Mass infrequently or not at all. The influence of such a widely held view among non-attending parents was significant in so far as their opinion may be reflected in their children. For the growing minority of parents and adults who did attend Mass, their feelings about attendance represented the acknowledgement of God's presence in the liturgy, an obligation to be there and a growth in understanding of God. Alternatively then, a projection of these views may find some children and young people aware of religious commitment and God's presence at Mass.

Other Literature

Rymarz and Graham (2005) conducted a study among Australian core Catholic youth (14 to 15 years of age), investigating their attitudes to Church attendance. The adolescents chosen for this study fulfilled set criteria pertaining to pre-existing connections with parish communities and the maintenance of a regular pattern of church attendance.

The study highlighted the attitudes of Church attendance as a key indicator for religious observance and concluded that there was a high probability for core Catholic youth to drift away from the conventional Church practice of attending Mass. They based this assumption on the understanding that while this group of adolescents were prepared to accept familial modelling of religious practice, they were not prepared to make an independent commitment. Reasons given for this were the lack of supportive social networks (at school, in parish and or with other faith based groups), which were regarded as important.

> If core Catholic youth are not part of wider supportive networks, and as family support lessens, then formal involvement with the Church may become less constant. (Rymarz and Graham, 2005, p. 61)

Another reason influencing the decision-making of core Catholic youth in regard to religious practice was the incidence of siblings, who having reached the age where they were free to make up their own minds, decided to go to Mass infrequently or not at all. Their example had significant bearing on younger siblings in their family. Finally, the researchers noted that participants did not give the significance of the Eucharist as a reason for attending Mass. Belief in receiving Jesus in the form of bread and wine was not articulated by any of the participants, rather partaking of Eucharist was viewed as an event to strengthen community ties with God (Rymarz and Graham, 2005).

While Rymarz and Graham's (2005) study revolved directly around Church attendance and involvement, several patterns of thought about Church emerged from core Catholic youth. Reported attitudinal patterns towards Church attendance were linked with either familial, communitarian or forced patterns of involvement. Where strong family bonds

connected adolescents to Church involvement, the emphasis for these young people revolved around the quality and importance of their experience in participation. This group viewed Church as important and viewed commitment positively. Another group was indicative of weak familial connection in so far as the core Catholic youth did attend Mass but the expression of their involvement was not important to them. Still others, who maintained that they were forced to go to Church felt encumbered by Sunday Church commitment. So for a minority, Church was important, participation was active and attitude was positive. For others, Church was not important to them but they still attended as part of a family unit. Still others, whose involvement was a forced experience, did not affirm commitment to regular Church-going. Those viewing participation in Mass expressed it as a community activity and reserved Church going for special occasions such as Christmas and Easter. Their Mass attendance was infrequent.

Kay and Francis (1996) conducted longitudinal studies into children's and adolescents' attitudes towards Christianity and monitored the changes during childhood and adolescence. Research was conducted with pupils of both sexes between the ages of eight to sixteen in denominational and non- denominational schools in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland and other parts of the world. There were several main findings specifically related to the decline in attitude toward Christianity, but of significance to this research was the finding that religiously active children and adolescents generally had favourable attitudes to Christianity. The study showed that positive participatory religious behaviour and involvement expressed within this age range brought a raised attitude toward Christianity, and that behaviours such as weekly attendance at Church and Church- related youth groups promoted such feelings (Kay and Francis, 1996). Thus where there was regular active participation and involvement for children and youth there were positive thoughts about faith. This study indicating positive attitudes among young people from a Western cultural background informed the second research aim. It provided insight into the Church attendance

and related youth groups in Church community and offered a point of reference to compare this group with the Dinka children and adolescents from the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Children's Spirituality and Prayer

Through the experience of prayer children established a connection with God, imaging God as a 'Good' (Mountain, 2005). The imagination of this 'Good' in a child built hope and resilience, (Bruggemann, 1986) and perpetuated awareness of the spiritual search for meaning, value and purpose (McClure, 1996). This proposition offered a scaffold of ideas to enhance the contention that a spiritual, prayerful child was a resilient one, which in turn was one of the mainstays of this research.

Mountain (2004) linked the spirituality of the child as the co-existence of their prayerful nature with their *hopeful imagination.* Brueggemann (1986) noted that without prayer there was no hope. Mountain (2004) conducted a research project investigating the meaning and function of prayer for children in several primary schools in Melbourne. The schools represented were Catholic, Independent (Christian), Christian (Parent-Controlled or Charismatic School), Orthodox Jewish, Islamic and Government schools. There were 60 year five pupils (children about 10 years old) interviewed and they were asked to write their responses to sentences such as: a) Prayer is… b) People pray because… c) I would pray… d) I feel most prayerful when…

Findings from this research indicated that children of this age group viewed prayer as a form of communication with a good God. The main function of prayer was seen as perceiving and responding to the experiences of life. In prayer children identified the expression of feelings and hopes like praise, grief, need and guilt as the way to connecting to God. Anxiety, loneliness, fear and anger led to prayer which provided hope for an afterlife, as well as assisting the personal formation of the individual. Through prayer children located their social identity in communal ritual, activity and belief. It was seen as a way of directing

help to family, friends and those suffering in crisis or from extreme social injustice. It was also noted that the purpose of prayer was to give praise and thanks to God. Understandings about the meaning and function of prayer provided by Mountain's study informed comparisons between Dinka participant's thoughts and non war-affected children.

The hopeful imagination (Brueggemann, 1986) took shape in the words of the psalmist's vision of God's covenant relationship with the people of Israel. The poetic laments in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and 2 Isaiah were statements of faith, which helped the people to cope with the difficult experiences of life according to Mountain (2004). The notion of the 'hopeful imagination' also articulated the kind of relationship with God that prayer invited. Through interpretation of these psalmists Brueggemann (1986) offered a powerful hermeneutic, and paralleled Israel's relationship with God pre- and post-transformation, to aspects of the faithless spiritualty prevalent in modern society.

The psalmist's vision of God's covenant relationship involved the acceptance of heart-felt grief in awareness of the loss of relationship with God. It also involved God's claim in fidelity to restore what was broken. In the biblical sense this related to Israel's exile situation after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE to the Babylonians. Metaphorically it suggested that

> …the end of any known world, [and it is] about the dismantling of any system and power. (Brueggemann, 1986, p. 4)

Brueggemann's hermeneutic connoted a new order of experience for the Israelites, a change that was manifested from their grief and a hope that transformed them as they embraced God's will. The relinquishing of an old order for the Israelites meant the realization of a new covenant; and in metaphorical terms the application of Brueggemann's interpretation for the current research may be realized in the Dinka's evangelization. This is not to suggest that the previous traditional known world of the Dinka was spiritually inept. On the contrary, their spiritual world reverenced the Divine and their way of life sustained them. This theology offered insight into the meaning and function of prayer for this research because the Dinka's

traditional system of meaning had been attacked, and their prayerful attitude remained with them through their suffering. Their collective hope and search for new meaning was finding a realisation in the Christian religion. Stancliffe's (2008) contention relating Isaiah's rescue and redemption language to Dinka conversion to new faith was significant in the light of Brueggemann's hermeneutic of the psalmists. Knowledge of this background assisted in the formulation of questions about prayer for the semi-structured interviews with Dinka adult and child participants. The issues offered in this line of inquiry supported the second research aim in so much as the meaning and function of prayer presented themes of hope and endurance as a backdrop to their religious practice.

Mountain's (2004) study claimed that children from backgrounds without the experience of war connected in prayer to God in times of need and grief, and that prayer contributed to their social identity, communal ritual, activity and belief. In the context of the Dinka's cultural sensitivities it was expected that their practice of communal ritual and prayer set the tone and example for their children. Brueggemann's (1986) hopeful imagination helped locate Dinka faith, in the context of an experience of grief that sought regenerative newness, a hope that trusted in God's fidelity, and a memory that allowed joyful possibilities. Their humility of heart dignified their right relationship with God, in whom all things were possible. In spiritual and religious terms, this was the substance of resilience.

The Mental Health of Children Affected by War

Defining Mental Health Issues

For the purposes of this research the terms *posttraumatic stress disorder* (PTSD) and

psychosocial were used in discussions about the mental health of children affected by war.

The protracted response to a stressful event is called PTSD.

> The symptoms include the reliving of the trauma in 'flashbacks' or dreams, together with feelings of detachment or emotional numbness or blunting. There may also be avoidance of people or particular situations, especially associated with the trauma. (Baker, 1995, p. 178)

The United Nation's Children Fund Workshop on Psychosocial Care and Protection (1997)

outlined the parameters for the meaning of the word psychosocial, attributing to it the

interplay of psychological and social effects, which may have an affect on one another.

> 'Psychological effects' are those which affect emotion, behaviour, thoughts, memory, learning ability perceptions and understanding. 'Social effects' refer to altered relationships due to death, separation, estrangement and other losses, family and community breakdown, damage to social values and customary practices and the destruction of social facilities and services. Social effects also extend to the economic dimension, as many individuals and families become destitute through the material and economic devastation of conflict, losing social status and place in their familiar social network. (Machel, 2001b, p.28)

In response to this, children may present with various symptoms including

> …separation anxiety, developmental delays, sleep disturbances, nightmares, decreased appetite, withdrawn behaviour and lack of interest in play. Younger children can have learning difficulties; older children and adolescents can show anxious or aggressive behaviour and depression (Machel, 2001b, p. 28).

These conditions identified the areas of incongruity from psychosocial perspectives as they

related to symptoms of war-affected children and adolescents. The information provided

informed the third research aim.

Factors Affecting Mental Health

Factors affecting the mental health of children who have experienced war were informed by

the studies of Machel's (1996, 2001b & 2007), United Nations Reports on the impact of

armed conflict on children, and the rights and protection for war- affected children. The

factors that were said to contribute to the psychosocial redress of children were the deprivation of material and emotional needs. The deprivation of nutritious food, adequate health care, decent education and shelter was significant to the mental, as well the physical, well-being of the child, because the absence of these called into view the instability of the social structures that were not able to sustain their viable function. Also in the absence of a secure and loving family a child's emotional needs were not met (Machel, 1996). Not withstanding many of the dangers and sufferings that a child may have experienced as a consequence of war, it was maintained that family separation was especially detrimental to the well-being of war-affected children, because it was seen as the time when children needed to rebuild their trust in adults and learn to develop sustainable relationships (Machel, 2001b). This information was important for the understanding of the mental health of the Dinka child who had been affected by war. It highlighted the context and sensitivity for the experience of trauma in terms of normative child's needs per se and did not focus attention on any mental disorder. It also reoriented the notion of dysfunction as inclusive of the harmful occurrences, which affected children rather than stigmatize the children's minds in their ability to absorb trauma. This stance was adopted in this research. It also identified the range of possible lived experiences that Dinka children and adolescents endured. Identification of these informed understanding of the psychosocial impact of war, and was relevant to the third research question.

Psychosocial Impact of Violence on Children

A picture of the psychosocial impact of violence applicable to the experiences of Dinka participants for this research was informed by the Machel reports (1996 & 2001b). Experiences of adversity encountered by Dinka children in the various states of displacement have been discussed earlier in this chapter. These in part illustrated the suffering that contributed to the psychosocial impact of the destabilizing life experiences that war had in the mid to late 1990's and early 2000 on the Dinka child. The following issues however related to

grave violations that they might have experienced. The source of information was Machel's (1996) report to the United Nations and subsequent press releases.

Of special concern was the recruitment and use of child soldiers in armed conflict and sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. For reasons such as the experience of hunger, poverty, being abducted or volunteering for military service, children between the ages of eight to eighteen were used as combatants in conflict zones in Sudan. *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund* (UNICEF) put figures of 12,000 child soldiers in the charge of SPLA forces in 2005 (UNICEF Press Centre, 2009, November 23). In 2001 UNICEF airlifted 2,500 child soldiers (boys and girls) in the Sudan combat zone of Bahr el Ghazal, which was the homeland of many of the Dinka. These children were trained for combat, with a proportion engaged in fighting and with others experiencing the trauma associated with living in an army camp. (UNICEF Press Centre, 2001, February 27).

Sexual exploitation and gender-based violence included rape, prostitution, sexual humiliation and trafficking. Women and girls were at risk and vulnerable in the places they sought refuge as internally or externally displaced persons, or as they fled or were in transit from combat zones. The perpetrators responsible were mainly from either the governmental military or the militia armed forces (Machel, 2001b).

> I was defiled by some older boys [could not remember how many] when we were being marched to the rebel camp. After returning from Sudan, I was a wife to one rebel commander then another junior commander and then two 'older' rebel soldiers. I had one child who died when he was a few days old. I was a slave to the rebels for 19 months. I do not think I will marry again. A (now 18 year old) girl abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army. (Bennett, Gamba and van der Merwe eds. 2000, p. 48)

The effects of abduction, captivity and incarceration, and the exposure to killing in combat, beatings, rape and physical abuse were known to develop PTSD in children. The resulting breakdown in trust they experience created the false understanding that violence was acceptable and necessary for living. Often estrangement occurred from family and friends. This disorientation in relationship relayed physical symptoms such as painful nightmares,

hallucinations and flashbacks, insomnia, depression, anxiety, irritability, hyper-alertness and outbursts of anger and violence. It was important to note that the response to trauma was individual and commensurate with a person's inner strength (Bennett, Gamba and van der Merwe, 2000). No questions about combat experience or sexual exploitation were asked of the Dinka participants, however this literature highlighted the range of child suffering and the levels of trauma that war affected children and adolescents may have been subjected.

Complementary Studies

Literature about the effects of war on children involved a matrix of issues, which related variously to the mental health outcomes of individual refugee children (Merali, 2008). In the first stages of displacement and or migration the following situations may have applied. Children may have been born and raised in a refugee camp (Miller, 1996); or they may have the fled war zone and experienced internal or external displacement (McCloskey, Southwick, Fernanndez-Esquer and Locke, 1995; and Kostelny and Wessells, 2004).

Findings from seminal studies conducted into the mental health of Guatemalan Mayan children raised in refugee camps near the Mexican border found children had low levels of *posttraumatic stress* (PTS) and typical psychosocial problem development. The results from this study also significantly linked the positive mental and physical health of the mothers to their children. Children of mothers who experienced PTS, depression and physical health problems resulting from war experiences, presented with emotional or behavioural distress. Despite this, Miller's (1996) research supported the notion that children born and raised in refugee camps could positively adjust when camp life was generally settled and it was all that they knew. Miller (1996) also maintained that when education in the camps offered developmentally appropriate explanations for the children being there, they came to understand why they were there (Miller 1996).

Children who have experienced displacement and who have witnessed violence, death and / or destruction presented with PTS and psychosocial problems (McCloskey et al. 1995).

Another study focusing on the war experiences and distress symptoms of Bosnian children (Goldstein, Wampler and Wise, 1997) classified various areas of children's experiences of trauma in war and witness of suffering. They found that children, particularly of an older age who had witnessed violent victimization of the nuclear family, the killing or injury of a parent or sibling, the arrest, torture or intimidation of a parent or sibling, or had witnessed a massacre, presented with significant distress symptoms. These symptoms may have included PTSD, anxiety, sadness, guilt, the re-experiencing of traumatic events, the avoidance of associated stimuli and increased arousal. Distress symptoms hampered the children's ability to play or engage with others appropriately, some felt they were responsible for their family's troubles and others demonstrated extreme pessimism.

Kostelny and Wessells (2004) worked with East Timorese children and adolescents on a community–based intervention programme. These young people had witnessed violence and were internally displaced, and support was offered to arrest psychosocial distress. Researchers found the programme reduced psychological distress levels and the skills the young people gained benefitted their lives. Notably similar programmes such as this operated in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya (Sommers, 2005).

The trauma associated with war-affected children's pre-migration experiences has been cited. The PTS related to post-migration stressors were investigated by Heptinstall et al. (2004) among a mixed sample of refugee children from the United Kingdom. Results from this study found that levels of depression in children were associated with the experience of their family. The study identified insecure asylum status, financial difficulties and parental unemployment as the main stressors responsible for having an impact on refugee children's mental health in the post-migration stage. For the purposes of this research, it was understood that war-affected children might have experienced ongoing stress in the post-migration stage, even in the relative safety of their final host country. The variables presented here highlighted the psychosocial impact of violence and instability in war-affected children and adolescent's

lives, and provided information for raising awareness for their psychological needs. These also assisted in unpacking the implications and incongruities associated with the research aim.

<div align="center">Resilience</div>

War-affected children suffered trauma, loss and grief. Their ability to process and make meaning of these stressors required resilience. Anderson (2004) contended that resilience was the product of adverse experiences and she attributed three meanings to the word. Resilience viewed as a developmental process was related to risk and having the ability to develop the attributes to "overcome the odds." Resilience seen as a coping mechanism had the ability to manage chronic major life stressors and the third view depicted resilience as the capacity for recovery from prolonged adversity. Thus it can be said that resilience is a process, a capacity and an outcome (Masten & Coatsworth, 1991).

Of particular interest were the attitudes and cognitive systems that promoted resilience such as optimism, humour and control beliefs (Freitas and Downey 1998; Masten & Coatsworth, 1991). As an indicator of spirituality this research sought to investigate how these attitudes and cognitive systems helped make meaning of Dinka children's lives.

Ego-resilience was coined by Blecham (2000) to describe children's resourceful, flexible responses to stressful situations. High levels of empathy, reasoning and openness to experience were said to characterize their outlook. Investigation and demonstration of these attitudes and personal qualities were sought by this research and the semi-structured interviews incorporated the exploration of this notion of resilience.

<div align="center">*Children Coping with Loss*</div>

The reactions of war-affected children to trauma called to mind the significance of things they had lost that were important to them (Frater-Mathieson, 2004). One of the coping behaviours for loss involved the person facing the reality of the loss situation, and grieving. Another coping behaviour was to face the reality that is to be dealt with, and the prospect of change that reoriented the person's life (Silverman, 2000). The way war-affected children made

meaning of their loss indicated relationship to self, others and their world and this was relevant to their spirituality. This study sought demonstration of the quality of Dinka children's resilience and their ability to relate to their loss through conversation and questionnaire. Understandings about children's and adolescents' resilience and coping mechanisms applied multi-dimensionally to the three aims of this research. For the first aim, the notion of resilience and spirituality offered insight into the ways war-affected young people may empower themselves to become spiritually well after the chaos and trauma they have experienced. Resilience through communal solidarity and religious participation supported exploration of the second aim. The third aim of this research highlighted the need to associate resilience and coping mechanisms of war-affected children to their settlement concerns.

<div align="center">Spirituality in Education</div>

In Britain, the 1988 Education Reform Act called for a balanced curriculum and highlighted the need for spirituality in education. Initially, the issue of the nature and effectiveness of moral education was raised in response to perceived social moral decline, unruliness and violence among the young. The moral rhetoric shifted as fundamental questions were asked about the spirituality of their young people, and their ability to assimilate concern for the ultimate meaning and purpose of life (Wright, 2000). It was felt that anxiety over life's meaningless preoccupied the young and that this had degraded their sense of 'ultimate concern', which was said to source "the meaning of all meanings" (Tillich, 1962, p.13). This it was believed resulted in a loss of one's spiritual core. Thus the balanced curriculum called for:

- Promoting the spiritual, moral cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and;

- The preparation of such pupils for opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.   (HMSO, 1988)

The resolve to inculcate spiritual vigour in British education was contained in the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority paper (SCAA, 1995). It identified the following needs :

- develop an appreciation that people have individual and shared beliefs;

- develop a sense of awe, wonder and mystery;

- experience a feeling of transcendence;

- search for a purpose in life;

- be able to respond to challenging experiences in life such as beauty, suffering and death;

- be able to recognise the worth and value of each individual and to develop a sense of community;

- examine one's own experiences and those of others, and be able to express innermost thoughts and feelings through creative arts and media;

- appreciate their emotions and feelings, e.g. their response to kindness or beauty.

The needs identified in the abovementioned text highlighted spirituality to connectedness and presented a relational dimension of being. These areas were pertinent to the spiritualising of education from a non-religious base, which were applicable to all areas of the curriculum and adaptable for all students (de Souza, 2010).

A recent historical perspective for spirituality in education in Australia identified that the notion had not gained support. Recognition to spiritual aspects of human existence was not acknowledged in *The Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia* (Australian Education Council, 1989), as was the case in Britain at that same time (Fisher, 2010). Traction for the idea was gained during the 1990's when ten references for the spiritual development of young people were made in the subject areas of health and physical education, studies of society and environment and maths in *The Victorian Curriculum and Standards Framework I* (Board of Studies, 1995). In recent times, *The Curriculum and*

Standards Framework (CSF) II, (Board of Studies, 2000) has made only one reference to the spiritual domain in the rationale for the arts section, and currently *The Victorian Essential Learning Standards* (VCAA, 2004) has made one reference only in the history section of that document (Fisher, 2007). The Victorian syllabus material makes known there is a limited application for spiritualising education in Melbourne schools. However a theoretical position for understanding spirituality in Australian education has provided perspectives to analyse the spirituality of war affected Dinka children and adolescents who attend Catholic schools. Literature focusing on the spirituality of children and adolescents highlighted their needs and deficiencies. In identifying the spiritual needs of young people from Western cultures, Eckersley (2008) considered the reclamation of community was necessary for grounding their identity, values and beliefs in a sound social context. He also contended that responsibilities over rights, the spiritual over material, a shared vision of the future over present and an appreciation of the enduring over ephemeral, were priorities for restoring spiritual equilibrium (Fisher, 2010). Literature informing perspectives on contemporary spirituality in Western culture highlighted the prevalence of changed cultural meanings responsible for influencing the identity, values and beliefs of young people. Implications of these for religious education in Catholic schools contextualized a necessity to offer education in spirituality relevant to the lives of pupils in a non-deficit model (Rossiter, 2010). The following sample list focused on the sociological constructs that interpreted various spiritual dispositions. They included secularisation, privatisation of religion, individualism and individualisation and de-traditionalism. Emerging social psychological frameworks for understanding personal identity, wellbeing, character and virtue were also identified as constructs. Secularisation identified the decline in prominence of religion and the privatisation of religion referred to religious beliefs also becoming a private matter. The notion of individualism and individualisation emphasized the individual and the exercise of personal freedom that often came at the expense of the community. De-traditionalisation harkened to the decline in the

sense of family, religious and cultural traditions. In the realm of social psychology the ideas of identity and wellbeing linked the individual's inner resources to self-understanding, self-expression and wholesomeness in life. Character and virtue as constructs were relayed as an individual's moral integrity, where the quality of values and commitments made were reinforced by the good 'habits' of the mind (Rossiter, 2010).

Given these constructs, Rossiter (2010) situated spirituality in education for Catholic schools, calling for its religious education to become more focused on resourcing children and adolescents in their basic human spirituality. To do this he proposed that Catholic religious education needed to realign their focus to include contemporary spirituality and help young people to negotiate the spiritual and moral complexities of modern life. He also contended that the teaching of the traditional religious heritage remained an important part of spirituality in education but that it needed be broadened to account for the healthy possibilities and associated problems contained in unwrapping new cultural meanings.

The views of Eckersley (2008) and Rossiter (2010) situated young people's spirituality in contemporary Western culture. The literature provided a background for comparing the spiritualities of the war affected Dinka children from the western suburbs of Melbourne with the young people from a Western culture. In exploring the theoretical application of spirituality in education, possible differences arising from the contrasting spiritualities of the two groups may be examined. These differences may highlight possible incongruities and implications for inclusive Catholic religious education in Melbourne.

<div align="center">Implications for Teaching Religious Education</div>

Possible implications arising from the Dinka children's and adolescents' experiences of war and their cultural background for the teaching of religious education may be realized in the needs and issues that arose from their learning. Qualities of their religiosity and spirituality may be assessed. A study conducted by de Vries-Schot, van Uden, Heitink and Pieper (2008) developed a set of criteria for assessing the quality of a person's religiosity and faith, from

psychological, psychiatric and theological points of view. The criteria for assessing healthy religiosity and salutary faith from these disciplines were commonality of understanding and appreciation of relationship to self, God and others. A person who freely accepted to do good, valued life non-materialistically and searched for its meaning through trusted relationship with God in prayer were said to be of mature faith. These common psychological, psychiatric and theological precepts of faith and religiosity informed behaviours and learning for affective and spiritual outcomes in religious education, and were noteworthy for unit planning and lesson preparation in these areas.

Cognitive learning skills appropriating language need were highlighted in Oliver, Haig and Grote (2009). They addressed educational challenges faced by African students from refugee backgrounds especially in relation to English as a Second Language (ESL) programme requirements for new arrivals in Intensive English Centres (IEC), and also mainstream primary and secondary schools in Western Australia. The needs and issues they highlighted were pertinent to general academic learning skills required to perform successfully at school. Sangster (2002) also highlighted strong oral rather than literate traditions for students with African refugee backgrounds and these informed the area of religious knowledge acquisition. The subject of homework and homework groups for African students with low literacy backgrounds acknowledged the dichotomy between skills and meaning-based practices of language and literacy education (Dooley, 2009). The appropriation of didactic and language experience approaches in religious education needed consideration and the success of these groups for creating opportunity in learning was presented. The Religious Education Curriculum Framework for Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne for Primary and Secondary (2008 & 2005) respectively, highlighted skills of reading and writing where critical, reflective, analysis and informed communication about God, Jesus, Church and its community, religion, prayer and sacrament were sought for primary and secondary learners commensurate with each level. The cognitive

skills-based component assumed in the Melbourne religious education frameworks was considered in relation to the religious education needs of the Dinka children.

Matthews (2008) explored schooling and settlement concerns for refugees in Australia. She cited issues affecting good practice and treatment for African refugee students and commended that knowledge about their historical and cultural backgrounds broke down barriers. In particular she noted that refugee education here required a socio-political approach that addressed *racialisation*, acculturation and resilience. Racialisation she considered an ideology where modern post-colonial developed nations received afflicted refugees in a way that denigrated their status as a "fourth world" new comers, and delivered marginalizing effects on their settlement. Good practise interventions she conceived offered a whole school approach informing organizational processes and structures, policy, procedure, pedagogy and curricula. In Catholic schools where the Dinka students are learners of Catholic faith, responsibility for their religious education responds to a holistic approach and good organizational practices where racialisation, acculturation and resilience are addressed. The implications for teaching religious education in Catholic schools are perceived to be generated from literacy issues (Oliver, Haig & Grote, 2009), learning differences (Oliver et al., 2009 and Dooley, 2009), and attitudes and understandings about African refugee students (Matthews, 2008).

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

The spirituality of children and adolescents not affected by war (Hay & Nye, 1998; Keating, 2000 and Mountain, 2005) and their spiritual development (Champagne, 2001; Hyde, 2005 & Kessler, 2000) focused enquires into the Dinka young people's worldview, culture and traditions (Deng, 1972 & Lienhardt, 1987) and their experiences of war (Yath, 1991; Moro, 2004; Johnson, 2002; Parker, 2002 & Crisp, 1991), because these aspects provided information about the Dinka children's and adolescents' spiritual "connectedness" (Hyde, 2008 & Kessler, 2000) in the wake of their trauma and suffering (Machel, 2001). The

religiosity of children and adolescents not affected by war was highlighted in their perceptions of God (Duffy, 2005), Jesus (Aylward, 2005), Church (Dixon, 2005) and prayer (Mountain, 2005), and literature from these sources provided information for comparing with the Dinka young people's perceptions. The Dinka students' prior and current learning about God, Jesus, Church, and prayer called into view the influences of mainly Christian (Deng, 1972 & Stancliffe, 2008) and to a lesser extent Islamic (Deng, 1972) evangelization that occurred during the course of the two recent civil wars (1958-1972 and 1983-2005) in Sudan. The implications of the Dinka children's and adolescents' war experiences, worldview, culture, tradition and prior religious learning are relevant to their religious education. The assumptions made in Catholic religious education curriculums (The Religious Education Curriculum Framework, primary 2008 & secondary 2005) highlighted a disparity in learning approaches for the Dinka students (Matthews, 2008 & Oliver et al., 2009). A theoretical examination of spirituality in education (Wright, 2000) focused learning needs in young people from Western cultural backgrounds (Eckersley, 2008 and Rossiter, 2010) and highlighted possible contrast with Dinka children and adolescent's spiritualities.

In the following chapter the elements of the research design are described and justified for this study. The epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodologies, methods and system of data analysis that was used are linked to provide a framework for the generation of findings.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

This chapter describes and justifies the elements of the research design that were selected for

this study. Figure 3:1 sets out the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodologies,

methods and system of data analysis that was used, showing how these together provided a

framework for the generation of findings. The research design was an extension of a model

Figure 3:1. Overview of the Research Design

EPISTEMOLOGY	• Constructivism: Knowledge is individually constructed based on socially contextualized learnings • Social Constructionism: Reality is socially constructed. The collective generation of meaning as shaped by the conventions of language and other social processes where culture is the medium for publicly transmitting their system of intelligibility.
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	• Interpretivism: Qualitative approach for identifying and documenting 'knowing' through interpretation of specific phenomena studied in the particular context from people's frame of reference. • Phenomenological Hermeneutics: Acknowledges the description of lived experience and the socially constructed reality as facts meaningfully experienced and processed interpretively.
METHODOLOGY	• Qualitative: A qualitative approach to social research relying on the analysis of text data for the purpose of gaining meaning of human action (Schwandt, 2001). • Multicase & Multisite Studies: Methodology represents qualitative research undertaken as multicase, multisite studies guided by analysis driven, purposeful sampling with phenomenal variation.
METHOD	• Open Questionnaire: use of closed and open-ended questions delivered orally • Focus Group: Modified focus group technique incorporating discussion from responses to visual data & conversation generated through open-ended questions.
METHOD CONTINUED	• Visual Data Collection: Draw-Write and Narrate approach • Semi-structured interviews: Interviewee's descriptions of situations prompted by closed,& open-ended questioning and including participant recount & focused questions eliciting detail.
DATA ANALYSIS	• Content Analysis: Qualitative approach to data analysis. • Applies to interpretive methodologies that code text into categories and counts frequencies of occurrences within each catagory.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

proposed by Crotty (1998). The researcher used this model because it provided a logical

pathway to navigate the considerations of the research task.

Epistemological Foundations

Introduction

Constructivist and social constructionist epistemologies acknowledged the construction of

individual's understandings of their human experience and also of their cultural social world

respectively. Lincoln and Guba (2000) contended,

> … that a goodly portion of social phenomena consists of the meaning-making
> activities of groups and individuals around the phenomena (p. 167),
>
> The meaning-making activities themselves are of central interest to social
> constructionists/constructivists, simply because it is the meaning-
> making/sense-making attributional activities that shape action (or inaction) (p.
> 167).

In exploring the spirituality of the Dinka child and adolescent in relation to their lived

experience of war, the meaning they made of it was incumbent on the activity of the

individual mind. Hence the learner's knowledge was constructed. On the other hand, the

quest for knowledge concerning Dinka religiosity focused on a "collective generation and

transmission of meaning" (Crotty, 1998, p. 58), as engagement by the whole community *in

situ* constructed the meaning of their religious practices, in sympathy with their language

conventions, their traditional past and their cultural presence in Catholic parish communities

in Melbourne. This knowledge assumed an historical and cultural landscape and the context

to operate within social constructionist perspectives (Schwandt, 1994).

 This research included the epistemological perspectives of both constructivism and

social constructionism. It acknowledged meaning-making phenomena as individually and

socially constructed, present in human thought and action, and that the mutual interaction of

these was important for the creation of knowledge.

Constructivism

Constructivism may refer to either an epistemology or pedagogy. As a theory of knowledge the seminal works of Piaget (1956) and Kant (Kant, 1781/1998) provided its basis, and as a way of learning it defined human experience as the seat of knowledge. Epistemologically, constructivism derived aspects of its rationale from Piaget's (1956) theory of cognition. Claims that linked scientific and technological advances to providing the ultimate truths about the world objectified knowledge and reality. Piaget questioned this view of reality arguing that our senses, which coordinated our action, influenced the way we perceived and thought about the world, and this experience embodied the way knowledge was made (von Glasersfeld, 1995). Kantian constructivism made the link between empiricism and rationalism. According to Kant (1781/1998), neither the knowledge grounded in experience, nor the knowledge constructed by the mind could operate in a vacuum. Empirical knowledge required sensory experiences, and rational knowledge needed conceptual schemes to make meaning as they constructed experience. The construct of experience was thus facilitated by mental categories such as space, time, motion and previous knowledge. For Kant, knowledge acquired empirically and rationally was realized in these conceptual areas because these elements characterized our experience of the world (Howe & Berv, 2000).

Piaget (1956) and Kant's (1781/1998) contributions to constructivism led to the following assumptions. Knowledge within the realm of sensory experience was rationalized symbiotically through conceptual constructs. In effect, living and thinking co-constructed our human experience of the world. Crotty (1998) contended that knowledge was dependent on individuals engaging with objects in the world who in response were moved to make sense of them. The radical constructivism of von Glasersfeld (1995) noted that the individual act of learning to make sense of the world involved a process of knowledge reconstruction on the part of the learner. The sense made of the knowledge constructed was viewed as "temporary,

developmental, non-objective, internally constructed and socially and culturally mediated"
(Fosnot, 1996, p. ix).

      Glaser and Strauss' (1967) formalized theoretical application of 'Grounded Theory'
legitimized qualitative inquiry. In defining constructivism in view of grounded theory
Charmaz (2009) articulated a contemporary revision of constructivism's elements.
Constructivism assumed a relativist epistemology where social circumstances denoting
empirical problems led to situating knowledge. This knowledge was socially produced and
located the participant's meaning and actions. Various standpoints incorporated both the
participants' and theorist's thoughts where the interpretation of the participants' beliefs, their
purposes, action and inaction were contingent on the researcher's knowledge of the
participants and their situation. Finally, a reflective stance toward the actions and situations of
both the researcher and participants were considered for both the field setting and the
analytical constructions of them. Charmaz's (2009) position on constructivism recognized the
importance of social circumstances such as social locations, cultural traditions, and
interactional and situational contingencies for guiding the personal construction of
knowledge, and this epistemic model was sympathetic with social constructionism.

      Constructivism was selected as a theory of knowledge meaningful to this study
because it acknowledged sensory experience as a schema for a conceptual construct, where
the meaning-making activity was generated by the individual mind (Crotty, 1998). In relation
to the Dinka, knowledge about spirituality was first sourced from the learner because what
they came to know about their self, others and creation was learned in the context of their
personally lived experience. Constructivism also aligned social contexts as transmitters of
human knowledge and this provided suitable accommodation for social constructionism. The
meaning the Dinka children and adolescents were able to make of their sensory experiences of
war was relational to their social circumstances, and the constructivist perspective was
sympathetic to these variables.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism acknowledged culture as the generator and transmitter of human knowledge in the social context. From a constructionist perspective information about human beings and their interaction with, and the meaning they made of the world, was developed and transmitted within a social context (Crotty, 1998). Denzin (1997) citing Stuart Hall (1985) claimed that "there is no way of experiencing real relations of a particular society outside of its cultural and ideological categories" (p.105), and Fish (1990) described culture as a "publicly available system of intelligibility" (p. 186). Thus the nature and function of culture in the process of social exchange was contingent on the social constructionist theory because its information was subject to the collective generation of ideologies that were passed on orally or in written form. Culture publicly mediated knowledge to individuals through a system of significant symbols (Geertz, 1973) and these symbols were collectively generated and transmitted within a given social network. Social constructionism then, is concerned with a meaningful reality that is shared within a social construct, which is sustained and reproduced through social life (Greenwood, 1994). Overall, social constructionism acknowledged the input of culture as significant for knowledge construction and it accepted that meaningful reality in the social context was relative and transient. Interpretation of these realities was assumed in this research and the Dinka historicity and their social culture were recognized.

In this research the relative and transient perspectives of social constructionism provided appropriate conditions for the interpretation of phenomena. Crotty (1998) contended that divergent interpretations were necessary because different kinds of people operated in different worlds of social life. Separate realities were possible through the recognition of resultant understandings and meanings, which by nature were diverse. This study recognized that a social reality of war was different from one of peace, and that its realities led to diverse understandings and meanings because the nature of its social life was different.

In social constructionism, language and culture have been viewed as a mechanism for disclosing the meaning of the human world (Taylor, 1995), and as an interpretative medium used to reveal the truth (Smith, 1997) respectively. Thus the various ways of thinking and speaking within social collectives distinguished the meaning of separate realities, demonstrated in social life that becomes a construct relative to that meaning. The relativity and transience of the interpretation of social life, which was bound to language, disclosed the meaning of particular and diverse world cultures, ethnic or otherwise. Pre-civil war (1958), Dinka culture was distinctly tribal and agrarian and Dinka language was in deference to cattle. The impact of two civil wars in the thirty-three years on their traditional way of life, and to their language highlighted the need to incorporate epistemic mechanisms that accommodated relativism and transience for the interpretation of the Dinka's experience.

Social constructionism seeks knowledge that is constructed through culture and language, and the meaning that these mechanisms help create in the social context provide understanding when shared (Gergen, 1995). The study of Dinka religiosity involved understandings about the collective generation of meaning concerning God and worship. Shared understandings created through common religious practices in sympathy with their language and cultural conventions, past and present, publicly expressed their meaning socially. Knowledge derived from the collective generation of meaning that has been shaped by the conventions of language and transmitted by culture provided the epistemic position for this research.

<div align="center">Theoretical Perspective</div>

<div align="center">*Interpretivism*</div>

Interpretive research is said to focus

> …on identifying, documenting, and 'knowing' through interpretation of 'the world views, values, meanings, beliefs, thoughts and general characteristics of life events, situations, ceremonies and specific phenomena under investigation, with the goal being to document and interpret as fully as possible the totality of whatever is being studied in particular contexts from the people's viewpoint or frame of reference (Leininger, 1985, p. 5)

What was sought was the meaning of human action. Arising from neo-Kantian thought concerning the distinction between the natural and human sciences, interpretivism maintained that the subjective meaning of action might be discerned without sacrificing objectivity. Interpretivism then, responded to the needs of research in the human sciences by seeking the meaning of what contributed to action. The assumption underlying this was that human action was meaningful (Schwandt, 2000).

This research sought to interpret the acts of spirituality and religiosity and other human qualities concomitant with these acts such as resilience, dignity, piety and devoutness. To do this, the exploration of beliefs, desires, and personal experiences, required a theoretical process. Several interpretivist philosophies informed this theoretical process and an examination of the proponents of phenomenology and hermeneutical phenomenology provided insight into ontological alignment of constructivism and social constructionism epistemologies as necessary complementaries in this research.

The interpretivist approach was adopted for this study because it looked "for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). In this sense the culture of the Dinka who have been affected by war and suffering were brought into focus with the culture of the Catholic tradition in Australia. These cultures combined were engaged in an historical situation where the Dinkas as refugees, who have been forced to migrate, have also encountered the Catholic religion. Both made sense of God and the world and through phenomenological hermeneutic expressions of the Dinka spirituality and religiosity in their connection with the Catholic religion, these offered insight for appropriating religious education pedagogy.

Phenomenological Hermeneutics

Within the perspective of interpretivism, phenomenological hermeneutics has been recognized as the theoretical perspective for this study because it located knowledge about human existence as emanating from the human situation, and furthermore that these situations

were ripe for interpretation. Phenomenological hermeneutics is an inquiry approach into the

nature of phenomena from perspectives such as human consciousness (Husserl, 1970), the

"mode of being" (Heidegger, 1962) and "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990). Clarification

of the conditions where the understandings of particular lived experience has occurred may be

illuminated by research into its subject matter through the medium of language (Gadamer,

1998). Philosophies from these theorists provided the theoretical perspective of this research.

Husserl's phenomenological philosophy focused on the character of the

conscious experience of stakeholders. Heideggerian thought attributed significance to the

consciousness in formation of historically "being-in-the-world". The notion of lived

experience or "the life world" (van Manen, 1990) comprehended meanings of human

experience as it was lived (Polkinghorne, 1983). For the Dinka, their consciousness was of a

historically lived experience of war and suffering, and this research assumed this

understanding. Phenomenologically speaking it may be said that the Dinka children and

adolescents constructed meaning in a world from their world of experiences whilst

simultaneously operating in it (Koch, 1995). The researcher sought understanding of this

construct through active involvement and immersion in the Dinka community. Growing

awareness of the Dinka worldview through discussions with the Dinka about aspects of their

spirituality and religiosity informed the researcher about their lived experience.

Hermeneutics involves an interpretative process, which may be achieved through a

"hermeneutic circle" (Gadamer, 1998). This metaphor explained the movement that generated

analysis and interpretation between the parts of the experience to the whole of the experience

in repeated reciprocal action within a text, until meanings without contradiction emerged

(Annells, 1996). Gadamer's (1998) phenomenological hermeneutic was concerned with

clarifying the conditions where understanding took place. The situations where understanding

took place for the Dinka child and adolescent occurred in their physical journeys as refugees,

and in their relationships with others who shared these experiences. Knowing what these

young people held important, and wished for, indicated what they valued in life and their considerations of the importance of change respectively. Additional areas for the adolescents were their rites of passage from adolescent to adult, and their awareness of self in their ability to exceed their own expectations. These presented as areas for clarification in terms of the conditions that addressed life's transitions and adolescents' needs to transcend personal limits (Kessler, 2000).

The interpretive process sought the Dinka child's and adolescent's conscious selves. In applying a phenomenological hermeneutic approach the researcher sought understandings about the meaning these young people made of war, dislocation, suffering, God, prayer and religion in their connection to self, others and the world within the tradition from which they spoke (Gadamer, 1998). The researcher noted that the understandings and interpretation of them were linked and as such the interpretation was not static but an evolving process (Annells, 1996). It was also noted that the understandings referred to were based on historicality of being (Koch, 1996), and thus the meaning that was made of them could apply partial understanding of the spirituality and religiosity of war-affected children and adolescents in keeping with Dinka culture, tradition and the young people who experienced the second civil war (1983-2005) and its effects first hand.

Research Methodology

The purpose of the methodology was to reconstruct the organizing principles and logic of the research methods used. The methodology was qualitative research undertaken as multi-site, multi-case studies guided by analysis driven, purposeful sampling with phenomenal variation (Sandelowski, 1995). Multi-case and multi-site studies were chosen as the research methodology for discerning the nature and context of Dinka children's experience of war, dislocation, and trauma, and its significance to their spiritual perceptions, religiosity and the congruence of these for learning religion in Catholic schools.

Rationale for the Methodology

The methodology grew from the researcher's background in education, teaching literacy to new arrivals in Catholic schools in the western suburbs. In addition the researcher's interest, work and association with the Christian Brothers from the Edmund Rice Refugee Services meant that the researcher knew the children and adolescents of the Dinka community through direct involvement in school and community environments.

From the year 2000 onwards many refugees from the south of Sudan came to learn in Catholic schools. The researcher was aware that these Sudanese students responded well to language experience approaches melded with didactic approaches that incorporated meaning-based practices of language. Working with the children while utilizing these techniques offered much in the way of methods that led to rich responses from refugee students, and it reinforced the researcher's resolve for using a modified focus group technique that incorporated a "draw-write and narrate" with young pupils. The other data collection techniques including the oral questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews also offered the prospect of retrieving accurate and credible responses from literacy limited young Dinka students because it was envisaged that both methods would encourage conversation style answers. The oral questionnaire, modified focus group with the Dinka children, semi-structured interviews with the Dinka adolescents, and semi-structured interviews conducted with the adults were the various case studies in this research.

Multicase Research

A case study provides detailed, in-depth description of a particular phenomenon. According to Merriam (1998) a case study may have *'particularistic,' 'descriptive'* or *'heuristic'* features. Particularistic case studies focused on a specific situation and highlighted the general problem. Descriptive case studies provided description of an incident with the aim to show its complexities for the purpose of illustrating difference of opinion. Heuristic case studies revealed insight and offered explanation of reasons for a particular problem (Merriam, 1998).

The four case studies devised for this research included particularistic, descriptive and heuristic features. The first case study was concerned with the Dinka children's and adolescents' religiosity and used an open questionnaire. The questionnaire interviewing technique employed in this method accommodated particularistic and heuristic features through various questioning styles, and it focused on the young people's religiosity, examining and highlighting their perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer. The use of open-ended as well as closed questions in the questionnaire encouraged them to elaborate on their answers, and to provide insightful understandings about aspects of their religiosity and spirituality. The second case study sought the characteristics of the Dinka children's and adolescents' spirituality. The modified focus group featured activities that drew descriptive characteristics from the Dinka children's war experiences. This case study also aimed to illustrate the complexities of the types of trauma suffered by the children in the war, and focused attention on aspects of their physical refugee journey as a metaphor for their spiritual one. The semi-structured interviews with the adolescents featured heuristic characteristics in seeking understandings about the quality of their spirituality. The third case study was conducted with Dinka adults and stories and expressions about their past and present world were sought. This case study accumulated pieces of a picture that described the Dinka worldview. The fourth case study searched for congruence or incongruence between the Dinka student's religiosity, spirituality and worldview and their religious education in Catholic schools. The semi-structured interviews with the adult interviewees were structured around revealing descriptive and heuristic information on issues and needs in religious education, resettlement, conditions of war, prior religious learning or their observations of positively or negatively affected spiritual dispositions. The use of these various case studies acknowledged the construct of information as individual and social, supporting also the theoretical position of interpretivism whilst engaging a hermeneutic of phenomenology. The use of several case studies opened the way for the exploration of different sites.

Multisite Research

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Dinka adults, teachers and principals of primary and secondary schools, religious brothers and a parish priest. These different groups meant that the research had a multisite approach that focused on school, community and parish environments. The prospect of these varied sites offered a breadth of various categories to elaborate the terms of lived experience and helped establish the credibility of the qualitative findings. Several sites for the case studies were chosen. Site one was a Catholic parish represented by the views and observations of a Catholic parish priest. Site two was the Edmund Rice Centre representing community perspectives from the Dinka children, adolescents, adults and the Christian Brothers. Sites three and four were the Catholic primary and secondary schools situated in the western suburbs respectively and involving the Dinka children and adolescents as well as samplings from their teachers and principals. Site five was a seminary training college in Melbourne featuring the childhood memories of war and refugee experiences of a Dinka seminarian. The collection and analysis of different data from these sites led to religious and spiritual insight, cultural, historical, sociological, educational and psychological information relevant to the research problem.

Sampling Techniques

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) proposes the selection of information rich cases according to pertinent issues central to the purpose of the research. The participants selected to purposefully fit this research were those whose experiences of war and the effects of these on their spirituality and religiosity could be articulated in some way. Research aims also referred to the Dinka children's and adolescents' experiences of religious learning in the Sudan or in refugee diaspora, their perceptions of God, Jesus Church and prayer and the implications of these for their religious learning in Catholic schools in Australia. Thus the selection chosen to obtain purposeful sampling for this research was obtained from the Dinka children and adolescents in Catholic schools in the western suburbs, Melbourne because these provided

information of their past war experiences and present perceptions about God, Jesus, Church and prayer. Dinka parents and significant Dinka adults such as elders, a catechist and a seminarian provided information about their past experiences in relation to their journeys, observations of the children's responses to experiences of war, religious learning and aspirations for their future living in Australia. The Christian Brothers and the parish priest provided information about settlement issues, religious practice and the religious brothers reiterated education needs and issues from their experience in the Edmund Rice Refugee ministry. The selection of these participants provided the opportunity to investigate war experiences from different perspectives, and provided credibility through the triangulation of several methodological techniques among the various groups to gain information rich data.

Sandelowski (1995) concurring with Patton's (1990) view that research was 'purposeful,' contended phenomenal variation as one mode of three purposeful sampling types. Phenomenal variation highlighted the presence of representative variables, "likely to be important in understanding how diverse factors configure as a whole" (Sandelowski 1995, p. 182). The phenomenal variation considered pivotal to understanding in light of diverse factors in this research was the understanding that spirituality in the experience of trauma could produce salutogenic or pathogenic forces (Antonovsky, 1987) that illuminated or carbonized (Restrepo, 1999) the spiritual landscape of children affected by war. Therefore the variation in phenomena that was sought observed indications of children's hope or lack of it. Connected relationships in social and religious activity were looked upon as spiritually regenerative behaviours that illustrated positive spiritualities. Angry behaviours or behaviours that sought social or religious isolation were considered spiritually negative. The decision to seek phenomenal variation in this research was made *a priori* for representing resilience and resilience factors in war affected young Dinka. This phenomenal variation was attuned to a theoretical construct, the sampling of which modelled Morse (1991) and Sandelowski (1995), and not Glaser's (1992) projection of theoretical sampling conducted through comparative

analysis of data implemented to test the possible direction for the particular research. Phenomenal variation was a pretext of theoretical sampling and it included purposeful sampling (Coyne, 1997). This form of purposeful sampling was used in this research. Table 3:1 outlines each case study, the applicable research method, the focus of data collection and the particular site where it was gathered.

Table 3:1. *Multi-case /Multi-site Studies, Method and Sampling Focus*

Case study	Research Method	Sampling Focus	Site
1. Dinka children 8 to 16 years	Open questionnaire	RELIGIOSITY Church and Mass participation and reasons for attendance, prior religious learning and perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer	Site 2
2. Dinka children 10 to 12 years	Modified focus group	SPIRITUALITY Encompassing aspects of their experiences of their journey/s and spiritual perspectives pertaining to Hyde (2005a & 2005b), Champagne (2001) and Hay and Nye (1998)	Site 3
Dinka adolescents 13 to 16 years	Semi-structured interviews	SPIRITUALITY Encompassing aspects of their experiences of their journey/s and spiritual perspectives pertaining to Kessler (2000), Hay and Nye (1998) and Donaldson, (1992).	Site 3
3. Dinka parents and elders	Semi-structured interview	SPIRITUALITY/RELIGIOSITY Aspects of personal journey, observations of children's refugee experiences, future directions and Church and Mass participation	Site 2
Dinka catechist	Semi-structured interview	Background information regarding religious instruction in Sudan and refugee diaspora	Site 2
Dinka seminarian	Semi-structured interview	Aspects of journey, religious learning in Sudan and/or in refugee diaspora	Site 5
4. Principals and teachers	Semi-structured interview	IMPLICATIONS FOR CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION Resettlement concerns, positive and negative aspects of Dinka spirituality, and religious education perspectives relating to experience in Catholic school.	Sites 3 and 4
Christian Brothers	Semi-structure interview	Resettlement concerns, positive and negative and positive aspects of Dinka spirituality, religious education perspectives relating after-school homework programme	Site 2
Parish Priest	Semi-structured interview	Resettlement issues, religious activity of the Dinka and participation in the parish.	Site 1

Ethical Considerations

Research involving the Dinka refugees raised important ethical issues. The issue of giving informed consent and the ability of the Dinka adults and children to make autonomous decisions was considered. The notion of iterative consent (Turner and Fozdar, 2010) suggested that ethical agreements for gaining consent could best be secured by a process of negotiation (Mackenzie et al., 2007). Obligatory form filling, in fulfilment of ethical requirements, was undertaken. Thorough procedures were executed to ensure participants and parents of the participants received full knowledge of the nature and requirements of the research and several approaches to ensure this were followed. In some cases consent was obtained from parents of Dinka children and adults through formal introduction via a literate, educated south Sudanese community worker who would accompany the researcher and made the initial formal introductions into Dinka family homes. This was necessary where the parent or guardian of prospective participants could not speak English. The community worker was fluent in Dinka, Arabic and English and would explain the nature of the research and consent details to them. In cases where English speaking did not present a barrier, a Christian Brother known to the families accompanied the researcher and made the formal introductions. As Turner and Fozdar (2010) reported "consent became apparent through the processes, styles and outcomes of interaction in the research situation" (p. 188). The processes of interaction were iterative and interactive. The styles of interaction were professional, caring and involved in the success of the refugees and the outcomes were the efficient and effective collection of data.

Growing knowledge and understanding among the Dinka community about the objectives of the research and the possible positive impact on the learning opportunities for their children informed the decisions of other potential participants. It was also made clear to the children and adolescents involved that they were under no obligation to participate in any

of the research activities even if their parent or guardian had granted consent. This information was conveyed to them by the community worker and was restated by the researcher to individual participants before each session. The process of gaining consent was iterative and interactive on personal, family and community levels. Understanding about consenting and the research project in general gained momentum through "word of mouth" and community support was evident. The researcher regarded the welcome into Dinka family homes as a privilege and was met with hospitality and openness. A sensitive approach for providing informed consent coupled with the researcher's immersion in the community was the basis for building trust, and was maintained through regular contact with the Dinka young people in teaching at schools, and in providing volunteer tutoring in out of school hours homework programmes. The researcher had established a professional and caring rapport that was built on several years of regular and reliable service in educating refugees in Catholic schools and as a volunteer in the Christian Brother's ministry in this area. These approaches contributed to efficient and effective data collection.

<div align="center">Methods</div>

<div align="center">*Introduction*</div>

Methods for gathering data from the different sites included an open questionnaire, a modified focus group, a "draw, write and narrate" method and semi-structured interviews. The gathering of information from different sites utilizing various collection and data analysis enhanced the external validity of findings (Miles and Hubermann, 1994). The use of oral open-ended and closed questions melded quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Responses from closed questions were tallied and open-ended questions were categorized and interpreted according to *content analysis* approach. The findings from both these approaches were obtained by counting the frequency of common responses. The modified focus group provided part one of three phases of inquiry into the Dinka children's and adolescents' spiritual journeys. Textual analysis was an appropriate and suitable way to explore the quality

of the young Dinka children's journey in their refugee diaspora (Ronen, Rosenbaum, Law & Streiner, 2001). The "draw write and narrate" method used in the focus group engaged the children's memories of refugee journeys. This method offered a child-centred and child-directed approach to data collection (Driessnack, 2006) and illustrated its use in the qualitative case study of war experiences and childhood spirituality. Semi-structured interviews used qualitative methodology as they identified, described and interpreted the lived experience of the relevant participants according to the phenomenological hermeneutic of intent (Brenner, 1985). These methods of information gathering culminated in an interpretation that focused on descriptive and heuristic assessment and evaluation of the research problem.

Participants

The phenomenal variation within purposeful sampling (Sandelowski, 1995) targeted those groups of participants who represented the targeted phenomena. The targeted phenomena concerned Dinka spirituality and religiosity and the following participants were selected to inform this research topic according to a range of perspectives. They consisted of Dinka students, male and female, aged between nine and sixteen years of age, Dinka parents and significant Dinka adults including elders, a catechist and a seminarian, educational professionals including teachers, principals and Christian Brothers and a parish priest. Some of the perspectives these groups contributed to the research focus were their lived experiences of war, the Dinka's values and traditional beliefs, the education professionals' understanding of Dinka students' religious learning, resettlement issues in Australia and Mass and Church participation in Africa and Australia. The phenomenal inputs reflected variables important for understanding how diverse factors such as war, spirituality, religiosity and diverse culture configured meaning for the Dinka children and adolescents who were affected by war, and the implication these had for religious education in Catholic schools. In Table 3:2 participant

information, data collection method and recruitment strategy are given. The data collection

sites were a Catholic parish, two Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, the

Edmund Rice Centre run by the Christian Brothers in the western suburbs of Melbourne and a

Catholic seminary.

Table 3:2. *Participant Information, Data Collection and Recruitment*

Group	Number	Method	How Recruited
Children and Adolescents 9 to 16 years	21	Open questionnaire	Through Edmund Rice Centre
Adolescent interviews 13 to 16 years	3 Secondary	Semi-structured interviews	Catholic secondary school
Children 10 to 12 years	1 x 5 Primary	Modified Focus Group Picture chat, draw-narrate-write, and group discussion.	Catholic primary school
Elders	2	Semi-structured interview	Known to researcher
Parish Priest	1	Semi-structured interview	Known to researcher
Christian Brothers	2	Semi-structured interview	Known to researcher
Parents	3 parents (2 men, 1 women)	Interviews on Dinka religiosity and spirituality	Known to researcher
Principals	2 (1 per school)	Semi-structured Interviews	Through Catholic Education Office, Melbourne
Teachers	2 (1 per school)	Semi-structured interview	Through Principal
Dinka Seminarian	1	Semi-structured interview	Through seminary college, Melbourne

Open Questionnaire

Open questionnaires usually cater for distance interviews carried out by telephone, post or email. Post and email questionnaires require written answers from interviewees and assume certain standards of literacy. In some cases audio-recordings can be used to gather data from participants. Questionnaire interviews are a category of the open questionnaire and are conducted face-to-face. The questionnaire generally has several topic questions accompanied by sub-questions where the openness of responses may be gauged. Open questionnaires are seen as an abbreviated media and considered useful for getting information from an inaccessible source (Gillham, 2005). Questionnaire interviewing was selected to provide ease and comfort for young participants to answer questions orally. Digital-audio recording was used to account for children's accents and possible mispronunciations. A focused topic question relating to aspects of the children and adolescents' religiosity was presented in a closed question format and conversation was invited through strategic open-ended questions.

The open questionnaire involved gaining the responses from twenty-one participants, thirteen children aged nine to twelve years and eight adolescents aged thirteen to sixteen years. The participants were recruited through the Edmund Rice Homework centre. The questions of the questionnaire covered the participants' perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer. In addition to these responses information was sought regarding the Rosary, religious symbols in the home and previous religious instruction and attendance at Mass. (See Appendix C1 for master copy of questionnaire). The participants were questioned and their responses were written, digitally recorded and later transcribed. The researcher completed the hard copy of each questionnaire, filling in sections pertaining to closed questions and taking notes of the participants' responses for the open-ended questions. At the times when interviewees recounted particular experiences the researcher asked focused questions, asking them for specific detail and providing further open-ended questions as required to enrich their description (Walker, 2011). The use of dichotomous questions that invited the respondents to

answer 'yes' or 'no' was important in the questionnaire because these questions invited the respondents to enter into conversation and expand their views. Examples of closed questions were: -

Do you believe in God?

Do you believe in Jesus?

Is Jesus important to you?

The use of open-ended questions allowed the respondents freedom to choose what to say in a way that was comfortable for them with their grasp of English. It also allowed them to expand their answers and provided a checking mechanism for clarifying meaning. For example a respondent expressing belief in God would go on to describe characteristics of Jesus and it was clear that their explanation enhanced the text. Questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'where' and 'why' were used to sometimes lead and moderate the questioning process to gain meaning about their perceptions. Examples of open-ended questions were: -

What do you believe about God?

What do you believe about Jesus?

When do you pray together in this way?

In this way the open questionnaire melded characteristics of a semi-structured interview with the content of its data providing numerical results and interpretative text that pertained to the participants' religiosity.

An anomaly presented in a quantitative method-type chosen within a hermeneutical phenomenologist paradigm presented some possible internal inconsistency in this research design. However, the rhetorical differences from these two methodologies can be complementary and their merging, be advantageous (Firestone, 1987 and Fry et al., 1981). The open questionnaire was chosen to facilitate quantitative and qualitative analysis. The purpose of pursuing the two approaches originated from the assumption that the collection of facts would be required to help make sense of the Dinka's religious situation. For

example it was important for the Dinka children and adolescents to answer the questionnaire orally because firstly they were generally confident "talkers", and secondly because their various backgrounds in their refugee diaspora offered a broad experience for them to link their perceptions about God, Jesus, Church and prayer to their current religious practice. In the interest of precision the questionnaire interviewing allowed the young Dinka to qualify their answers and understanding, and in so doing, provided increased meaning to the data collected. The advantages of these for the research design were enhanced clarity, improved conceptualization of categories and a qualitative analysis facilitated and supported by a quantitative context (Fry et al., 1981). The connection here between the rhetoric, method-type and paradigms consolidated the credibility of the findings and enhanced analysis.

Modified Focus Group

Bloor et al. (2002) and Litosseliti (2003) maintained that data generation via a focus group methodology provided an acceptable way to generate meaning and norms through a group process, and viewed the technique as readily complementing other methods in a multi-method design. This focus group was the first phase of three undertaken in case study two. The "draw-write-narrate" method with the children, and the semi-structured interviews with three adolescents provided phases two and three respectively (See Table 3.2). The three distinct phases of textual analysis included aspects of the Dinka children's and adolescents' spirituality, which was guided by the exploration of their refugee experiences and their personal values and hopes for the future. The combination of these methods systematically provided in-depth inquiry and the opportunity for cross-case analysis with case study three where Dinka parents were given the opportunity to qualify the children's experiences (See Table 3.1).

Experience working with new arrivals led the researcher to choose the focus group approach because the children were familiar with a similar format, and it was known that they could comfortably attune to different activities. The inclusion of different activities in this

session was a modification to the general practice of a focus group where its generic design centred on group discussion (Merton and Kendall, 1946). Researchers including Ronen et el., (2001) and Hill, Laybourn and Borland (1996) have successfully adapted the focus group method for children. Modified groups incorporating the use of play dough and drawing environmental maps were found to be effective for facilitating inquiry into children's feelings and stimulating their memories (Ronen et al., 2001). A "picture chat" technique was chosen to help stimulate general discussion around the focus of refugee journey (See Appendix A, Figure A2, for examples of the stimulus pictures). The "draw-write and narrate" activity promoted a child-centred and child-directed approach to personal discussion, which respected the children's privacy and initiative to introduce topics they felt comfortable to talk about (Ogina & Nieuwenhuis, 2010). The "picture chat" allowed the children to generalize when referring to the pictures, and particularize their chosen personal experiences through the drawing activity, and in effect it permitted them to raise the issues they wanted discussed (Mauthner, 1997). The use of concrete aids, such as pictures, paper and felt tipped pens helped to focus the children's thoughts on the topic by providing sensory retrieval cues and a transitional space for them to externalize their feelings in a non-abstract form (Driessnack, 2006). The focus group was organized around themes of war, refugees, journey and life values and the activities aimed at including the children as active participants in research (Fraser, Lewis, Ding, Kellett and Robinson, 2004).

The modified focus group comprised five Dinka primary school children aged between ten and twelve. The objectives were to describe Dinka children's war experiences in the context of their refugee journey and to explore their feelings about these experiences. It was also important to identify the children's responses that highlighted their connections to self, others and the world, as these aspects signified their spirituality. In particular their experiences of the journey from Sudan, Egypt, Kenya or Uganda to Australia, and understanding the trauma they endured, as a cause of war was important to this research. The

presentation of a picture chat activity and a "draw, write and narrate" session offered a way to discuss life values and personal notions of opportunity for beneficial change with the children. In brief the discussion revolved around, "what matters most to you and what would you wish for?" Their engagement in these tasks generated interaction that provided shared understandings and new information.

Seven pictures were used to focus discussion on possible aspects of the children's experiences of refugee journeys (See Appendix C, Figure C2, for stimulus pictures and questions). The questions were designed to generate discussion about their every day experiences as a refugee and the feelings these created. As stated previously, the pictures and questions allowed them to speak in general terms, and the content of these answers was to be used as a background on juxtaposition to the assumptions contained in the goals for Catholic religious education in their schools. The "draw, write and narrate" activity was chosen to stimulate personal memory of their journey experience and the narration of these permitted them to speak about a personal experience of their choosing with the rest of the group. After the children narrated their drawings, they had two questions asked of them. 'What is most important to you, and what would you wish for?' These questions were posed to stimulate discussion about what they valued most, and how or where they envisaged benefitting change to occur. These questions sought to address spiritual connections they had for valuing self, others and the world and highlighting characteristics of their spirituality. These final discussions culminated in shared understandings about their values. The use and sequence of multi-methods in this focus group was designed to introduce the topic, immerse children in child-centred, child-directed activity, and to crystallize their thoughts and provide an outlet through group discussion to gain consensus on certain issues.

The inclusion of child-centred and directed activities that made children active participants in the research addressed the issue of bias and manipulation to some extent. By allowing the children's input in the research process the participants were encouraged to

initiate the content of the exploration and not be subject to responding to possible inherent prejudices of the researcher. The use of audio and video recording and the implementation of verbatim transcription ensured levels of rigour that supported data collection and its analysis. These aimed to negate the possible 'false' consensus, where a strong personality could have dominated the discussion, or a difficulty distinguishing between a group view, where individuals who may have disagreed but remain silent.

Visual Data Collection

The "draw, write and narrate" technique was used with the primary school children to help engage in a memory recall of their choice about an aspect of their journey. The four boys and one girl were each given a white piece of paper and a black felt tipped pen and were given approximately fifteen minutes to draw something about their life before coming to Australia. They were given the option to draw about a good or a bad happening that they remembered. While they drew the researcher circulated around the table providing assistance to anyone needing help with their written description. When the drawings and written work were completed the children were invited to share their stories with the others. The children provided their own interpretation of their drawings and follow-up questions based on the participants' descriptions were asked (See Appendix C, Figure C3, for children's drawings and text). Discussion was encouraged for each drawing so the children could reveal the story behind their drawing. Sensitivity and tact was required for those children whose drawings depicted hardship or trauma and who may not have wished to share the details of their story with the group.

Some justifications for the "draw, write and narrate" approach have been incorporated in previous sections of this chapter. Adult interpretations of children's drawings do not adequately access their meaning and children's self-reporting of their drawings provide credible interpretation (Driessnack, 2006). Within the context of the modified focus group the aim of the drawing activity was to arouse discussion. Two issues were important here. The

first acknowledged that children would discuss more fully aspects of journey that could be successfully recalled. The drawing activity used as a retrieval cue meant that children's encoded and stored information was most effectively accessed through sensorial rather than semantic encoding (Salmon, 2001). The second issue was that drawing aided children's abilities to talk in interview conditions (Wesson and Salmon, 2001). The drawing activity specified a personal context for the children to share aspects of their refugee past, and they were able to set the parameters of the topics for discussion through the various scenes they chose to draw (Backett-Milburn and McKie, 1999). The phenomenological approach and its assent to "lived experiences" was realized in the children's drawings about their lived experience of war. Through the children's deliberate choices of what they drew, the subject matter and content of the data collected for this method was determined. The children's pictorial contributions then provided a hermeneutic constructed by the children and the researcher.

<p style="text-align:center;">*Semi-structured Interviews*</p>

It was appropriate to apply an interviewing technique in this qualitative methodology where phenomena associated with the Dinka's lived experiences of war and their religious education in Catholic schools in Australia needed to be understood. Semi-structured interviewing offered a balance of flexibility and structure that produced quality data.

Van Manen (1997) contended that the fundamental question that initially prompted the need for the interview was the key for deciding the appropriate type of interview. The purpose of the interviewing was multi-faceted and three of the four case studies utilized the semi-structured interview format. In case study number two (See Table 3:1) semi-structured interviews were conducted with Dinka adolescents from Catholic secondary schools. The aim was to explore their spirituality by examining aspects of refugee journey and their life in Australia. In this study participants were asked a series of questions devised from the adolescent spiritual perspectives of Kessler (2000). Six separate themes were allocated to

explore deep connection; meaning and purpose; joy, wonder and awe; and transcendence and initiation. The questions were conceived to link with the themes and they took into account Dinka tradition and cultural heritage where applicable. The interview format incorporated a combination of participant recounts, focused, open-ended, closed and probing questions and whilst the semi-structured interview questions were prepared, they were mainly used as a guide (See Appendix A4). The participants offered recounts during the course of the interview often in response to open-ended questions, which were followed by focused questions. Examples of these were on three occasions when two participants recounted moments of terror and frightening happenings during the course of the interview. At other times probing questions were asked in relation the participants' awareness of traditional initiation ceremonies for the Dinka.

Case study number three sought information from Dinka parents, elders, a catechist and a seminarian. Interviews from these sought information about past and present elements of the Dinka worldview. Specific information pertaining to personal journey, observations of children's refugee experiences, Christian religious learning in Sudan and their refugee diaspora as well as their vision for future involvement in the Church and Mass were explored. Questions were also asked about their personal values (See Appendix C5). Interviews with Dinka adults included open-ended, focused and closed questions. Direct questioning was not used but the participants willingly offered narratives incorporating specific war experiences.

The fourth case study involved data collection from education professionals, religious brothers and a priest. The purpose was two fold. The first was to locate congruence and incongruence that highlighted the Dinka's spirituality and religiosity against the background of Catholic education goals. Open-ended and closed questions were utilized to source resettlement concerns, education perspectives and parish and Mass participation for this part of the investigation. The second sought their awareness and observations of positive and negative spiritualities (See Appendix C6). Narratives about children who displayed a strong

connection or detachment in their personal, family or friend relationships were canvassed by focused questions, which led to detailed recounts.

On one occasion an interpreter was used during an interview with a male parent. The community worker in the area who also was known to the researcher knew this parent. The parent spoke minimal English but was happy to be interviewed provided the community worker who was also the interpreter could be accessed. The venue for this meeting was at one of the Christian Brothers Homework centres and the interview began in the usual way. Considerable time and effort was given to ensuring that the participant had made informed consent and the interviewer asked the participants if they had any questions before commencing. It was important during the interview that eye contact was made with the interviewee and that questions were directed at him. This acknowledged the important role he offered in this process and indicated that the interview was with him. In this case the prepared interview questions were adhered to but this did not stifle the flow of focus or probing questions that were asked. Questions were asked and thoughts, views and answers received, smiles were exchanged and attempted words in English were reciprocated with attempted pleasantries in Dinka. What began rather stiffly, concluded in a relaxed manner. Suggestive of the quality data received, the interviewer came away from this interview with the understanding that the participant had regarded the meeting and verbal exchange as important.

The semi-structured interview format was selected for the case studies because it allowed the researcher to control the themes of the various interviews, which ensured that the required information was obtained, and it also allowed the participants the flexibility and freedom to explain their experiences in their own words (Morse and Field, 1996). In each of these case studies the themes were maintained through questions organized under topic headings, which guided the interviewer's approach during the interview (See Appendices C4, C5 & C6 for sample of questions). The emphasis on rigidly following these pre-determined questions shifted as the researcher became attuned to the flow of participants' responses.

Several interview tactics (Descombe, 2007) were used widely during the interviews especially in registering the Dinka participant's views. Use of prompts by the interviewer enlisted repeating and rephrasing of questions, repeating the last few words spoken by the interviewee for confirmation of response, and summaries of response given at certain intervals to check correctness of information (Walker, 2011). These techniques balanced and checked the interviewees' thoughts, subtly encouraged them to reveal details of their experience and helped to position the interviewer's place and move on into a new area.

Hermeneutic inquiry into 'lived experience' of war had the potential to arouse powerful emotional responses because of its closeness to death and suffering, awe and joyful celebration. The interviewer was aware of the possible distress these may cause, and follow-up support was made available on-site in the event of such an occurrence with the attendance of a qualified social worker. The researcher found on one occasion that debriefing with the social worker was particularly beneficial. An interview conducted with a Dinka adolescent charged with graphic war content had been very thought-provoking for the interviewer, and time taken to sensitively discuss and reflect on its content provided inspiration and stimulated research focus.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Content analysis is a method of analysing qualitative or quantitative data or a blend of both. Qualitative content analysis grounds examination of data to 'ideological mind sets, themes, topics, symbols and similar phenomena' (Berg, 1995, p.175). Methods utilizing a qualitative approach in this research were the modified focus group, visual data collection incorporating the "draw, write and narrate" technique, the semi-structures interviews, and the open questionnaire. Because the questionnaire was transcribed from oral deliveries the text they generated could be subjected to hermeneutic inquiry. Thus all data collection methods in this research were subjected to content analysis.

Gillham (2005) maintained that the classic form of content analysis concerned the analysis of text. Qualitative content analysis involved the transcription of speech that was textual, which meant that oral speech derived from discussion, conversation or interview once transcribed was different from prepared written text. Extracting salient points from transcribed verbatim delivered substantive statements, which became the basis for categories eliciting of meaning. Substantive statements presented as emerging themes and meanings in the data collected, and categorical analysis was applied to the case studies because pre-determined questions provided themes of engagement for participants and interviewees to consider (Gillham, 2005). In processing many transcriptions within a given case study, the categories became apparent. In Table 3:3 the responses from children aged nine to 12 years for questions 20 to 27 of the questionnaire illustrate the coded themes. A set of categories was derived for the same question for each transcript within the open questionnaire. The repeated process of linking themes to quotes in a cyclical way, allowed dominant categories to come to the surface.

Table 3:3. *Example of Coding for Themes*

Children's Responses for Perception of Church	
9 to 12 years for questions 20 to 27	Number of children
Mass and Church participation in Africa	
Attended Mass	11
In Egypt	9
In Sudan	4
In Kakuma: Kenya	1
Don't remember	2
Experiences of Mass/ Church in Africa	
Danced at Mass	1
Attended Mass with family	1
Baptised in Egypt	3
Baptised and made Holy Communion in Sudan	2
Prayers said: Our Father, for family, to God, Jesus and Mary	3
Listened music and learned hymns	1
Listen to testimonials	1
Did not pray	1
Mass and Church participation in Australia	
Attended Mass	12
Does not attend Mass	1
Attends Dinka Masses	9
Attended other Masses	8
Mother attended Arabic Mass for Dinkas & Dinka Mass for Dinka; rest of family attended Dinka Mass in Dinka only	1
Attended Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints	1
Reasons for Mass attendance	
To be like Jesus & learn about God, Jesus, Mary	8
To attend lessons at Mass	2
To pray	6
To receive Holy Communion	7
To initially receive sacraments	8
To altar serve	1
To listen	3
To sing	3
To light candle	1
To pray for forgiveness	1
To follow the crowd	1
To enjoy being there	1

Figure 3.2 sets out the elements of the data collection and illustrates the approach that was undertaken. Devising the categories relied on intuitive guidance informed by the purpose of the study, the researcher's knowledge and the participants' meanings. Thus the unit of measurement was the qualitative analysis of themes and recurring patterns of meaning (Merriam, 1998).

Figure 3:2. Data Collection and Analysis Process

Four Case Studies
1. oral questionnaire
2. focus group, visual data collection & interviews
3. Interviews
4. Interviews

Transcribe
making notes & comments

Produce detailed interpretative, reflexive written account

Identify & Label
emerging themes & meaning within text

Produce Summary Table
Cluster the themes from texts into key themes with related sub-themes

Coding for Themes
derive set of categories for responses to each question
(ie same question for each transcript within each study)

Produce Analysis Grid Spread Sheets
Enter category headings & number codes
Locate respondent's statements corresponding to categories

Identify categories and repeat the process

Relate back and link themes to quotes in cyclical process

Data Analysis in Multicase, Multisite Studies

Two stages of analysis apply to a multiple case study. They are referred to as the with-in cases analysis and the cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998). For each of the four cases in this research, comprehensive verbatim transcription and content analysis was applied. With each

of these analyses completed cross-case analysis was done. The purpose of these was to build abstractions across the case by building a general explanation that linked the individual cases (Yin, 1994). Figure 3:3, illustrates an example of cross-case analysis. It shows the relationship between each case study and the influence of "lived experience" on the Dinka children's and adolescents' spirituality and religiosity. Notice that the arrows for case studies one, two and three face towards the centre image. This is to indicate that the data and their analyses supported the notion that the Dinka children and adolescents' spirituality and religiosity have been heightened by their lived experiences of war. The arrow pointing away from the centre image towards case-study number four indicated that awareness of this understanding had to make inroads into this sector.

Figure 3:3. Example of Cross-case Analysis

Reliability, Validity and Triangulation

Some approaches of the interpretive process applied to content analysis prescribe that the researcher's 'mind space' be free of preconceptions in regard to the research inquiry. Known as bracketing researchers are meant to disassociate their thoughts from past knowledge and experience (Giorgi, 1985) so as findings do not reflect the researcher's expectations. Conscious of possible bias for giving voice to Dinka refugees the researcher adopted a reflexive approach (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003) where pre-understanding gained through working in the field with refugees may be exploited as a source of insight.

The use of a combination of different methods in this research assisted in triangulating the data. It enhanced the credibility of the research findings and helped to inform and validate the research problem (Berg, 1989). The methodological techniques employed for this research were the modified focus group, visual data collection, oral questionnaire, and semi-structured interview. Data from these methods contributed rich, thick description, which offered a breadth and depth of themes and categories that could be checked, compared and cross-referenced.

The multi-site design incorporating the use of several sites maximized diversity in the phenomenon studied. In this way its results applied to range of situations and it achieved this variation through purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998). Five different sites were chosen for the collection of data and within each of these sites there were multiple sources. The five sites were the parish and its Church, the Edmund Rice Centre, Catholic primary and secondary schools and the seminary college. The multiple sources represented the Dinka children, adolescents and adults. Parents, elders, a catechist and a seminarian represented the Dinka adult sources. Teachers, principals, Christian Brothers and a parish priest represented educational professionals and spiritual leader. Data gained from these multiple sources and sites assisted the construction of "plausible explanations about the phenomenon being studied" (Mathison, 1988, p. 17).

Conclusion

In selecting constructivism the research design accounted for the personal meaning the Dinka children and adolescents' attributed to their experience of war and their perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer. Social constructionism accounted for the significance of the collective generation of meaning implicit in their way of life, pre and post civil wars (1958-1972 and 1983-2005). The interpretivist approach acknowledged that specific phenomena of the Dinka's "lived experience" could be documented and interpreted hermeneutically. From a phenomenological perspective the research design assumed that the conditions where understandings about their past experiences and perceptions about God, Jesus, Church and prayer occurred, contained meaning about their spirituality and religiosity. Analysis of text derived from their narratives allowed for spiritual and religious meaning, and were supported by a qualitative methodology that used multicase and multisite studies. This methodological approach applied four methods in five sites. The open questionnaire, modified focus group, visual data collection and semi-structured interview were conducted with forty-two participants. Content analysis applied to the data collection methods coded and categorized text, and their frequencies were noted. It was hoped that this research design and its data analysis produced credible findings about the Dinka's spirituality, religiosity, resilience and evangelization, which supported recommendations for inclusive Catholic religious education. In the following chapters the description and analyses of the data is systematically presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

DINKA CHILDREN'S AND ADOLESCENTS' RELIGIOSITY

Introduction

The findings of the research, which are proposed and discussed in this chapter, identify

significant characteristics of the Dinka children and adolescents' religiosity, defined earlier

in this thesis as the dedication to beliefs in God, Jesus Church and prayer, and the

demonstration and support of these beliefs through participation in religious activities.

Findings and analysis of these indicators were compared with similar studies and literature,

for children and adolescents who were not affected by war. Literature concerned with

children's and adolescents' religious thought and practice about God (Duffy, 2002), Jesus

(Aylward nee Walshe, 2005 and Kay & Francis, 1996), Church (Dixon, 2005) and prayer

(Mountain, 2005) proposed some basic understandings. Young people had difficulties

differentiating Jesus as separate from God, and tended to focus simplistically on Jesus'

humanity. In Australia there was a current trend of falling attendance at Mass, which

included the children and adolescent demographic. The young people who prayed, did to

God, who they envisioned as a "Good". Longitudinal studies (1974 to 1994) conducted into

young people's attitudes towards Jesus (Kay & Francis, 1996) found that there were

increasing numbers who presented with negative attitudes. The focus of these studies and

other literature highlighted the areas of religiosity that offered comparative study and

discussion in this chapter.

The data collecting method encompassed the following aims: -

1. To identify Dinka children's and adolescent's perceptions on God, Jesus, Church and
   prayer

2. To identify how the children and adolescents came to know about God, Jesus, Church
   and prayer in their country of origin

The first data gathering method was a questionnaire, which was completed by those Dinka

children who had been proselytized to Christianity and had experienced the trauma of the war

in Sudan. As refugees to first and sometimes second host countries in Africa before coming to

Australia, their experiences informed understandings and practices relating to beliefs in God,

Jesus, church and prayer. The data came from two groups of young people. The first group

were the 9 to 12 year olds and the second group were 13 to 16 year olds.

Dinka Children's Perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and Prayer for ages 9 to 12

The Questionnaire

The following findings were produced from the responses to a questionnaire that was put to a

group of thirteen Dinka children aged between nine and twelve years of age, four female and

nine males. The group consisted of four nine year olds, three ten year olds, two 11 and four 12

year olds. For twelve participants, Egypt was their country of departure and for one it was

Kenya. Twelve children were Catholic and one was Anglican.

Perceptions of God for ages 9 to 12

Twelve of the 13 participants affirmed belief in God. Seven claimed to know God in a

personal way, describing God as a special person who was loving and helpful. Eleven

children clearly demonstrated, informed understanding of the word God in relation to normal

Christian definitions. One child denied God's existence and was not sure why she did not

believe. Six responses described God as an omnipotent creator of the world and people, who

was powerful and omnipresent. Two children acknowledged God as the father of Jesus and

two others stated the Christian belief of God's action in Jesus as a saviour of people.   Other

separate responses professed the truth and validity of God, the acknowledgement of God's

offer of heaven for people of good action, the notion that God as Creator and "maker" of the

Catholic Church. The majority of the children were able to distinguish between the persons of

God and Jesus. These children conveyed a belief that God operated in heaven and Jesus helped people here on earth.

Conversely, some responses highlighted confusion about perceptions of God. Four respondents stated they were not sure what they thought about God. One of these responses included a denial of the existence of God. Another child said that God was "nice" but could not elaborate her thoughts. She could not say what she thought about God, but later demonstrated proficient language skills when talking about Jesus, prayer and Church. Her confusion was with the idea of God. There were three responses from two of the participants which indicated confusion between God and Jesus. In the first instance a respondent said that she believed he [God] helped people and made people happy but were unsure about what happened to [God] dying on the cross. This child clearly demonstrated confusion between God and Jesus. Another child claimed that God forgives, is always there, loves everybody and says that we are to love our neighbour. This child attributed Jesus' teaching of 'love thy neighbour' as a saying from God. Later, this child was able to articulate a sound understanding of Jesus being the Son of God, who acted as the messenger for the Holy Spirit. In this case the interchange between the words 'God' and 'he' used to describe a saying from Jesus, suggested perhaps ambivalence towards the word and action of God in Jesus. It could also have indicated the child's perception of God as tripersonal. One respondent claimed that God sent the prophets and revived the Church under Joseph Smith, who was the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints movement. The child did not specifically refer to himself as Mormon and according to his parents their initial introduction to Christianity was through the Episcopal Church.

The following were the findings for Dinka children's (9-12 years) perceptions about God: -

1. The majority of participants aged between nine and 12 affirmed belief in the existence of God.

2. Perceptions equally acknowledged God's existence in a personal relational way as well as in a divine context.

3. Some perceptions of God came from various Christian sources.

4. The children mostly distinguished between God and Jesus Christ, although there was some confusion on this point.

Table 4:1 in Appendix 4 tabulate the children's responses to this topic.

Perceptions of Jesus for ages 9 to 12

Belief in Jesus Christ was affirmed by 11 of the 13 respondents with two children claiming uncertainty. One child conceded belief sometimes and another claimed she did not know if she believed in Jesus or not. Both children claimed that Jesus offered a model of kind behaviour, which for one was personally helpful for emulating kindness, and for the other not helpful at all. Resoundingly among the believers, perceptions of Jesus' humanity and his personal impact on people, as well as the kind of person he was were significant. Sixteen responses overall referred to specific qualities of Jesus. There were perceptions that Jesus cared for people, with comments also acknowledging him as a healer of hearts, a peaceful person and one who made people happy. Two participants mentioned Mary as the mother of Jesus and that he was born in Bethlehem. More than half of the respondents perceived Jesus as Saviour. That he "died for us" was a notable theme, as too, were aspects of his Passion and Resurrection. These children referred in some way to Jesus' divinity. Their awareness of Jesus' relationship to God could be noted in the several comments that focused on Jesus as the Son of God. Examples of these were: -

> *…he is the Son of God. He is the messenger for the Holy Spirit.*
> *He's the Son of God… He's important because God's his Father.*
> *[I believe about Jesus that] he is God's son.*

The question of Jesus' importance was put to each participant so as to assist in determining his or her reason for belief. Ten children affirmed the personal importance of Jesus; two were not sure of any personal importance and one child denied any personal importance of

Jesus. Common statements, which substantiated Jesus' importance to the children, presented in descending order, were that: -

1. Jesus modelled kind behaviour and helped me to be kind to others.

2. Jesus helped and cared; he loves us and cares for people and family.

3. Jesus healed; he has real power to support all people.

4. Jesus was a teacher. He taught love and forgiveness.

5. Jesus' father is God and that was important.

The following were the findings for the perceptions of Jesus among the 9-12 year olds.

1. The majority of participants aged between 9 and 12 knew about and believed in the person of Jesus. They were able to articulate Christian beliefs in the humanity of Christ.

2. Over half of the participants surveyed were able to articulate aspects of Jesus' divinity. These children expressed the Christian belief concerning Jesus' relationship to God and his saving power.

3. The majority of participants explained Jesus' importance as an exemplar of perfect human behaviour.

Table 4:2 in Appendix 4 tabulate the children's responses to this topic.

Perceptions of Prayer for ages 9 to 12

The Dinka children aged between nine and 12 were familiar with the practice of prayer. Eleven of the children prayed daily and routinely, and two prayed sometimes. This was despite the fact that three of the respondents were not clear about their beliefs in God or Jesus. Overall there were various reasons why the children prayed. Thirteen respondents prayed for special intentions for themselves, the poor and the homeless, for the family and for the sick. Other prayers included giving thanks to God, and praying to Jesus and Mary. Formal and personal prayer was used. Formal prayers used by four respondents were the *Hail Mary* and the *Our Father*. One of these respondents also prayed the *Apostle's Creed*. Prayers were said

routinely, before going to sleep, by 12 participants, one child prayed communally with other siblings before going to bed each night. Four respondents noted that prayer was said at Church, intimating to some extent that Church was not necessarily the primary place for saying prayer. Some prayer rituals practised by the Dinka children included making the *Sign of the Cross*, kneeling next to the bed and praying silently with hands joined. To a lesser extent some mentioned closing their eyes, lowering the head, sitting down, focusing on holy pictures and lighting a candle. The children's attitudes towards prayer were almost unanimous that prayer helped them, although one child maintained that prayer did not help. Eleven of the respondents said that praying helped in time of need and that extraordinary things can happen because of prayer.

Some children attributed their escape from oppression to fervent prayer.

> *My mum kept on praying…she prayed for five days without no stopping. She said ok tomorrow and for the next three days we are going to pack[ing] all our clothes…We getting on plane and flying all the way to Egypt.*

Another thought that praying helped the dying and said, "You pray for someone who is dying… God helps the dying person." And still another believed that prayer brought peace to people commenting, "It makes things be together…people…so people don't [can't] have to fight." Trusting in God and Jesus was important to the children whose attitudes to prayer were positive. Children were aware that prayers were not always answered but for most attitudes of respect for God, of being protected, and of being listened to by God and Jesus were assumed.

Conversely, one respondent's perception of prayer was mixed. She admitted to praying regularly, even at school when there was nothing better to do. However in response to whether prayer helped, the child replied: -

> *It does nothing but you pray it makes peace with others…know like when you're angry about something like your sister's sick and you pray and nothing happens.*

This child did not affirm belief in God or Jesus but admitted freely to praying for the poor, sick and other special intentions. The respondent conceded that prayers were sometimes

answered and sometimes not. Personal anger led to conflicted feelings about God, Jesus and prayer, but the habit of prayer continued.

A large majority of the children said that it was through prayer and reflection that they came to care about making peace with others, about asking forgiveness and saying sorry for doing wrong. One child said, "Sometimes if you're really bad, only if you're bad and you are sorry, that's when…you keep praying… to not do it again."
Family prayer was also important. Eight respondents said that they prayed as a family and five others said that they used to pray together. Those who prayed together did so at meal times. "Yep, when its dinner and when mum makes food…we just close our eyes and say our prayers," said one of the participants.

Other significant times for family prayer occurred during family celebrations for special intentions. Examples of special intentions were, "We hoped nothing bad would happen," and, "If someone in the family is sick, we pray." There were various rituals performed. One knelt together with their brother and sisters, others gathered together in a circle, one prayed in Arabic, another sang the *Our Father* and joined hands together with family members and yet another had family prayer led by their father, with everyone's eyes closed as formal prayers were said after which, informal prayer was invited by other members of the family. The Dinka children had experienced or currently participated in communal family prayer as a regular ongoing practice. The following were the findings that emerged for the nine to twelve year olds perceptions of prayer: -

1. Children were familiar with the practice of private and communal family prayer.

2. Their private prayer generally involved praying for special intentions for family, the poor and the sick.

3. The majority of the children routinely said prayers before sleeping. Their prayer ritual usually began with the making of the Sign of the Cross.

Their attitudes to prayer were based on the following assumptions: -

1. Prayer helped in time of need.

2. In prayer people asked God for strength to be able to do "good", and to be forgiven for
    the things we have done wrong.

3. Praying brought a sense of calm.

4. Prayerful habits may persist when faith in God and Jesus is doubted.

5. Children were aware that prayers were not always answered. Various thoughts about
    the value of personal prayer assumed attitudes of trust and respect, of being protected
    and of being listened to by God and Jesus.

6. Personal anger may have led to or accompany conflicted feelings towards God, Jesus
    and prayer in response to the experience of tragedy and unanswered prayer.

7. The Dinka children who took part in the research have, or have had the experience of
    the practice of regular family prayer at home.

Table 4:3 in Appendix 4 summarises the children's responses to this topic.

Perceptions of Prayer: The Rosary and Religious Symbols

Of the 13 Dinka children in the age group of nine to 12, six participants said that they did
have Rosary beads and six did not have Rosary beads. One other child did not know if she or
other family members possessed them. Eight children prayed the Rosary and five did not. Of
the eight who did, two respondents said that they were learning to pray the Rosary by
practising with their mother or with an older sibling, and one other child mentioned that they
had a format sheet to guide their praying of the Rosary. Of the five children who said they did
not pray the Rosary, four noted that their mothers prayed the Rosary. Overall, seven
references were made to children's mothers praying the Rosary and one said that her mother
attended the Legion of Mary. Four of the children, one nine year and three twelve year old
girls were able to name the prayers, the *Hail Mary*, the *Our Father* and the *Glory Be* as
components of the Rosary, and they said that they knew how to pray it. Two children said that

Rosary beads were used as decoration or displayed on walls in their homes (See Table 4:4 in Appendix 4 for the detailed responses from children aged between 9 and 12 years).

Religious symbols such as statues, pictures, books, audiovisual material and DVDs were widespread in the homes of the Dinka children. All thirteen participants acknowledged that they had religious materials such as these visibly on display in their homes. Nine children said that they had pictures, Rosary beads and/or statues of Mary and Jesus displayed in their homes. Two mentioned that they had pictures of Jesus or a crucifix on display, and two other children noted they had pictures of Mary in their home. Six respondents said they had religious pictures and or statues in their bedrooms and two noted that looking at these images encouraged them to pray. "I look at the picture and pray sometimes," and " I think about Jesus… [the] time when like on the cross and things like that." One child said he had a picture of a Mormon holding the golden book displayed on his wall as well as a picture of Mary and Jesus. Another young person said that she had statues of Mary MacKillop, Saint Eugene de Mazenod, Saint Anthony and Saint Therese in her bedroom. She spoke about how Saint Eugene and the other saints had made an impression on her.

> *He's a great saint.* [Eugene de Mazenod] *He helped children when they were ill. He come[s] from Italy or Paris. Learnt about them [him] in grade three. I learnt about Mary MacKillop in grade four and Saint Therese in grade five.*

Rooms where pictures, statues or a crucifix were displayed were mentioned in descending order of presence: - the bedrooms, living/dining room and the hall and kitchen. Religious pictures were also displayed on clocks and on the desktop wallpaper on the computer. Findings in relation to the Rosary and religious symbols in the home were: -

1. A majority of Dinka children prayed the Rosary with assistance from their mothers or to a lesser extent an older sibling.

2. Dinka children's awareness of praying the Rosary was influenced by the mother's practice and prayer ritual.

3. Some girls prayed the Rosary independently.

4. Christian devotional materials were prominently displayed in Dinka family homes.

5. Pictures or statues of Jesus and Mary were on display in Dinka homes

6. Many Dinka children had Christian displays in their bedrooms.

7. Sometimes the presence of Christian devotional displays in Dinka children's homes occasioned prayerful thought.

Sources of Learning about God, Jesus, Church or Prayer

Seven of the 13 children could remember some things about being taught religion in Africa before coming to Australia and recollected religious classes. Two children could not remember religious learning and four respondents said that they had no religious learning before coming to Australia. Of the seven who recalled religious classes, five were from Egypt; one was from Sudan and the other from Kakuma Refugee camp. They recalled topics, learning experiences, methods and resources that were used. Methods of teaching and learning included the use of Scripture and Bible stories, the use of big books about God, playing games, listening to lessons and asking questions about Mary, God and Jesus. Significant stories remembered by four respondents included the Passover, (Ex 12), David and Goliath, (1Sam 17: 48-5), the Wedding at Cana, (Jn 2: 1-11), the Prodigal Son, (Lk 15: 11-32), the Crucifixion of Jesus, (Mk 15: 21-32), the Resurrection of Jesus, (Mt 28: 1-10), the visit of the three wise men, (Mt 2: 1-12), the cleansing of the man with leprosy, (Lk: 5-16) and the doctrine of the Assumption. The teachers were either close family members, or clergy and the venues varied from the home to the Church and Sunday school. Generally, home schooling occurred in Egypt and Sunday schools were conducted in refugee camps. The children who said they could not remember or had no religious learning noted that they were very young at the time, some of them being aged between three and six (See Tables 4:5 in Appendix 4 for Dinka children's responses about religious learning prior to living in Australia).

The following were findings regarding religious learning in Africa: -

1. The children who had recollection of religious education in Africa were generally aged 11 or 12 and their experiences were sourced from Sudan, Egypt or Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya.

2. Young Dinka children had recollections of praying, especially with parents before coming to Australia.

3. Teaching methods and teaching resources relied mainly on Scripture and Bible stories.

4. Scripture and Bible stories were recalled from Old and New Testament and highlighted the ability of the downtrodden to overcome foes, Jesus' miracles and teaching, crucifixion, resurrection and Mary's assumption into heaven, body and soul.

Perceptions of Church for ages 9 to 12

Eleven of the children surveyed in this age group remembered the experience of attending Mass in Egypt, Sudan or Kenya. Three of the participants had recollections of both Egypt and Sudan. One child drew his experience from Kakuma in Kenya. Two children said that they did not have any recollection. One of them reasoned that they were too young to remember and the other, an older child maintained they did not go to Mass at all in Africa. Predominantly, personal recollections relating to celebrating Mass in Africa, involved attendance at Baptism and Holy Communion ceremonies. Other memories recalled dancing, music and learning hymns as well as the experience of being with family. For the young child in Kakuma Refugee Camp, the memory of recounted testimonials of redemption and conversion to God were in the Mormon tradition. Twelve of the 13 respondents surveyed attended Mass here in Australia including the older child who did not experience Church going or Mass in Africa. Nine of the children surveyed attended Dinka Masses and eight other responses indicated attendance at Masses other than Dinka. Of the nine who said they attended Dinka Mass, five also said they attended other Masses. One child attended the Church service of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. This child's

experiences of Church noted people's talk at church about unselfish service as significant.

The anomaly about this child's religious background was that the parents maintained the

family were Anglican. This family was Dinka from the sub-tribe Bor and many Bor Dinka

belonged to the Episcopal Church because of the regulated missionary activity that permitted

Anglican missionaries to proselytize in that province since 1905 (Sundkler and Steed, 2001).

The child in question attended state primary school at the time, but was likely to attend a

Catholic secondary school. Two other siblings attended Catholic primary and Catholic

secondary school in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

When the children were asked why they attended Mass eight responded that they

wanted to be like Jesus and, or to learn about God, Jesus and Mary. The consensus among

these children was that they went to Mass to receive Holy Communion and to pray. Most

were aware that Mass and going to Church offered the opportunity to receive the sacraments

and they noted that receiving the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist and

Confirmation were reasons for their attendance. Listening, singing, lighting a candle, praying

for forgiveness and altar serving were some of the singular responses. One child conceded he

did not really understand what was happening in the Mass. He went to Mass with his mother

and he said, "I just follow the crowd." Another child declared that Mass was one of his

favourite things, especially the learning and enjoyment he received from participating in the

special children's lesson conducted for the young during part of the Mass.

> *...it's* [mass] *my favourite things when you go inside and you get a book, and then you get a sheet of a mass, and you write all of the correct things, and then you keep the book, and then when you go to mass, you go inside and do it again.*

These two responses were from Dinka children aged ten and nine respectively and the

disparity between their two experiences was indicative of their various levels of participation

and engagement in the Mass. The following were the findings from the nine to 12 year old

Dinka children's perception of Church (See Table 4:6 in Appendix 4 for a summary of responses for Dinka children's perceptions of Church aged 9 to 12 years).

1. Mass and church experiences in Africa were memorable in some way, usually associated with Baptism or Holy Communion.

2. Some Dinka children had been proselytized into the beliefs of another Christian tradition.

3. Dinka children mainly attended Dinka Masses.

4. The prominence of Dinka children attending Dinka Masses signified a cultural solidarity demonstrated in their celebration of the Mass and connection with their community.

5. Dinka, from the sub-tribe *Bor*, usually belonged to the Anglican tradition and children from this background may have attended various Christian Mass and prayer services.

6. Children of this age group willingly went to Mass to learn about God, Jesus and Mary and to be a part of the community. Various experiences of Mass for young Dinka children ranged from engagement to disaffection. Involvement and engagement in learning about the Mass were key factors in the children's participation.

Dinka Perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and Prayer for Adolescents Aged 13 to 16

Introduction

The following findings emerged from responses to a questionnaire that was put to a group of Dinka adolescents aged 13 to 16 years of age. The responses indicated their perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer. Eight young people were surveyed in this group and the group consisted of four females and four males, with two being 13 years, four 14 years and two 16 years of age respectively. Seven were Catholic and one was Anglican.

Seven of the eight participants said that they believed in God. One adolescent's perception of God was expressed in this way, "I believe God loves us and that we love him and that we know that we are his children." For half of this group aspects of Jesus' divinity were entwined with their understanding of God. This was demonstrated in the following responses.

> *He is merciful. He is creator of the world. I believe in judgement and that he is an immortal man.*
> *I believe he is our Saviour.*

In speaking about God some would name Jesus as one and the same for example, "Both Jesus and God. He is merciful."

Other predominant characteristics attributed to God included creator God and loving, merciful and forgiving God. One respondent expressed the belief that God was in relationship with people saying, "I believe that God loves us and that we love him and that we know that we are his children."

Finally one young adolescent denied belief in God and said, "If the religion doesn't help or do anything then its not worth it…I am angry with God."
For this person reference to a 'tragic thing' happening since coming to Australia had changed his thoughts about God and religion and he had developed very negative thoughts that God and all religions in general were ineffectual (See Table 4:7 in Appendix 4 for Dinka adolescent responses to their perceptions of God). The following were the findings for Dinka adolescents' perceptions about God for ages 13 to 16.

1. Dinka adolescents from this age group believed in God though half of the respondents confused characteristics of Jesus with those of God.

2. Comparatively speaking there appeared to be more confusion in the perceptions of God for the 13 -16 year olds than for the younger group.

3. The younger children distinguished more accurately the relationship between God and Jesus and the places "where" God and Jesus "operated."

4. Feelings of anger led to denial of the efficacy of God and religion.

5. Descriptors for God indicated personal relationship.

Perceptions of Jesus for ages 13 to 16

The majority of respondents affirmed belief in Jesus. One respondent denied the importance of Jesus conceding that Jesus was a real person but as a religious figure he was unbelievable. A total of seven adolescents envisaged Jesus as either the Son of God or as Saviour. Some acknowledged him as one who was born of the Virgin Mary, a good man who was a teacher, forgiver and a miracle worker. Two of the respondents believed that Jesus personally engaged with the Dinka people to assist them and bring them to happiness. The following comments captured this sentiment, "Jesus is important to all of us because he's looking after everyone," and "We [the Dinka people] needed to come here [Australia], so we got helped to come here. I believe Jesus is helping us."

There was awareness that Jesus was present during good times and in times of adversity. One adolescent spoke about Jesus' importance in the following way. He said that feeling close to Jesus made a person happier and because of this, good things happened. From discussions he had with his mother about his baby brother's death, it revealed that the presence of Jesus had been felt at that time. He also recounted the time when the family escaped from Sudan to Egypt. He said that his family trusted in Jesus because they believed in Jesus' sacrifice and they had felt his presence. "It was like he was there when we need him." Some of the participants were able to articulate the real sense of relationship they and their families felt in times of happiness and of tragedy. The knowledge that Jesus suffered and sacrificed his life made him personally accessible to them. One respondent confused Jesus for God in recounting Jesus' crucifixion saying "God died for us." There was confusion between God and the actions of Jesus Christ. Jesus' importance was generally agreed and reasons offered predominantly centred on his ability to offer positive presence in daily lives to these adolescents and their families. One participant was not sure about Jesus' importance and

another denied his importance altogether. Some acknowledged the importance of Jesus in terms of being "God's messenger" and "our Saviour." As one participant commented, "God brought him [Jesus] to the world to try and save us from our sins. He [Jesus] was sent by God to give a message." Two respondents focused on Jesus' importance as an influence for modelling positive behaviour. They stated that the action of Jesus was responsible for their personal belief in God and that it was through Jesus that one learns how to be good (See Table 4:7 in Appendix 4 for Dinka adolescent responses to their perceptions of Jesus). The following were the findings from the Dinka 13-16 years adolescents' perceptions about Jesus.

1. The majority of respondents accepted Jesus as one who is from God and who is Saviour.

2. The Dinka adolescents predominantly believed that Jesus' personal presence offered a positive influence in daily life for times of happiness and hardship.

3. The various responses from the participants equally represented aspects of Jesus' divinity and his humanity.

4. The young person who did not believe in Jesus both affirmed him historically, and denied him as a divine entity.

5. There was confusion between God and the actions of Jesus Christ for one adolescent.

Perceptions of Prayer for ages 13 to 16

The majority of Dinka adolescents said that they prayed. One young person admitted to praying sometimes, but added that more recently she had stopped praying completely. Most of the respondents said that they prayed routinely before going to sleep at night. They also mentioned they prayed at Church and at school. These young people offered to God and Jesus their prayers of special intention with informal and to a lesser extent, formal prayer. Their special intentions were predominantly concerned with, "Stopping the bad things happening" and, "to make things right". Asking for help especially for others such as family, the sick and the dead were also among their intentions in prayer. Some of these adolescents openly shared

their experiences of death in the family. In one instance a brother had died and in another the father had died, and they knew from first hand experience the dangers associated with fleeing a war torn country. Prayers of thanks and asking for forgiveness also featured in their responses.

The private prayer ritual of these young people demonstrated reverence. Most commenced praying by making the *Sign of the Cross* and others addressed their heavenly father or prayed in the name of Jesus Christ. Some prayed with hands joined, two others said they knelt next to their bed and one person also lit a candle to pray.

Most of the young people thought that prayer was purposeful because they believed it brought the person closer to God. Their comments communicated the following perspectives:-
Praying allowed one to openly surrender oneself to God.

Praying lets you release yourself to God.

God listened to those who pray with a fervent heart.

When we're praying we're closer to God, and if you pray with all your heart he'll answer your prayers.

Confessing sin in prayer relieved great personal unhappiness.

When you do the confessing… it relieves you out of your miseries.

The consensus gained from this group of Dinka adolescents was that praying for special intentions personally helped them, because they had faith that God listened to them. Their comments about prayer demonstrated a trusting and respectful relationship with God (See Table 4:8 in Appendix 4 for a summary of the responses given by Dinka adolescents for perception of prayer). Notably the one person who did not pray lamented that important prayers had not been answered. This participant expressed anger with God.

Family Prayer Participation

Over half of the adolescents prayed together at home, either regularly or sometimes. They prayed with either the whole family or with separate members or smaller groups within the family. Four children said that they prayed with their brothers and sisters. Two respondents indicated that family prayer used to be practised but no longer was. Some occasions of family prayer included prayer before meals, to give thanks to God, to ask for happiness and for help to those in pain and those in need in Sudan. Celebration of the sacraments and praying together at Mass were also considered a form of family prayer. One respondent said about family prayer participation, "When we pray together we don't count the time." The following were the findings for Dinka adolescents' perceptions about prayer for ages 13 to 16: -

1. Dinka adolescents were familiar with the practice of private and communal prayer. They believed that God listened to those who prayed.

2. The majority of these adolescents routinely prayed before sleeping. Their prayer ritual demonstrated reverence. God was trusted and prayer helped develop a relationship with God.

3. Their private prayer involved special intentions for their family, the suffering of others especially in Sudan, and for the dead, especially relatives. It was believed that praying for others helps those in need.

4. Their prayer indicated a breadth of experience marked by suffering and loss and this was predicated by a heart-felt relationship with God. Being close to God was important. Prayer helped the person praying.

5. Personal anger affected prayer and the relationship of faith in one case.

6. Dinka adolescents have or have had the experience of the practice of regular family prayer.

Perceptions of Prayer: The Rosary and Religious Symbols

Five of the adolescent respondents said that they possessed Rosary beads, while three did not.

Three respondents knew how to pray the Rosary and were able to list some of the mysteries of

the Rosary. One sixteen-year old male said that he used to pray the Rosary in Dinka but did

not pray the Rosary any more. Another said that he used to have the beads and pray the

Rosary, but has ceased praying. Five respondents admitted they did not know how to pray the

Rosary, but two young people said they were learning, one from his mother and the other

from her grandmother as well as from school. Others were aware that their mother and their

grandmother possessed Rosary beads and that some prayed the Rosary in Dinka.

All respondents in the age bracket indicated that there was widespread display of

religious holy pictures, statues and symbols in their homes. Specifically holy pictures and

statues depicting Mary and Jesus separately, and as mother and child, were noted as well as

the crucified Christ. These items were displayed in different rooms around the home in

prominent places such as the living room or entrance hall. Three of the young people also

mentioned that they possessed their own Bible. There was some esteem in claiming

ownership of the Bible (See Table 4:9 in Appendix 4 for the Dinka adolescents' responses to

praying the Rosary and the display of religious symbols). The findings in this area were: -

1. Some Dinka adolescent respondents were aware of the form and function of the Rosary
   and many possessed Rosary beads.

2. Some learning and practice of the Rosary occurred at this age. The Rosary was learnt in
   Dinka, Arabic or English.

3. The mother, grandmother or school influenced the learning of the Rosary for some of
   these young people.

4. Religious devotional pictures and statues were prominently displayed in Dinka family
   homes.

5. Dinka adolescents who had a Bible attributed importance in its ownership.

Sources of Learning about God, Jesus, Church and Prayer

Seven of the adolescents had recollections of religious education in Africa. Five were taught in Egypt and two in Kenya. One recalled no religious learning prior to coming to Australia, although mention was made of attending Mass in Egypt, suggesting some involvement in religion. One of the respondents was required to attend a Muslim school for academic and religious learning. This child, as well as another, learnt about religion in Arabic. Outside the teaching and learning occurring in the Muslim school, the education of all seven respondents who positively recalled Christian religious learning received it through the Church and from parents, women, Catholic catechists and Dinka elders. The child who attended the Muslim school at the time explained how they received Christian religious instruction concurrently. Speaking about Islam the respondent observed, "We learnt about God but not like Christian God." Later in explaining how Christian religious instruction was delivered the respondent said, "We had these people who came to our house. Mostly my dad teaches us stuff about Christian God." For all others these lessons occurred in the home with other children or at the Church, during the Mass or in Sunday school. The lesson content involved sacramental preparation, the learning of Bible stories and the practice of prayer. The learning about God, Jesus and praying was taught through listening to Scripture, attendance and celebrating the Mass, discussion of Bible stories, watching movies about God and learning religious songs. One respondent described intense rigour and involvement associated with being an altar boy, noting that for him, the service he offered to the Church and the helping at Masses marked a sign of willingness and readiness to prepare for the priesthood.

For this age group the experience of religious instruction in Africa prior to coming to Australia was varied (See Table 4:10 in Appendix 4 for Dinka adolescents' responses about their prior religious learning). The following were the findings for the experience of the Dinka adolescents' religious learning prior to coming to Australia: -

1. Every participant interviewed recounted different ways of receiving religious instruction. No two responses were the same.

2. A predominant element among respondents for receiving learning about God, Jesus and prayer in Africa was their attendance at Mass.

3. Some young people received sacramental preparation for Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

4. The childhood experience of some of the adolescents included attendance at a Muslim school in Africa.

5. Various resources and methods were used to teach young people about Christianity.

6. Religious knowledge acquisition and learning mainly involved listening and oral comprehension skills, and a dependency on memory retention.

7. Altar boys learned about Christianity and were groomed for the priesthood.

Perceptions of Church for ages 13 to 16

All of the respondents said that they had attended Mass in Africa. Six responses affirmed attendance in Egypt, four responses affirmed attendance in Sudan and one each attended Mass in Kenya and Kakuma respectively. The following descriptions are a montage of the responses that highlighted the interviewee's experiences of attending Mass in Sudan, Egypt or Kakuma. It is not a representation of Mass at any particular place. The recollections were vivid and the responses detailed. Their prayer focused on asking God for peace, help and forgiveness. Other singular responses recalled a priest in front of a crucifix with lots of people praying in Dinka, and lots of music. The elders would be seated on chairs and the rest would be seated on dirt mounds. People brought their own napkin to place on the mound. Individuals recounted long hours of altar serving and passing a bowl of water around to make the sign of the cross. During the Mass children were withdrawn from the Church and taught by elders outside. After Mass a sense of great happiness would be demonstrated with dancing outside the Church. One respondent said that their experience of Mass in Kenya was more peaceful

than their experience in Sudan. Another young person who attended Mormon services remembered the testimonies recounting personal redemption. These snippets indicated that participation in Mass before coming to Australia was a common experience.

Experiences of Mass and Church in Australia

In Australia the majority of Dinka adolescents who took part in the research went to Dinka Mass in a Catholic church. One of the participants attended Dinka Mass and also went to other Catholic Masses. One young person said that he did not go to Mass any more. He said that his mother was especially concerned about him refusing to go to Mass but the reason was that he was bored with it. She had encouraged him to go to an earlier, shorter Mass. This adolescent had not admitted his true feelings to the family about his anger towards to God. Another participant attended Church service of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. This participant said that his mother attended the Church service with the family, and that she also attended service at St Andrews Uniting Church. An interview with the children's parents revealed that the family were Bor Dinka and they claimed they were Anglican. Furthermore, several children from this family went to Catholic schools in the western suburbs (See Table 4:11 in Appendix 4 for Dinka adolescents' responses about their perceptions of Church).

The main reasons the adolescents gave for attending Mass was to pray, to listen, to receive Holy Communion and to sing. Prayer involved asking for forgiveness and praying for their special intentions. Listening involved attention to the priest and Scripture.

> *I go to Mass to pray for people who have a difficult life. I go to receive the Body of Christ, even the Blood. We sing altogether, we make the sign of the peace. We listen to the priest and Bible stories.*

In the case of the mother attending the Uniting Church, one respondent mentioned that listening to her speak at the service was important. In discussing the different ways Holy Communion had been received in the Anglican Church compared with the Church of Jesus

Christ of the Latter Day Saints the respondent referred to their understanding of Eucharist in the following way,

> *It's when you can eat your bread and receive the Body of Christ and Blood of Christ. But I only drank the wine when I received my first Eucharist, but I only take the bread now. At the Church of Jesus Christ they give us little bottles of water instead of wine – little cups of water. And they don't give us other bread. They give us normal white bread. Not the hosts.*

This respondent attended a Catholic secondary school in the western suburbs.

Solidarity gave meaning to attending Mass for some of these young Dinka people. They were aware that being at Mass contributed to the support of others in their community. Other individual reasons for attending Mass included an obligation of conscience and to learn about the prophets.

> *I like to learn about God and try to be involved in different stuff so I don't go to hell, hell, hell… I want to go up, go up, not down.*

The following were the main findings for Dinka adolescents aged 13 to 16 in regard to Mass attendance.

1. The Dinka adolescents surveyed continued to attend Mass except for one respondent.

2. The participants attended Mass in the context of family and community.

3. Patronage at other denominational Church services was inclusive of the religious experience for a minority of Dinka who attend Catholic schools in the western suburbs.

4. Memories of Mass and Church experiences were vivid. Adolescents' recollections included witness of numerous people in attendance, expressions of forgiveness and help and praying for peace.

5. Masses were characterised by singing and dancing occurring during and after the religious celebration.

6. Some ambiguity existed about the Eucharist where young people have been exposed to the family adherence of multiple Christian faiths.

7. Dinka adolescents attended Mass to listen, pray, sing and celebrate the Eucharist.

8. There was awareness that attending Mass was important for supporting the Dinka community in Melbourne and also that prayer helped those people experiencing a difficult life.

9. The celebration of Mass, on the whole, was a significant part of the Dinka adolescents' religiosity.

Dinka Children's and Adolescent's Religiosity

Religiosity and Religious Beliefs

The majority of nine to 16 year olds affirmed belief in the existence of God. God was perceived as relational, immanent and transcendent. In the 13 to16 age group half of the respondents confused characteristics of God with those of Jesus. Some adolescents did not readily differentiate the place "where" God and Jesus "operated". Descriptors of God's transcendence and immanence were given indicating strong relational connection to God among Dinka adolescents. However for two of the young people feelings of anger and ambivalence led to denial of religion and God's efficacy. A claim was also made that God sent the prophets and reviewed the Church under Joseph Smith, indicating that there were perceptions of God that came from various sources.

The research suggested that some confusion and lack of surety was prevalent for children and adolescents about their understandings of God. Coles' (1990) study with eight to 12 year olds found that God was very important to most children and that images of God were strongly influenced by their family and significant adults. Coles' finding was important in the light of family influences on Dinka children's religious learning. Their perceptions of God were influenced to some extent by family and significant adults, who themselves were learning about the Christian faith. Madge (1971) found that adolescents' understanding of the relationship between Jesus and God was sometimes confused and unsure and Duffy (2002) also found that young people had difficulties differentiating Jesus as separate from God or as

identical with God. There was a tendency for the 13 to 16 year olds to confuse characteristics of God with those of Jesus. The younger age group seemed to distinguish more accurately the relationship between God and Jesus though during the questionnaire some would preface their answers with " I'm not sure" and then proceed to talk about God in divine and personal ways. Most Dinka children and adolescents affirmed belief in God and this cohered with the studies cited.

The majority of children and adolescents believed in the person of Jesus. Aspects of Jesus' divinity and humanity were equally represented in various responses of participants. The confusion between God and Jesus seemed to apply only in discussions articulating attributes or characteristics of God. The role and nature of Jesus Christ was articulated with surety. Children spoke of him as an exemplar of human behaviour, and the adolescents related to feelings of his personal presence. They perceived Jesus as a positive influence in their daily lives, in times of happiness and sadness. Many of the participants especially the adolescents spoke about Jesus' divinity and were able to express the Christian belief of Jesus' relationship to God and his saving power. One young person did not believe in Jesus and both affirmed him historically and denied him as a divine entity. His understandings of God and Jesus had changed since arriving in Australia.

The studies from Cox (1967), Claehout and Declerq (1970), Savin-Williams (1977), Astley and Francis (1996), Francis and Astley (1997), Francis (2001) and Copley (2005) found that children and adolescents overlooked Jesus' divinity and focused simplistically on his humanity. Studies conducted by Aylward nee Walshe (2005) and Aylward and Freathy (2008), found that young children and adolescents were known to question the relationship between Jesus' humanity and divinity in so much as they accepted Jesus as the Son of God, but were less prepared to attest that he was God. This research found that Dinka children and adolescents related to Jesus as God's divine saving power on earth. They articulated aspects of Jesus' divinity and humanity in equal measure. It also found that the majority of children

and adolescents believed in the person of Jesus, concurring with studies dating back to the 1960's that indicated that young people conceptualized Jesus in positive terms. In comparison, a longitudinal study conducted by Kay and Francis (1996) from 1974 to 1994 at four-year intervals with 12 to 16 year olds, highlighted an increase in adolescents presenting with negative attitudes towards Jesus. The present study found Dinka adolescents maintained positive feelings towards Jesus. They discussed attributes of Jesus in doctrinally orthodox images and notably they personally related to Jesus in prayer, viewing him as a positive influence in their lives.

Religiosity and Prayer

The Dinka children and adolescents were prayerful young people. They prayed routinely, in private or communally and they prayed as a family. The majority of the nine to 16 year olds prayed every night before sleeping and their prayers asked for personal strength, calm, protection and forgiveness. Other special intentions were said for family, the poor and sick, and those suffering. For the 13 to 16 year olds, prayer indicated a breadth of experience marked by suffering and loss, and was predicated by heart-felt relationship with God and Jesus. The children and young people alike generally believed that being close to God was important and that praying helped the person who prayed. Four of the 13 children and six of the eight adolescents possessed Rosary beads, and were either being taught or knew how to pray the Rosary. Some girls said that they prayed the Rosary independently and others were learning and practising it in Dinka, Arabic and English. There was significant devotion to Mary. The Dinka children's and adolescents' awareness of praying the Rosary was influenced by their mother's and grandmother's practice and prayer ritual. Some also noted that the Rosary was learnt at school. Both groups of young people had or have had experience of regular family prayer. Attitudes to prayer included the understanding that prayers were not always answered. Various thoughts about the value of personal prayer assumed attitudes of trust and respect, of being protected and listened to by God and Jesus. Conversely two

respondents expressed negative feelings, one of anger and the other denial towards God, Jesus and prayer in response to the experience of tragedy and unanswered prayer. In spite of these conflicted thoughts, prayerful habits persisted through their doubt and denial.

A Spiritual Link to Religiosity

The Dinka children and adolescents articulated personal relationship in prayer to God and Jesus. The 13 to 16 year olds shared and expressed their tragic experiences including death of family members, separation from family members and personal and family illness. Relational consciousness described a feature of spirituality where the awareness of self in relationship with one's reality demonstrated a truthful response of value (Hay and Nye, 2006). Dinka children and adolescents communicated with God and Jesus routinely perceiving and responding to their life experiences. Champagne (2001, 2003 and 2008) studied the spiritual dimensions of young children. Her description and method for perceiving spirituality in young children was to listen to the prayers of children and adolescents. Listening for the spiritual integrity of prayer illuminated the meaning that has been made of everyday living and many of the Dinka young person's prayers expressed their feelings of praise, gratitude, grief, compassion and guilt as its response to life. Their prayers helped make sense of their reality and they connected in hope to God. The God of hope was envisaged as 'good' (Mountain, 2005). Bruggemann (1986) contended that this "good" promoted hope and resilience in the child and adolescent, and McClure (1996) suggested that this hope and resilience perpetuated meaning, value and purpose.

This research proposes that the Dinka children and adolescents who took part in this case study have made meaning of their trauma, dislocation and suffering of war in such a way that their prayer connected them to the reality of their experiences, and in seeing God as 'good' delivered hope and promoted in them personal resilience, which they in turn shared and expressed as a consequence with others in their homes, at Church, in Mass and in the

wider community in a relationship of solidarity with other Dinka. Their spirituality and religiosity demonstrated this quality, practice and attitude.

This claim was made because the data from the questionnaire (see Appendix C Figure C1.) showed that for the majority of children and adolescents who affirmed prayer as helpful, qualified their responses in relation to God, and the specific instances in their life when prayer was personally beneficial. The children shared their experiences of trauma, citing death of family members because of the war, dislocation through the separation from family members, and suffering and hardship, due to serious personal and family illness. When they spoke about these instances, they readily connected them to times of prayer. In doing so they were connecting their prayer to their personally experienced reality. In perceiving God as 'good' the majority of questionnaire participants affirmed belief in God, many articulating this in either a personal and relational way, or specifically referring to God's love, mercy and forgiveness, viewing him as a positive force in their lives. While there was some confusion between God and Jesus among the adolescents, their overall perceptions highlighted their understanding that Jesus was the Son of God, and that he was responsible for helping the Dinka in their plight (see Table 4:7). Their perception of the good being done for them was expressed in their responses that associated the filial relationship between Jesus and God and this indicated their perception of the goodness of the Divine. In summation, the children's and adolescent's affirmation of God, their strong perceptions about God's ability to make extraordinary things happen, their understanding that the Son of God has interceded positively in their plight, their expressions of feeling that God makes them grow in compassion, to be stronger and calmer and to bring them closer to God all through prayer, deputes God as 'good' (see Appendix D). Encompassed in these prayerful themes their personal experiences have indicated their thoughts about the nature and purpose of their prayer and their hopes for the Dinka people. The saying of private personal and family prayer (see Table 4:3), and congregational prayer at Mass (see Tables: 4:6 and 4:11) were articulated in the open

questionnaire. The large number of Dinka children and adolescents who attended special

Dinka Mass expressed a commitment to solidarity for the Dinka community. Their spirituality

was noted in their lived experiences and their attitude to prayer as mentioned above. Their

religiosity was noted in their perceptions of God and Jesus and in the strong attendances at

Dinka Mass. These correlated altruistic prayers and committed levels to Dinka Mass

attendance.

Religiosity and the Mass

Dinka children and adolescents went to Mass in Africa before coming to Australia, and

were involved in their Church and parish communities. Mass and Church experiences in

Africa were memorable for the interviewees. The young children associated the Church with

the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and the adolescents recalled large numbers

of people in attendance at Mass expressing forgiveness and praying for help and peace.

Singing and dancing was a feature of celebration and worship during and after the Mass.

In Australia the nine to 16 year olds mainly attended Dinka Masses. Children went to

Mass with the family to learn about God, Jesus and Mary and to engage with their Dinka

community. The children's appreciation of the Mass depended on their involvement and

participation during the Mass. Special lessons where children were withdrawn for part of the

Mass to learn, enhanced their appreciation of and encouraged their participation in the Mass.

Most Dinka adolescents went to Mass regularly and this represented a cultural awareness of

solidarity. Some stated that by attending the Mass with other Dinka, they were supporting the

Dinka community and they said that their praying together helped those with a difficult life.

Collectively the adolescents understood that attendance at Mass involved their contribution to

engage, listen, pray, sing and celebrate in the Eucharist. Some Dinka children and

adolescents' parents had been proselytized into the beliefs of the Anglican tradition. These

interviewees were usually, though not always, from the sub-tribe Bor and their experience of

Mass and prayer services varied. This research found that children and adolescents from the

one family attending the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints were originally from an Anglican background and attended Catholic schools in the western suburbs. Overall the celebration of Mass and participation in Church activities was a significant part of Dinka young people's religiosity.

Research has found that figures for Mass attendance were declining and continue to fall (Dixon, 2005 and Dixon et al. 2007). The majority of Dinka children and adolescents who took part in this study went to Mass regularly and were involved in their Church community. Rymarz (2005) noted that the change in attitude to Mass by parents and influential adults and a lack of supportive networks for children and adolescents in parishes contributed to the fall in Mass attendance. This study supports this notion as it was found that children and adolescents regularly went to Mass with their parents. It also found that support networks attached to parish activities encouraged participation at Mass including choir practice, the Legion of Mary, sacramental catechetical classes delivered by Dinka catechists and special lessons conducted for children at Mass strengthened commitment. Kay and Francis (1996) maintained that religiously active young people had positive participatory involvement and behaviours in regard to Mass attendance. This study found that the celebration of the Mass on the whole was a significant part of Dinka children's and adolescents' religiosity. The youth especially were aware that there was solidarity in being Dinka and Church was the place to express this. They wanted to belong and support their Dinka community.

Religiosity and Dedications

Religiosity demonstrating religious dedication was explored through the possession and display of religious symbols. Christian devotional materials were prominently displayed in Dinka homes. They included pictures, statues and or crucifixes and also pictures or statues of Mary. These were placed on tables or walls in bedrooms and other rooms in the home. In other separate examples of devotional displays one participant had a prayer table in her bedroom where pictures and a statue were placed and a candle was lit for prayer, and another

had a picture of the crucifixion displayed on the computer screen. Rosary beads were hung on the walls for ornamentation. Crucifixes on necklaces and personal Bibles were valued. The presence of Christian devotional displays in Dinka people's homes sometimes occasioned prayerful thought in the young people.

Prior Religious Learning

Prior religious learning contributed to Dinka children's and adolescents' religiosity. Their sources of learning Christianity were variously experienced in Sudan, Egypt and Kakuma in Kenya. The memories of the nine to 12 year olds provided random snippets about their religious learning. Many of the children were too young to remember. Those children now 11 and 12 years of age recalled their parents as teachers of Christianity. Recollections of special lessons highlighted Scripture, games and listening activities with memory and rote as learning methods. Bible stories that were taught featured cases where the downtrodden were able to overcome mighty foes.

Thirteen to 16 year olds provided detailed accounts of their religious learning. Seven of the eight adolescents recalled sources of their learning from participation in routine family prayer, parents, women and Catholic trained catechists and tribal elders. Once again religious knowledge acquisition and learning mainly involved listening and oral comprehension skills with a dependency on memory retention. One adolescent recalled attendance at Muslim school for his academic and religious learning. He also participated in Christian Mass, Church activities and family prayer outside his formal schooling. This situation illustrated the lack of learning opportunity in educational systems other than Muslim. Attendance at Mass made a significant impression on Dinka young people's religious learning, and for some also the sacramental preparation for Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. Some of the boys from Kakuma refugee camp remembered being trained to be altar servers and received religious instruction from the priest. They recalled this training as grooming for the priesthood.

Conclusion

The majority of Dinka children and adolescents believed in the existence of God and perceived God as relational, immanent and transcendent. There was some confusion about the nature of God as a number of the young people confused God with the human characteristics of Jesus. They believed in Jesus and referred to aspects of his humanity and divinity in equal measure. They were clear about the role and nature of Jesus Christ in the world and as the Son of God. Dinka children and adolescents prayed routinely and regularly in private and with others. They felt close to God and Jesus and spoke about the positive influence of prayer in their lives. Some prayed to Mary and they either knew or were learning to pray the Rosary. The majority went to Mass to pray and be involved. Many viewed their prayer and attendance at Mass as important for the betterment of those suffering and as a mark of cultural solidarity. Church and Mass attendance were a significant practice for Dinka young people's religiosity. In Dinka homes there were Christian religious statues and pictures displayed and these dedications provided them with prayerful opportunity. Their beliefs, practices and dedications provided an insight into a religiosity where faith sought understanding. Religious activity engaged their hearts, minds and souls through celebration praise and worship of God, and religious dedications offered them a consciousness of their spiritual devotion.

Three questions offered reflection for the nature of religiosity linked to the nature of Dinka spirituality. Did Dinka people's religiosity suggest spirituality, and if so what behaviours suggested this? While praying may be viewed as a religious practice, it may also be understood as the offering of deep connections to the invisible sacred (Tacey, 2003). The Dinka children and adolescents engaged in deep connection to their lived experiences as they prayed regularly and routinely. The content of their prayer reflected serious matter, non–materialistic nor trivial (Hyde, 2008), (see Appendix D, Tables 4:3 and 4:8).

What evidence was there that spirituality was a major factor for their prayer? The deep connections referred their practice of prayer to their belief that it was helpful in bringing them

close to God and in helping others. Their sense of hope connected their sense of being to the action of praying. Their sense of hope emanated from their perception that through prayer extraordinary things happened (see Appendix D, Table 4:3) and that God heard their special intentions (see Appendix D, Table 4:8).

Was prayer indicative of a spirituality that was unique to experiences of war trauma? Their lived experiences of war had not extinguished their sense of hope or being. In this respect their prayer was indicative of a spirituality that was unique to the Dinka cultural experience of war trauma, because in spite of their human suffering in diaspora (Yath, 1991; Moro, 2004; Parker, 2002 and Crisp, 1999) and from the insecurity of post migration (Heptinstall et al. 2004), their dancing, singing and saying of prayer (O'Hanlon, 1991) animated the presence of the spirit in their collective midst.

In the following chapter proposed findings for the Dinka children and adolescents' spirituality are discussed. Data collection methods including a focus group, draw-write-narrate session and semi-structured interviews are explained in light of relevant studies and literature concerning young people's spirituality.

CHAPTER FIVE

DINKA CHILDREN'S AND ADOLESCENTS' SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

The findings of the research, which are proposed and discussed in this chapter, identify

significant characteristics of the Dinka children's spirituality which was defined in Chapter 1

in relation to this study as describing the relationship and "connectedness" children

demonstrated through self to others and the world, and which was expressed through their life

experiences .The "connectedness" (Hyde, 2008) of young people and their ability to make

meaning about life indicated a consciousness of spirituality (Keating, 2000). Examples of

these connections were sourced from children's discussions, conversations and drawings

exploring their war and refugee experiences. Analysis of children's stories and drawings

illuminated their experiences and findings proposed and discussed from this part of the

investigation were aimed at informing the topic of the spirituality of war-affected children.

The spirituality of the adolescents was also linked with their war and refugee experiences. An

understanding of these was gained from semi-structured interviews and their thoughts about

war experiences, personal relationships, concerns, sense of belonging and projections of

themselves in the future were gathered. Analysis of these thoughts were aimed at identifying

possible connections between their experiences and relationships to self, others and the world,

and are presented as a means of highlighting their spirituality in the light of their war

experience. A discussion of Dinka young people's spirituality in the context of resilience was

guided by a brief questionnaire and other relevant information offered during the course of

data collection with the Dinkas. Analysis of these indicated the Dinka children's and

adolescents' experiences of pre (Miller, 2008 and McCloskey et al. 1995) and post

(Heptinstall et al. 2004) migration stressors. Proposed coping mechanisms and elements of

their resilience were identified in the light of current literature on the topic (Freitas and

Downey 1998; Masten & Coatsworth, 1991; and Anderson, 2004).

The data were collected in the framework of the following aims: -

> To gain understanding of the trauma and suffering that these children and adolescents may have experienced as a cause of war.
>
> To identify elements of Dinka children's and adolescents' spiritual perspective.
>
> To gain understanding of their spiritual perspectives in relation to their coping mechanisms for trauma and personal resilience.

The methods used for this case study comprised a focus group approach, which included picture chat discussion, "draw-write-narrate" activities and semi-structured interviews. Executed through elements of a lesson format, the thoughts, words and pictures of five children aged between nine and 12 provided data suitable for exploring the ramifications of the children's personal experiences as they related to their spirituality. A picture chat was used to stimulate discussion about the children's refugee experiences. They were then given the choice to draw a picture of an aspect of their journey and write about it. Afterwards the children spoke about their experiences with the rest of the group. In addition, the children were asked to respond to questions about what they thought was most important in life. A series of semi-structured interviews with three young Dinka adolescents was also conducted. The purpose of the interviews was to gain an understanding of Dinka adolescent spirituality as well as gain insight into their past experiences and how they reflected on them in the present.

Experiences of Living in a War

The Focus Group

There were several parts to the focus group, which was aimed at engaging the children in discussion about their experiences of war and being a refugee. Techniques used in this investigation were a) picture chat; b) drawing a picture of an experience before coming to Australia and c) a discussion about what really mattered to them in life.

Dinka children's refugee experiences, their thoughts and feelings about what happened to them and others around them were explored in conversation about the subject matter of seven pictures (See Appendix C, Figure C2). The images depicted the following: -

1) Sudanese refugee in a bus looking out of the window

2) Massed rows of huts at Kakuma refugee camp

3) Many hands reaching into one big bowl of food

4) Milk being measured and poured for distribution to refugees

5) Baby crying and distressed in camp situation

6) People on the move. Refugees moving worldly possessions in a wheelbarrow, walking along a desolate road

7) Medical checks being administered to children by U.S. Navy

Explorations of Dinka children's personal experiences were gathered from their drawings about memories of places and events before coming to Australia. The children drew the following pictures (See Appendix C, Figure C3). Names given here are pseudonyms.

Picture 1 drawn by Richard – "Alone"

Picture 2 drawn by Nick – "The Flood"

Picture 3 drawn by Stuart – "My Family"

Picture 4 drawn by Michael – "Working Hard"

Picture 5 drawn by Jenny – "My House"

Finally after the pictures were drawn and annotated a discussion was conducted around the topics of "The most important things in life to me"; and "The things I would wish for." These activities were intended to assist the Dinka children to describe their refugee experiences and also their personal values. The experiences demonstrated and the values they formed and articulated, as an expression of their experiences was significant to the dialogue concerning the spirituality of war affected children and their resilience.

Dinka Children's Experiences

The Picture Chat

The first picture was of a Sudanese refugee seated in a bus and looking out of the window. The man was staring seriously outward in contemplation. The children thought he might be thinking about life, why life was so hard and why there was a war. Nick began to articulate feelings aroused by the picture and said in response he thought the man was thinking about life and why it was so hard. Michael thought that the man was thinking about the war and later in discussion added that maybe someone killed his family and maybe he sought revenge. Jenny posited that the man was thinking about his family because perhaps he had been separated from them for a long while. Nick focused on the man's look of sadness and thought he may be thinking about the hardship of living and life in general. Richard raised the possibility that he may be a patient ready for hospital because of the identifying yellow tag on his wrist. The yellow tag denoted refugee status.

The children projected thoughts about what the man in the picture may have been thinking. The children's responses about the man's thoughts indicated aspects of refugee experiences and demonstrated an understanding of the sadness of life, living in the presence of war, the sickness associated with it and the loss and separation of family.

Picture two showed Kakuma camp. It depicted multitudes of shanty dwellings in row upon row. The instant recognition of this picture as a village by Michael led the others to also recognize it. Jenny shared her experience of making a cubby house in Australia like the ones pictured. The boys in the group tended to question her ability or reason to do this. Nick, Stuart and Michael were aware of friends and family who had lived in Kakuma. In speaking about the function of Kakuma refugee camp, Jenny acknowledged that it was the quest for shelter and food, which brought people to these places. At one point the interviewer asked why so many people have to live this refugee camp existence. Richard trivialized this question with humour but Michael and Jenny attempted to answer seriously. Jenny believed that people who lived

like this were forced to leave their country and homes because their homes had been destroyed. Michael thought that people had tried to escape from some form of hardship and explained people's reasons for living this way. The children did not have the experience of living in Kakuma refugee camp but mentioned family and friends known to them who had lived this way. Some were aware that people who lived this way had been forced to leave their country because their life had been threatened.

Picture three showed hands reaching to share from one bowl of food. The children gasped because the picture looked unappealing. Nick immediately announced that they were sharing, without prompting. Stuart recognized that it was food. Richard said it was rice and Nick identified it as quin (possibly quinoa). All the children knew what this food was and mentioned that it was sold in the Egyptian shop in St Albans. Initially they denied having shared food in this way. In response to noting what was the most important thing occurring in the picture Nick said that it was the sharing that was important. Jenny qualified that it was sharing, without fighting. They agreed that everyone eating from the bowl would be hungry. Further questioning about the feelings associated with sharing food this way led to other revelations. Jenny stated that her parents gave her food to eat this way when she was in Sudan. Michael revealed to the group that his mother served one plate of food to be shared among friends. These admissions did not meet the approval of everyone present. Stuart lamented about people having these memories of Sudan. It was clear he would have rather not remembered such things.

All the children identified the foodstuff in the picture and though initially they denied having had the experience from sharing food from the one bowl. Richard, Michael and Jenny agreed that they did have the experience. It was established that at least some of the children present in the focus group had experience sharing food from the one bowl and that not everyone was comfortable about the memory it brought. Perhaps there was some embarrassment associated with eating food in this way.

Picture four showed milk being measured and poured into a container in what appeared to be a refugee camp. Upon viewing the picture the children were not clear about what they saw. Michael thought it was washing, Nick thought it was yoghurt and Jenny thought it was milk. Jenny intuitively said that the people gathered were waiting and that the young child in the picture looked tired. Nick pointed out the sense of expectation in people's faces pictured hunger, noting that the young child pictured wanted to eat. This image did not especially strike a chord with any previous experience. Some of the responses demonstrated that the children might have associated waiting with feelings of being hungry.

Picture five showed a baby crying in a refugee camp. The picture displayed showed an African toddler distressed and crying. The young child had flies on his face and what appeared to be a necklace with pendants of dung affixed to it. The initial display of this picture visibly moved the children. Richard and Jenny stared at the picture, Nick looked away and Stuart covered his eyes. Richard and Nick then looked to Stuart's response. The children were asked what was happening in the picture. Stuart said that the baby was crying because he might be hungry. Nick said that he might be sick. Jenny speculated that the child may have lost his parents and he had been left alone. Michael thought that he might be hurt.

The children discussed the possible causes of the baby's distress. Hunger, sickness, being lost or abandoned, being hurt and unable to move were the causes the children associated with the crying baby. The facial expressions and body language displayed by the children viewing the picture demonstrated concern and unease with the child's plight. The scene visibly moved them, and they did not trivialize the child's anguish.

Picture six showed people on the move in Africa with their personal belongings. There were refugees walking along the road and a man in the foreground was pushing a wheelbarrow, which had some personal belongings in it. Women and children were walking ahead. The environment was desolate. There was a solitary hut in the distance and there were no other people in the picture.

The children were all aware that the people in the picture were moving from and to a place with their belongings. They established that they were walking a long distance. Michael commented that there were no trains to catch and Richard noticed that they did not have shoes to wear as well. Richard drew attention to the hardship that was suffered when walking a long distance without shoes. Stuart was most indignant and retorted that he did wear shoes, and contrary to Stuart, Jenny said that shoes were only worn since coming to Australia. Michael excused their lack of wearing shoes because they were young and young children didn't have shoes. Stuart interjected placing his finger over his lips to hush the group's talk and they complied. It was as though the lack of shoes was a sign of poverty and Stuart especially was sensitive about this. He sought to gag the rest of the children in the group lest they gave some wrong impression of their background. The researcher deflected this situation by reiterating that walking was required because there were no trains. Stuart put his hand up to speak with a direct and earnest gaze because he wanted to set things straight. Michael said that they walked far and became animated using expressive arm gestures as he said that they walked in fifty degree heat raging on their heads. Stuart redressed the previous statement noting that they did have trucks and cars and attested that you could get a lift. Jenny noted that her father had a truck for delivering coke and there was no room for lifts. The question about whether or not the children walked long distances received a mixed response. For Michael the memory of walking long distances was vivid. The walk from school to home was many miles, as was the walk from home to the police station. He recounted that if he begged for transport he was ignored.

This discussion highlighted information about isolation and personal hardship, as well as sensitivities towards personal poverty. It was clear that Michael knew what it was like to walk long distances in the raging hot sun and perhaps also Richard. For Richard there was the added dimension of walking long distances without the benefit of shoes. This partly seemed to suggest they did not have shoes and that for them this was a sign of poverty that brought some

embarrassment. In their silence and discussion here the experiences of isolation, personal

hardship and poverty were apparent. Also the sense of humour that Michael displayed when

recounting his experience was telling of his witty disposition, and highlighted to some extent

his strength to smile in adversity. Michael demonstrated he was comfortable sharing his

experiences as hard as they were. In trying to gag the group perhaps Stuart had not reconciled

aspects of his past experiences.

Picture seven was of a young girl receiving a medical check up from a U.S. navy

doctor. In the background of this picture there was another young child sitting on a table and

also receiving a medical check. Outward signs suggested that the children did not present with

any obvious medical issues. They had a clean appearance and they were wearing neat clothing.

It was obvious to the children in the group that the young girl was being checked. Nick noticed

the U.S. Navy badge was displayed on the medico's uniform and said that they had come to the

rescue. Michael believed that groups of refugees had lined up to be checked so they could be

sent back or sent to where they were to go. The question was put to the children: "Did you

have to get a check up before coming to Australia?" Richard and Michael admitted to having a

check prior to coming to Australia. Nick, Stuart and Jenny indicated they did not know. The

fact of the matter was that all refugee people were required to have a medical check to receive a

clear bill of health before entry to Australia. Michael's initial response about receiving a check

before going accurately depicted the correct routine, which they all would have had to undergo.

The evasive answers about the medical check highlighted that this was a sensitive topic for

some and that a discussion about health issues was to be circumvented by disclaiming

knowledge of the event. The children were guarded about conversing openly on this topic,

perhaps because they may have known of relatives who were declined entry to Australia due to

health issues. They shrugged their shoulders, their eyes flashed from side to side, some frowned

and another demonstrated a knowing look as examples of evasive body language were

revealed. Jenny's response revealed that she was not prepared to answer questions about health

check-ups because in dismissing the question her eyes grew wide and she stated that she came here by the train and bus. This of course was not true. The knowledge gained about their refugee experience from the conversation about this picture was that the children were afraid to speak openly about this topic.

Summary

Findings about Dinka children's experiences in Africa as refugees suggested that: -

1. They related to, and were aware of the experiences and feelings of other Dinka refugee's sufferings.

2. They linked war experience with the sadness of life such as sickness, separation from and loss of family.

3. They knew about refugee camps. They were aware of other people who had lived in Kakuma and they knew that people lived this way because they were forced to leave their country.

4. Some children expressed the experience of sharing food from the one bowl.

5. The children were sensitive to images and conversations depicting poverty, human need and violence. (They were not desensitized)

6. The children associated feelings of waiting in reference to the experience of hunger.

7. Some of the children had experience of walking long distances in harsh conditions on a regular basis.

8. The children knew about the medical check-ups required for entry into a new country.

The Drawings

Richards's picture featured a solitary figure predominantly placed in the foreground. It was a picture of himself. In the background along a horizon there was a progression of stick figures. Richard's picture captured the sense of being alone. The dual horizons in the picture highlighted the sense of distance and separateness.

Richard was last to start and the first to finish his drawing. The video recording of this part of the research showed that Richard clearly was procrastinating. He was given the option to dictate a story if he wished but he politely dismissed the offer. He began to draw a figure and at one point when he realized Nick had started again, he wished also to begin again. The researcher encouraged Richard to continue with his drawing. He did so but seemed tense. Richard's recount of the picture drew attention to his personal awareness of being alone and vulnerable. In the picture he illustrated how his safety had been compromised. He remembered walking alone and feeling scared. The representations of passersby depicted the tension and anxiety that Richard clearly felt. He did not mention how he came to be in this situation only that he took some time to walk home alone.

While Richard was recounting his experience his face was expressionless. He spoke without moving his lips, and his tones were muffled and barely audible. His body language was evasive and he was careful not to make eye contact at any time. His hands fidgeted continually sometimes covering his mouth, sometimes playing with the pens on the table. Initially it took a while for him to become settled before deciding what to draw. Once he had chosen the experience he drew with purpose and was the first to complete his drawing. Richard experienced being lost and alone amidst onlookers and strangers. He would have been a young child no more than six years at the time. This precarious experience of being lost and alone illustrated the danger of children straying.

Nick's picture showed three people in floodwater, one with their head above and two fully submerged under the water. Tiny bubbles were drawn coming from the submerged people's mouths. There were sandy coloured dots and lines surrounding the figures under water representing the turbulence created by the sand and dirt that flowed in the floodwater. The caption read that there was a flood and that the family needed to get to a hill to protect themselves. The faces of the two children under water were significant. One had eyes open and alert and the other had a frown with what appeared to be eyes closed. Lots of bubbles were

coming from the mouth of this figure. The third figure with their head above water had their eyes and mouth open. While Nick drew the picture he was aware he had misrepresented something and wanted to begin again. He was happy to do so. During his recount we established that there was a flood in Sudan, and that his family tried to get to higher ground. His big brother had taken charge of his little brother and somehow they got caught in the floodwater. His little brother began drowning and the big brother got into difficulty and could not help his little brother. Nick said that he saved his little brother and that his big brother was all right. His oral recount was delivered with accelerated speech and his eyes were noticeably wide. He was very conscious of the reaction of others at the table as he spoke and he was coy about admitting to saving his brother. The quickening of his voice indicated the excitement that he was feeling as he told his story. He was reliving the moment and it was a harrowing one.

The experience drawn and recounted by Nick indicated that the Dinka children not only suffered the political effects of war but were also at the peril of environmental hazards, which had to be endured. Torrential rains occasioned flash flooding in parts of Sudan (Yath, 1991) and Nick's drawing demonstrated that perilous situations such as flood were experienced. Children were challenged in life and death situations.

Stuart's drawing represented a stable sense of family life. In his picture he was standing next to his father who was wearing a cross around his neck. Stuart's brother was with his mother who was preparing food and the mother was smiling. Stuart drew his picture happily and his oral recount was delivered with a smile on his face. The video recording of this part of the research showed that Stuart demonstrated he clearly was enjoying looking at his work and telling the researcher about his father, mother and brother. When mention was made of his smiling mother he laughed endearingly. He was open and warm in the recount of his family scene. There was a warm affection for his mother. The juxtaposition of Stuart to his father enclosed within a boundary indicated a personal relationship to his father. Stuart's family

scene was indicative of closeness and security. In depicting a family scene Stuart demonstrated the stability of the family as the constant in life. This scene was supposed to recall a memory of Sudan though the imagery could easily apply to living in Australia.

Michael's picture showed three people detailed in various dress combinations. The people in the drawing were smiling and two of them appeared to be wearing a headdress. Initially, Michael wanted to draw a picture of the pyramids. He began to do so and was intent on representing his experience of a notable host country where he lived before coming to Australia. At the point where he perceived the others were drawing images that captured personal stories he decided that he wanted to start again and did so. He was keen to make an impact in his second attempt. His recount told of three strangers he observed who were trying to earn money for food and their families. He noted that the strangers earned hay and they had to work for it. Some interesting aspects about the story were Michael's perception about why these people were working and what they received for their efforts. Obviously the payment of hay for their labour did not resolve the issue of their hunger for food.

Michael's sense of morality and justice was perhaps alerted here. His observation of these people's experience indicated an awareness of unjust dealings occurring in situations of human need. During the course of the discussion with the group, Michael had made reference to people having to work hard in the hot sun, all day long. His picture appeared to be an extension of the comments he had made previously. Hard work and the need for food and money were the priorities depicted in Michael's picture about work.

Jenny's picture showed a house surrounded by animal pens or enclosures. A railing fence enclosed the perimeter of the property. There were many animals pictured including sheep, dogs and a cow. Notably there were no people featured. Jenny's recount drew attention to sleeping arrangements in her house in Sudan. She indicated that her bed was like a tent and that her parents' bed was big. She said that her bed was different from the ones used to sleep in Australia. The dogs sleeping at the foot of the bed perhaps indicated a need for security as well

as companionship. Jenny's experience of Sudan highlighted simple living arrangements and a dependence on animals.

The children's drawings illustrated the following aspects of their personal war experiences: -

1. The children experienced close family bonds, which produced feelings of order and security.

2. Family life was characterized by simple living arrangements and sometimes included animal husbandry.

3. The children were aware of the injustice of war and the hardship it created for people.

4. The children sometimes experienced danger, insecurity and abandonment as a cause of war.

5. Life and death situations were experienced.

Formal Conversation

After the drawings were completed and the pictures were annotated a formal conversation was conducted. The formal conversation revolved around the themes and things important to life and making a wish.

The question "What's the most important thing in life to you?" was put to the children. They all, without exception, said that family was the most important thing in life. The consensus was that it was family who looked after you and cared for you. They empathized with the plight of orphans and talked about orphaned people whom they knew. They knew that if one's parents died, one was orphaned. Jenny stressed the importance of family, not merely in terms of existing or surviving, but for living happily and with dignity. She maintained that for families to live happily they should not be forced to leave their home country. She argued that there should be food and shelter for the people of Sudan and that families should be able to live peacefully there. Richard thought Jenny was opposing what the majority had said and asked for clarification on her position about the importance of family. She supported her claim for the importance of family and said that she wished her home country would become peaceful.

Other things mentioned that were important to life were water, food and plants. Without these things survival was impossible. Michael mentioned that water and food created bigger things and Nick agreed that it was water that allowed plants to grow more plants, which grew food to eat. Michael added that water suitable for drinking was important as well as water that was used to generate electricity. There was no trivializing of the issue or light-hearted banter during this conversation. The children indicated the following as essential for living family, viable sustainable happy, peaceful life in Sudan, water food and plants. The children demonstrated real understanding of the qualities of living and one child in particularly was aware of the primacy of life for all, especially in relation to her home country, Sudan.

The conversation flowed to the next topic and the question was put to the group: "If you had one wish, what would you wish for?" Nick said, "The coolest guy in the world" then recanted "I'm just pretending". His real wish was that there was no global warming. Stuart agreed that it would be his wish too. Michael wished for moderate weather and perfect days. Richard offered no wish and remained silent. The findings in relation to the Dinka children's life-values were: -

1. The importance of family for care and security of children.

2. The need for family to live in peace, have food, shelter and a happy life.

3. Clean drinking water.

4. Other water for growing plants and electrical power generation.

The findings relating to children's wishes important for promoting significant change were: -

1. The reversal of global warming.

2. Peace in Sudan and Africa.

Dinka Adolescents' Spiritual Connections

Dinka Adolescent Interviews

A semi-structured interview was conducted with three adolescents comprising of two boys and one girl. They were all in year eight and aged between 13 and 14. For the purposes of the research the pseudonyms Daniel, Andrew and Simone were used. The questions put to the young people centred on pertinent aspects for connecting with adolescent spirituality. Kessler's (2000) rationale provided the language framework that offered questions for young people to describe the experiences that connected them with their inner life. These questions focused on many themes and issues significant to the spiritual acuity of adolescents as outlined in Kessler's (2000) *Seven Gateways to the Soul in Education.* Six of the seven areas provided a framework for structuring questions aimed at revealing ways adolescents may connect and engage self to the world. These areas chosen were of the experiences of joy, creativity, meaning and purpose, initiation and transcendence. The questions generated from many of these areas of significant meaning were put to the young people and also incorporated the experiences of wonder and awe as well as their perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer. The questions elicited responses from their African and Australian experiences and had potential to gain understanding about their relationships and their sense of belonging. The questions devised from these perspectives are listed (See Appendix C4).

The first question sought information about their relationship to self, others, their community as well as to their tribal lineage. All three interviewees experienced close personal relationships with family and family was respected. Their feelings of connection extended to family in Africa as well as family in Australia. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and cousins were referred to affectionately. Special feelings of closeness were felt for grandmothers because they were responsible in part for child rearing and also because they had to be left behind in Africa. For Simone and Daniel, this was the case, and for Andrew it was his

aunt and cousins who were left behind. Deep connection to Africa was marked by fond memories and close attachment to family.

Connections to Australia were various. Andrew and Daniel had lived in Khartoum for several years and both had similar experiences of dislocation in having to seek refuge in Egypt. They both referred to living in Africa as being 'normal'. Daniel said that he realized that living with war was not normal after settling in Australia and finding that the living conditions were different. Andrew described the infrastructure being different from Australia. Daniel and Andrew made general comments about their living conditions in Africa, and were non-committal about drawing comparisons with the amenity and infrastructure in Australia. The fact they both said that home was normal where ever it happened to be when they were in Africa suggested they had reservations about living in Australia. Generally speaking, for Andrew and Daniel, home in Africa was normal and living in Australia was different. Simone's experience differed. She was born in Kakuma in Kenya and she said that she liked it there, although she recalled traumatic fights between the different peoples who lived there, and the upheaval of moving to other places in the huge camp. The sporadic fighting and dislocation made her feel temporarily unsafe but the personal relationships she shared with her family and especially a female cousin seemed to compensate. A connection with Australia was guarded by the feelings that:

> *… you know some people hate like black people cause if somebody hated you they say, oh we don't want you to be in this country… like you feel like you don't belong in this country.*

Simone intimated that she felt challenged to develop a connection to Australia because racist comments made her feel unwelcome.

The young people were asked what really mattered to them, and what would they wish for? The three respondents said that family was the most important thing in their lives. Simone said that family was important because young people she knew who didn't have parents had to live with aunties and this did not always work out. Initially Andrew hesitated with his answer

but he decided that family was important adding that he wished his father were around. Daniel maintained that family was important "… because we are always looking out for each other." The boys' fathers were not living at home with them and in both cases the whereabouts of the fathers were unknown. Daniel's father had returned to Sudan because he was a politician and Andrew did not provide details about his father. They both felt a sense of separation and loss and the boys wished for the return of their fathers. Simone and Daniel also wished for lasting world peace.

The adolescents were asked about times they may have experienced joy and if they had, how they had given thanks or shown appreciation. Simone and Daniel spoke about their joy in the following ways. Simone recalled the special preparations for celebrating Christmas. Best clothes and shoes were worn and hair was done. Special biscuits were made, people were visited, gifts of money were received and all went to Church to pray and celebrate, and this was experienced in the context of living in Kakuma refugee camp. Thanks were given by repeat attendances at Church and Mass in a twenty-four hour period. Daniel associated his feelings of joy with school and school activities here in Australia. He demonstrated his gratitude by feeling happy and being nice to everyone. Andrew was pressed to consider whether he had felt joyful. Initially, he said that he could not recall a joyful time but conceded that special school activities made him feel happy on occasion, and he was encouraged to play with his friends. It was difficult to assume if the experiences he shared expressed true joy.

The experiences of wonder and awe were centred on the questions they had about life. Their questions focused on the nature of people and their experience of war, which highlighted their feelings of dread. Dread is a source of awe because awe can inspire fear as well as wonder. Simone questioned why people became mean? Andrew wanted to know why people killed each other and Daniel expressed frustration with Sudan being one country and questioned why there was fighting between the north and the south? Simone's eyewitness

account of people being mean to one another graphically demonstrated the inspiration of dread that focused her question.

> Researcher: *What kind of meanness have you seen?*
> Simone: *When they just kill people for no reason.*
> Researcher: *Have you seen that?*
> Simone: *Yeh… like… I haven't really seen people shooting, but I seen shoot, but like I didn't see the person, like I just get scared and then like mum would just take me and we would run and that.*

Simone saw the effects of people being shot but has not seen the perpetrators. Her experience of terror also illustrated the impact of awe.

> *Like once it was at night and we just sitting down eating and telling stories. We heard a gun shot so then like we ran at the back door and that way… we went the other, we went, we cross, we ran, then we went to my uncle's house and then we stayed and then we heard people going past. And then after that like we didn't hear more noise…*

Simone's feelings of fear and terror were a frame of reference as an experiential source for her spirituality. Awe struck by what she had witnessed and felt, her spiritual dimension searched for the reasons why humans behaved inhumanly to other humans.

Feelings of satisfaction arising from the freedom and form of dance and art or the sense of prowess derived from sport and physical activities were related to spiritual awareness of the self for the adolescents (Kessler, 2000). The adolescents were asked if there was something that gave them a sense of feeling good about themselves. Simone had won medals for running and this made her feel confident. Andrew enjoyed playing sports with others and said the feeling he got from this was the satisfaction that his contribution made a difference. Daniel said that soccer made him feel good and it had the power to dissipate angry feelings he may have had before he played. These feelings were empowering and the personal satisfaction these physical activities accord offered the potential for the adolescents to creatively relate to themselves and others in positive ways.

A question was asked of the adolescents about a time when they had a harsh life experience. Andrew and Daniel were unwilling to share any bad memories about their past,

though Andrew by his own admission, felt a sense of loss brought about by the separation from his father and the worry and uncertainty that his father's whereabouts were unknown, feared dead. Simone shared a harsh life experience.

> *Well I wasn't really in the fight but I saw people getting taken… dead people getting taken … and then I saw them like their leg are gone some of them bleeding. I saw them like going past. They taken them past to go to the hospital. I stay there. I saw people crying… I saw people like really sad and they were really sad. I was crying. Cause you know if I see people cry, sometime I cry cause like there was this lady sitting next to me. She like… she lost, I think she lost her child… then I just saw and then I was crying and then I saw the people and I started crying more.*

This was a harsh life experience. The pain of brutality was experienced and the connection to all who experienced it at that moment was to cry. The dimensions of daily life were exceeded and the terror was real. The feelings of compassion and empathy to this degree could never be forgotten. The sharing of pain and the witness of horror negated any ordinary preoccupation with herself. The hardship was endured and awareness of connection to those who suffered was intensely felt. The youth's denial of witnessing or experiencing any hardship was not plausible. Further research in this area would inform the topic of war-affected boys and their spiritual development.

Aspects of culture and adult initiation were explored in the context of the adolescents' African experiences. Questions about scarification, tribal elders and tribal community decision-making were asked. The notion of how they envisaged themselves in the future was also explored because their thoughts would enlighten their views and hopes for their future. The way Dinka adolescents saw themselves futuristically in the context of these societal structures affected their vision and ability to connect to their new place of living. Once again, such relationships either support or break down their spirituality. The main questions investigating these situations were about their knowledge of clan heritage, the meaning and purpose of Dinka elders and their vision of their future as they approached adulthood. Simone and Andrew knew their tribal clan name. Daniel did not remember though he mentioned he had been told several

times. The importance of this was so they did not marry any one from the same clan. The name of one's clan was drummed into one's psyche from a very early age (Baker, 2008). Daniel and Simone had knowledge about scarifying the face and knocking teeth out respectively. They were aware of the purpose of adult initiation because their parents had spoken to them about it. They understood too, the meaning and function of elders in their community as both of them had first hand experience of their fathers being elders. Some important perceptions about the role of elders were that they led the community by helping their people in Australia and Sudan through fundraising and providing financial support to those in need. They organized special celebrations and they were called upon to say special prayers at Mass. Daniel and Simone respected the role of the elders and the decisions they made in conjunction with the community. They perceived their value as advisors who actively helped their community. Andrew denied the role of the elders. He denied their purpose and their existence. If his thought were known then he would most certainly marginalize his position within the community as a Dinka adult for the future. Simone envisioned her future prospects in education and teaching and maintained that for now she was happy being a girl having fun at school.

The participants were asked about their beliefs in God, Jesus, Church and prayer. They all believed in God and Jesus and they all prayed. They perceived God as powerful and loving, and Jesus as the Son of God who helps, cares and teaches people how to live. Andrew attributed the redemptive action of dying for human sinfulness initially to God and then through self-correction to Jesus. There was some confusion about the nature of God among the Dinka adolescents. Simone and Andrew attended Mass and went to Church, and Daniel used to go but had stopped attending. Simone said, *Church was the place that you go to take God,* but she was not sure which church she attended. She thought that it might have been Anglican. They all attested to the power of prayer in their personal lives and trusted in God and Jesus' care. Andrew said that he prayed for the day that the family would come to Australia. Simone said

the following about the function of prayer, "It's good. Cause you got to thank God in your own way. And you can tell your personal stuff." Daniel prayed for positive outcomes.

> *I'm always praying for … if there's a big problem… like the one, when we thought my dad was going to be one of the people to be killed. I was praying let it be a positive answer, not a negative.*

These adolescents related to God and Jesus spiritually in prayer and prayed for special intentions of a personal and grave nature. Findings related to questions about relationship and explored the connections these young people had in relation to themselves, individual people, people in community and God.

1. The primary relationship for these young people was their immediate and extended family.

2. The adolescents had developed binding relationships with extended family members in Africa and they had strong feelings for family who were left behind.

3. The experience of living in community in a particular place was considered normal as long as family was present. The interviewees experienced displacement and the security and togetherness of family was considered the barometer for normalcy in these events.

4. The youths' visions for the future were conflicted. The adolescent female had a sense of future prospects for her in Australia.

5. Their connection to God and Jesus was demonstrated in attendance at Church and expressed through their practice of prayer.

Dinka Children's and Adolescents' Spirituality

Dinka Children's Spirituality

Being able to connect the experiences of life and drawing meaning from them illustrated spiritual consciousness (Keating, 2000). This consciousness developed through what was experienced, felt and valued, and what became known in this way was interpreted through the senses (Hay and Nye, 1998). Children's spiritual insight was demonstrated in their bonds and

connections to people and the world. This consciousness of relationship nurtured and characterized Dinka children's spiritual understanding.

The findings stated for the picture chat, children's drawings and their conversations illustrated aspects of Dinka children's spirituality. The picture chat was aimed at locating the children's feelings about aspects pertinent to their refugee experience. Findings indicated that the Dinka children had the capacity to empathize readily with others, especially refugees. They were aware that war had an impact on people's freedoms and personal dignity. The children recognized refugee camps and articulated coherently reasons of forced dislocation for people living in this way. They connected with people's experiences of hunger and thirst and spoke about the sufferings and challenges that had tested the limits of their physical endurance. Spiritual questing (Hyde, 2005) is marked by children's abilities to show compassion and Dinka children demonstrated empathy and concern for others.

The children's drawings of their refugee experiences were sourced from their journey experiences and from sharing reflections of these with others in the group. Their firsthand experiences illustrating separation, fear and danger, dislocation, family life and the witnessing of unjust events were depicted in their images of separation or abandonment (See Appendix C Figure C3 picture entitled Alone); peril and life threatening danger (See Appendix C Figure C3 picture entitled Flood); connection to family and living arrangements (See Appendix C Figure C3 pictures entitled My Family and My House) and witnessing unfair practices dealt to people in vulnerable circumstances (See Appendix C Figure C3 picture entitled Working Hard). These drawings describing aspects of their journey provided the insight that their life experiences comprised of intense relational connections to self, others and the world in which they were operating. Their drawings represented emotional responses that indicated concern for upholding life and the dignity of the person. Operating within a chaotic world, within the context of their experience of war as they did, indications of spiritual questing (Hyde, 2005a) and relational consciousness (Hay and Nye, 1998) were revealed in the good works they

offered daily. Food and drink was shared, and the awareness that each family member had a responsibility to care for the family in some way was understood. Everyone had a role and sometimes it may have involved saving a brother's life, as was the experience of Nick.

The conversation about their wishes and things that they held important pinpointed their values in life. Findings from the discussion highlighted pro-life and pro-family sentiments with their wishes referring to the common good of all people. The children's emotional responsiveness in this exercise once again connected them with concern for others.

Donaldson's (1992) observation about the ability to sense value in life was generated from the understanding that personal gain did not come at the expense of others. The quality of this attribute for making meaning of the world characterized the Dinka child's spirituality that was affected by war. Their strong sense of being part of the whole can be described as unitive, that is, they had a predisposition for connecting relationally to family and community. Their spirituality comprised a unitive sense of being, which endowed them with a strong sense of knowing their place and their purpose in relation to their family and how it operated in the world. From their experience, survival has innately permeated their worldview. They identified themselves within their families. Self-worth was valued as the personal dignity that may be achieved through the esteem shown by others for personal attributes. Life's meaning was concerned with promoting the welfare of the family for the good of others with ongoing benefit for the community.

Donaldson (1992), Hay and Nye (1998) and Hyde (2005a) expressed core features for children's spirituality. They aimed at identifying the way children spiritually connected and made meaning of their world. The child's life experiences were the 'engine room' of their spiritual development and expression. In the context of war the Dinka child's experience for the importance of and interdependence on family and with community marked the way in which they lived. This way of living upheld a spirituality that incorporated a unitive sense of being. The spirituality of the Dinka children affected by war expressed this unitive sense of being.

Kessler (2000) contended that adolescent students who were deeply connected were compassionate young people. They were passionate about life and they connected to a higher power, sourcing their faith and their meaning in life from it. The interviewees found meaning in their relationships with family and God. There was some estrangement in relation to secular community living as refugee experiences were varied. The Church predominated as the common experience of community for these young people.

Kessler (2000) highlighted adolescent concerns for making meaning and purpose instrumental to personal goals and worth, and wondering about the 'big questions' involving death, birth, God, hope, and the learning about being of service. Donaldson (1992) encapsulated these in the term, 'value sensing' and Hay and Nye (1998) applied 'relational consciousness' similarly. Ultimately the concern here was for development of altruistic thoughts and behaviours. As part of the interview structure, conversation turned to appropriating their thoughts about what was important in life. All three respondents maintained that family mattered most to them in life. Reference was made to the sadness they felt for orphaned children they knew, valuing close relationships and having the security that a mother and father offered. The important meaning they gave to family signified the action of its members as living in a common union to connect with and serve each other. In considering what would be wished for, Simone and Daniel nominated world peace. Simone qualified that it needed to be an affective peace that worked and could stop war. Andrew wished solemnly for his father to be with the family, but did not elaborate on his absence. Daniel prayed for his father's safe return from Sudan. The wishes were well considered. Andrew and Daniel's wishes illustrated their feelings of separation and loss while Simone and Daniel's wishes related a call to live in a lasting peace. Thus the meaning of life for these Dinka was sourced and sustained by the connection they felt to their families, and its purpose was to express an enduring common good. A unitive sense of being part of a family with a mother and father was the locus

of meaning and purpose for the Dinka adolescent. They drew their sense of identity from their family and related to others as a consequence of the relationships they experienced within the family. Their spiritual connection relayed through their value for family and wishes for lasting peace harks to Merton's sapiential insight that was realized through the awareness of the senses and the will to live (Keating, 2000). This suggested that their senses conveyed the wisdom that in promoting and being attentive of each other's wellbeing they were securing their own. Altruistically, their actions became a way of living in the context of the family.

Acknowledging the experience of joy as a precept for fostering adolescent spirituality distinguished the qualities of humility, reverence for life and feelings of gratitude and celebration. The interviewees understood that to experience joy meant to be really very happy. The adolescents' experiences of this feeling were varied. Kessler, (2000) contended that adolescents did not speak readily about joyful experiences that humbled them. Simone's recount affirmed celebration of life in the context of the feast of Christmas. Her gratitude was expressed spiritually and religiously. Daniel and Andrew said they were happy at school; Andrew was initially less forthcoming. The school environment was mentioned as a place where happiness was experienced and the significance of this for inculcating a sense of connection for these boys was important because they struggled with the notion of joy. Simone's recount affirmed celebration of life in the context of religion.

Feelings of wonder and awe were also considered spiritual conduits and the questions these adolescents articulated especially related to their sense of awe. Feelings of wonder and awe related in experiences ranging from ecstasy to dread (Hay and Nye, 1998). The young people's questions about life were sourced from dreadful experiences such as the witness of dead and seriously injured people, the threat to family dying and the fear of war. The meaning they searched for in response to this demonstrated concern, and in one case, true empathy for others. Their desire to comprehend human nature's responses to war cultivated a particular way in which they came to view the world. Their ability to understand the world permeated the

formation of their spirituality (Keating, 2000). Dinka adolescents' questions of wonder and awe inspired a reverence for life in spite of their violent experiences of war.

Kessler (2000) maintained that creativity nourished the soul, and that ability to revel in the form and freedom of athletic endeavour positively reflected on adolescent spirituality. The most satisfying activity for the three young people was derived from their athleticism. The sense of physical prowess they experienced in their running and playing sports engaged them sensorially and opened their awareness to feeling free (cf. Hyde's 'felt sense', 2005a). These young Dinka adolescents had at their disposal ways to encourage positive attitudes about themselves as they interacted with others. The expression of spirituality in relationship with self and in the context of settling into a new country and culture was nourished by their athleticism.

Weaver and Cotrell (1992) referred to transcendence as the times when we may experience going beyond the every day and the usual limitations that encumber it. Times highlighting human endurance with regard to pain, suffering and loss were vanguards of spirituality for adolescents and events such as ill health, separation or dislocation called for young people to transcend themselves (Kessler, 2000). The Dinka adolescents experienced such times with compassion, raw emotion and prayer.

Connection to Dinka culture and a view to Dinka adolescents' initiation into adulthood were significant to the study of adolescent spirituality. It was important because Dinka culture had particular rites of initiation for young people to proceed to adult life (Deng, 1984). In Australia, the expression of this passage into adulthood was scrutinized by Dinka elders in the community as well as the Dinka adolescents experiencing incultured changes through engaging in Australian culture. The young people knew about clan, adult initiation practices and the role and function of tribal elders in their community. Their expectations of the future for their adult lives, and ways for them to navigate into this realm were various. Simone's vision for the future involved completing her studies and perhaps becoming a teacher. Her outlook was respectful of tribal authority, optimistic of her future and hopeful for success. She seemed to have embraced

certain opportunities Australian culture had offered and she saw herself as contributing purposefully to society. Her spiritual disposition indicated that she was prepared to perform constructively within society. The boys' outlooks were conflicted. They knew about their cultural roots, one youth was respectful of his elders and the other not, and both were uncertain about their prospects for the future. Since both their fathers were not present in the family it seemed that certain aspects about their future might be unresolved for them. Fathers as sources of inspiration for their sons provided relationship, helped model appropriate behaviours and offered praise and set expectations for their sons (Engebretson, 2007). The youths were not prepared to answer questions about their future. They did not seem to have a vision for this and their spiritual disposition indicated uncertainties about their future direction. The lack of a father perhaps led to insecurity about ways for them to navigate adulthood. The young person who ostracized his elders marginalized his position to be able to perform constructively within his cultural group if his thoughts carried through to action.

This generation of Dinka adolescents were navigating a path of change in their culture and traditions. They perhaps were unaware of the transformation they were currently cultivating through the acquisition of an education. The male and female elders of their community were mentoring them. Their spiritual acuity would rely on their ability to envision themselves in the present actioning and promoting good in the future.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

In the context of the questions posed in chapter one on page 29 concerning the behaviours of war-affected Dinka young people and spirituality, the following analysis applied. The demonstrated behaviours of the children interviewed were sourced from the picture chat, focus group and conversation in case study two of this research. The focus of these activities informed the topic of spirituality by drawing from their experiences of journey. Examples of some of the behaviours that suggested spirituality from this case study included the following:

1. Their capacity to show empathy when looking at people in genuine distress. The video-taped focus group showed that the children were upset when they viewed a picture of a child crying in a refugee camp.

2. Their awareness of war indicting people's freedoms and personal dignity through group conversation and the drawing of a picture about an injustice a child had witnessed (see Appendix C Figure 3).

3. Their connection with people's experience of hardship by the sharing of an experience of dislocation (refer to Michael's story about walking long distances in the hot sun without shoes).

4. A child's drawing of his attempt to save his brother's life at the risk his own (see Appendix C Figure C3).

5. A children's group discussion articulated the absolute necessity to be part of the family and to be with other people because, "If you don't have a family, you have nothing."

This selection of behaviours and understandings suggested spirituality because they engendered qualities of empathy and real concern, responsibility and justice, endurance and selflessness, and family and community. In trying to discern spiritual factors for underlying their behaviours Eckersley's (2008) descriptors for locating grounded identity in young people was apt. He contended that the reclamation of community was pivotal to grounding young people's identity, noting in particular that their purpose needed to focus responsibilities over rights, spiritual over material things, with a shared vision for the future. In listening to the stories in the semi-structured interviews with the adolescents in case study two, the following indicators represented their behavioural attitudes. These young people articulated the primacy of the togetherness of family and belonging in community. They expressed the importance of communicating to God in prayer and this indicated religious and spiritual focus in their lives. Responsibilities over rights were not canvassed in these interviews, however visions for the future were discussed. Results here were not significantly positive due to the absence of a

father figure in two of the adolescent's family. Therefore only two of the four indicators represented spiritual factors that could positively influence their behaviours. In saying this, the responsibility to family and community was noted as most significant.

In many respects the children and adolescent's experiences of living in war zones and / or refugee camps pre-empted their living with trauma and this to some extent had engendered a particular type of spirituality. The lived experience of trauma had presented these children in chaotic and violent situations and for their part the practice of particular behaviours in these contexts assumed a unique living condition of survival, which saw care, responsibility, endurance and selflessness witnessed and practised within family and communal units. Living in this way had developed in them a connectedness to their family and community unlike in other situations. The children and adolescent's development of their personal spiritualities was guided by these experiences, and they in turn expressed a value of unity to the family and communal others.

Dinka children and adolescents expressed and shared a similar spiritual disposition. They connected to their families and the Dinka community and operated within these groups from the awareness that people were interdependent. What affected them affected others, and their experiences of trauma, suffering and war contributed to this awareness. With the family as the microcosm of this understanding the relationship of self to others afforded them deep connections to the visible human experience and invisible sacred presence (Tacey, 2003). Their unique connection between themselves and others demonstrated incidences where the common good made a meaning in their lives. The term 'unitive sense of being,' which has been given to describe this spiritual awareness highlighted their living by this maxim. Dinka children cared for family and valued the world in terms of the water, food and shelter it provided, and the peace and stewardship people brought to it. On different personal levels they experienced danger, hardship, insecurity and abandonment. They confronted fear and pain and gained a measure of fortitude, which offered them certain personal strength. Similarly, Dinka

adolescents related deeply to their family. Their reverencing had been acquired through feelings of awe, which were precipitated by the fear and dread of violent war experiences. They faced difficulty, adversity and danger and their fortitude allowed them to transcend, at times, experiences of serious hardship. The consequences of war connected Dinka children's and adolescent's spiritual experiences to self and others, and there was a strong sense of God's presence in their lives in refugee diaspora and post migration in Australia. The visible human connections described here indicated that their spirituality was nurtured by a reverence for life. The sense of the invisible sacred presence in their lives was indicated in a spirituality that was nurtured by hope and their faith in God. These characterised a difference for their meaning of life, and a unitive sense of being marked that difference.

In the following chapter aspects of the Dinka worldview and their relationship to Dinka spirituality and religiosity are discussed. Through the lens of the Dinka children's and adolescents' parents, guardians, elders and other significant adults in their cultural community, religious and spiritual influences are explored through narrative.

CHAPTER SIX

ASPECTS OF DINKA WORLDVIEW AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO DINKA

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOSITY

Introduction

As presented in the previous chapters, the spirituality and religiosity of the Dinka children found its meaning and expression in their personal life experiences. This largely occurred in the context of the family and the Dinka communities where they lived, and was set against a background of civil war in Sudan. The Dinka children's parents, guardians and elders were prime influences on how they thought about religion and expressed their spirituality. The contribution of these influences helped them formulate a particular worldview, which also influenced their spirituality and religiosity.

Seven Dinka adults were interviewed. They included two Dinka elders, one male and one female, three parents, comprising two male and one female, one male catechist and one male seminarian. The aims of the interviews were to gain insight into the areas of influence the parents, elders and other significant Dinka adults may have had on the Dinka child's worldview, and also to obtain detailed background information, which could help authenticate the Dinka children's refugee experiences in terms of their recollections and recounts.

The adults participated in semi-structured interviews recalling their spiritual and religious outlooks in relation to their personal war experiences, as well as thoughts about life presently in the suburbs of Melbourne. Several common themes emerged from the interviews. They included reflections on Church, Mass, prayer, religious singing and dancing, and parish life, which highlighted spiritual and religious perspectives, and themes of reverence for ancestors, the Dinka language, old religious beliefs and polygamy in the context of their culture and tradition. There were personal themes from stories about the interviewee's experiences of war. They included stories concerning unaccompanied and orphaned children, changes occurring in the mindset of adolescents since coming to Australia, the war stories of a

soldier and the story of a young girl left to look after her disabled grandmother. These stories were important because they offered the personal insight and experience of various Dinka adults, which helped to inform the nature of various influences that affected the Dinka child's spiritual and religious outlook.

<div align="center">Common Themes Influencing Dinka Worldview</div>

<div align="center">*Religious Change*</div>

Five of the seven interviewees commented on the religious beliefs of other Dinka prior to Christianity in Sudan. Their observations were from the period of 1960's to the 1990's. Raymond, the Dinka elder, drew a distinction between people from the village and those from the city. He observed that villagers had their own beliefs, which were different to those of the city dwellers who were mainly Catholic. He was aware that villagers believed in one almighty God and in the Old Testament, but that they would not have access to a Bible. He maintained that these people believed that the elders of the tribe were connected to God. He also noted that special leaders were called *spear masters* and that some people believed in the spear master (Lienhardt, 1987). As a spiritual elder this man was thought to be close to God and he was revered for being able to intercede on behalf of the village to help its people in need. Some parents and elders continued to believe in the powers of the spear master in Sudan. In contrast, city dwellers, without the guidance of the spear master, came to believe in Jesus Christ and they went to Church and became Catholic. It was interesting to note that Raymond was aware that newly arrived Dinka elders to Australia may still have believed in the 'old religion' especially if their adherence to the tradition of the spear master was strong. He attributed the civil wars and the spreading diaspora of the Dinka in Africa as having had an impact on old village beliefs and motivated many Dinka to become Christian, perhaps because their 'old religion' had failed to secure their collective salvation. This notion cohered with Stancliffe (2008, p.40) who also observed that mass evangelization was brought about by theological understandings from Isaiah in the Old Testament, which promised rescue,

redemption and inheritance of the earth to those who trusted the Lord. Geographical

differences in religious change were brought about by the diminished influence of the spear

master, the Dinka displacement from south Sudan and the adoption of new meanings of

salvation gained from the Old Testament.

Thelma, also a Dinka elder, referred to the time around 1983, which coincided with

the outbreak of the second civil war in Sudan.

> *...so lot of people changes at that time because there [was] so many people were not Christians. They were having different tribal gods… they were worshipping even snakes and all this…*

Thelma claimed that Catholic and Anglican bishops were proselytizing in the forests near the

borders between Sudan and Kenya, and Sudan and Uganda at that time, as people were

fleeing the country. She also mentioned that the Bishops in Kakuma were successful in

calling people to believe in a Christian God.

> *… and people were very interested or came to believe that there is God of what they have seen, that time, yeh… the difficulties they have gone in, the memories they are facing. So people left the old gods and believe. They turn to believe in Jesus Christ whether they Catholic or Anglican or Pentecostal.*

In effect, Thelma thought many religious conversions had occurred because people were

faced with questions about the meaning of life brought about by renewed civil war and mass

dislocation.

Karen and Samuel were parents of five children. They too, were aware that most

village people believed in the *Buddi* during the 1970's. This was their term for the snake and

they acknowledged too, that people believed in the grass, giraffe, elephant and the crocodile.

Samuel's father took him to Church when he was thirteen years old and he said that the Word

of God made an impact on him. He joined the youth choir at that time and was baptized in the

Anglican Church. They were aware that they were part of a religious change that was

occurring, and that people believed in one God, Jesus Christ and Mary, as the mother of Jesus.

These tenets of faith they believed to be important, but adherence to a particular Church was

not so important to them. They did not discriminate between the Christian Churches with which they had come into contact, as initially they were baptized as Anglican, and consequently they later attended Latter Day Saints and Uniting Churches in Kakuma and Melbourne respectively. They sent their children to Catholic schools. By their own admission they were committed to God and Jesus Christ and they prayed.

> *Anglican people…Catholic people… we believe God is one thing and Church is different …*

> *Mary, the mother of Jesus we know it. We believe God… of the name of Jesus Christ. That's important… you get the Church of Catholic… we pray… But any Church you pray, like me, any Church I get in it. I pray…*

Karen and Samuel cited Christian beliefs as important and Christian Churches as necessary for prayer.

Paul's mother was a Muslim and his father was a Christian. He maintained that initially it was important for his mother to have the children brought up in the Muslim tradition. He noted that his father did not force his children to follow the Christian way, although Paul believed that he really did care about what religion they practised. Their first host country was Ethiopia and their second was Kenya. It was in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya that change occurred.

> *There was a Church. A lot of people would go to Church on Sunday. I think nearly everyone nearly went to church on Sundays. For us, mum didn't go to church… she didn't really care if we went or not. And so sometime we would go to Sunday school with some of the kids just to sing songs and dance…*

Paul went to Church because that was the place where everyone met. He mentioned there were many activities at Church on Sunday afternoons, for example plays, and soccer. He believed that the priest had influence on the people in the camp. It would seem that Paul's religious outlook changed by circumstances of opportunity. Kakuma offered Christian community and the people there accepted its beliefs and hospitality.

The various religious changes cited revealed that Dinka spirituality was strong and that family, community and political circumstance guided their religiosity. The seeds of

Christianity to grow among the people of south Sudan were cast by the missionary, Father Comboni, in the mid to late nineteenth century and by 1920 the Christian movement had been set up by the Catholics and Protestants in the south (Sundkler & Steed, 2001). The official 1905 missionary code of regulations, which instituted denominational regions for missionary activity, set the boundaries for missionary activity and the British later accorded that the southern provinces were to continue Christian proselytizing (Deng, 1984). While there was conflict between religious tradition and modernity among the tribes-people, it was the introduction of Sharia in 1983, which encouraged many southern Sudanese to become Christian. Deng (1984) observed that a movement against Islamicization, and awareness by the south Sudanese that they were under represented in a Muslim majority government that backed this religious change, precipitated religious change in the south. The situation managed to escalate tensions of separatism. Christianity on the other hand, with the legacy of foreign origin, had now become a "southern" institution.

Findings for the Dinka outlook regarding religious change incorporated their perspectives of recent world history where western Christian British influences, confrontation with northern Sudanese values and migration into city and refugee camps strengthened a spiritual propensity that made meaning of the immanence and transcendence of one God through Jesus Christ. Young children come to accept Christianity as being part of their Dinka heritage. Adolescents became aware of the legacy of missionary activities and the refusal by many Dinka adults in the past to accept Islam in their Dinka way of life.

Church

There were many references to Church during the interviews with the Dinka adults. Their comments related to experiences in Sudan, Kakuma camp in Kenya and in Australia in the western suburbs. Aspects of the significance of Church, the importance of Mass and Dinka involvement in parish life are presented in this section.

The elders' and catechist's comments about Church were significant here. Raymond contended that Church was about "we" because when people came together, "we" made the Church. If there were no people then there was no Church. This image applied figuratively and literally for in Sudan the Church was often not a physical structure but the gathering of people sitting on mounds of dirt that were fashioned into seats. In this sense Raymond maintained that Church was a place of worship and prayer. The action of being Church with one another demonstrated a sharing of common belief in Jesus, of believing in Jesus' cross and following in his way. This common goal involved being open to sharing forgiveness with one another. Similarly, Stephen the catechist envisaged Church as community and a coming together to meet the Lord. Interestingly he also thought that a function of the Church was to provide service for the needs of the people who were the Church. For Thelma, the Church's significance was contained simply in the belief and worship of one God.

By comparison coming together at Mass was thought of by Raymond as the time to give voice to Christ, to ask for forgiveness and to be forgiven. The understanding of Mass for Karen and Samuel did not strictly apply. Through cross-referencing the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires carried out with their children, it was ascertained that Karen attended Uniting Church services on her own, and Latter Day Saints services with the rest of the family in the western suburbs of Melbourne. At these services Karen and Samuel read and learned from Scripture, listened to testimonials and to prayed. They attended services and engaged in a community of faithful. In Sudan, Peter attended Mass in Khartoum. He noted this as "big Church" and involvement in other Church activities revolved around "small Church." In Australia, he continued to be associated with Church activities, however, he noted that the Mass in English was initially confronting for the Dinka adults and that they found it difficult to follow.

> *The children have providing some strong supporting to families because they understand from school. They know English language very well … [In Mass] the children will be in the middle… so the children listen in English…. When he [the priest] says let us pray, we have to stand up to pray.*

Raymond's understanding of the Mass revolved around coming together and sharing with others. For some, Mass was for Sundays, offering to God, sharing in the Eucharist and meeting with friends and family.

Raymond, Stephen and Thelma discussed parish life. Dinka activities in Catholic parishes in the western suburbs included choir practice, dancing practice, catechist classes, Legion of Mary meetings, special Dinka Masses every second Sunday, sharing Bible readings in Dinka and Arabic, youth music practice [drums], language classes, computer classes, sewing classes, a meeting place for elders and baptism preparation with a catechist. In a recent Easter celebration twenty people were baptised including fourteen children and six adults.

Thelma said that the elders gathered to meet at Church every fortnight. They shared and discussed concerns and thought of ways to solve current problems in the Dinka community. On the elders' agenda at the time the interview was conducted were teenagers, domestic violence, news from Africa, proposed marriages and their recommendations and discussion surrounding dowries for individual cases, differences and questions about misunderstandings between Dinka community members, and finally providing advice for funerals. It was observed that through the active involvement of the elders, Dinka community activities were self-regulating. Their awareness, care and consideration for their people regulated what Dinka could and couldn't do in the wider community. Thelma also mentioned that a Church in the western suburbs had provided a venue for the Dinka to conduct a school for teenagers, especially newly arrived ones who were in need of English language tuition. The same school provided education for teenage girls from year eight onwards who had become pregnant.

The notion that the parish life of the Church was to serve and be served was reiterated by Stephen the catechist and Raymond the elder. Stephen noted that the Dinka and other

refugees benefitted from many of the Churches in the western suburbs. He commented that there was much change occurring in people's lives and that people liked being associated with the parishes because they received help. Stephen and Raymond seemed to be attuned to the initiatives that were being piloted in the parishes in the western suburbs. The services mentioned were the creation of employment opportunities, provision of accommodation and the provision of "no interest loans." At the time of interviewing, jobs such as domestic cleaning and work at a processed meat factory were being offered. People in the parish from refugee backgrounds were able to borrow one thousand dollars and pay it back at fifty dollars a fortnight. These loans were offered by several of the Catholic parishes in the western suburbs.

Findings

The findings for the adult Dinka perceptions of Church were: -

1. The influence of Dinka elders and significant adults helped to situate education and community services at Church venues.

2. The Dinka people viewed Church as a Christian place of worship and community.

3. The Church was viewed in some instances as "we the people." The people gathered together were the physical structure of the Church.

4. Mass was considered to be the community giving voice to Jesus Christ and sharing in Eucharist.

5. One parent couple accepted that different Christian faith traditions were similar.

6. Parish life engaged most members of the Dinka community.

7. Elders were called to be interpreters of Dinka culture and tradition as it became manifested in the broader Australian community. Their influence and decisions into Dinka life in Australia were observed as being far-reaching.

The worldview of young Dinka people in the Dinka community has been influenced and interpreted through Dinka elders and significant adults in family and community. Young

Dinka peoples' worldview about Church, Mass and parish life incorporated the visions and aspirations of Dinka elders and their parents.

Prayer

Four of the seven respondents commented on prayer during the their interviews. They were the parents Peter and Karen, the catechist Stephen and the Dinka elder, Raymond. They commented on various aspects of prayer including the nature and purpose of prayer and the ways parents and a religious catechist taught children and adolescents to pray. The responses from this selection set of interviews revealed that the nature of prayer was communication, the purpose of prayer was relationship with God, and the way parents taught was by example. The focus of the catechist was on formal, informal, private and communal prayer.

Peter's interview was interpreted through a third person and the quotes in this passage are the interpreter's words. As a parent, Peter prayed routinely and regularly. He prayed before going to sleep, before meals, at services and with the family. He viewed prayer as a spiritual contribution and a spiritual response where God and he communicated, and he built a relationship with God. Peter believed that God responded to a person according to need, but qualified his thought by adding, "Praying to God doesn't mean God will give you now." He spoke of the importance of building relationship with God and referenced Jesus' prayers before he was crucified, noting that God's response to Jesus' goodness was to be witnessed after his death. Peter saw this example of prayer as a way to explain the everlasting relationship with God: "No different now or after death." For Peter praying was without end in life and death. Prayer was seen as continuous, and regular daily prayer meant that by the time of death the person had formed a relationship with God. " If I die tomorrow I still will continue to pray. There is nothing to stop him from faith."

Peter commended his children for their prayerful attitudes. He noted that if he forgot to say prayers before meals, his children would stop him so that could bless the food. "He got much spirituality from the children[s]." He commented that he was always teaching the

children about prayer. In recounting his method for teaching his children he maintained that he sought to reinforce Catholic Church teaching about how to pray. These were his guidelines.

1. Ask for blessing from God.

2. Thank God for his mercy in coming to Australia, teaching that coming from home [Sudan] to here is a big blessing from God.

3. Ask God to bless our food.

4. Encourage children to pray for others who suffered and were facing problems and challenges in life. He referred to natural disasters such as bushfires and earthquakes.

5. He taught his children that they needed to learn to pray for others and not only for family and self.

6. He taught also that they may pray for their own futures.

The conversation about prayer developed into statements about his children being able to discover faith and link it to Catholic teaching for themselves.

> *What they are doing not because my dad is Catholic and the wife is Catholic. I have to be Catholic. Try to match the Catholic teaching… the Bible teaching. The decision is yours to build the relationship with God."*

Peter prayed faithfully, and his words and actions encouraged his children to pray and also to develop their faith through prayer.

Karen, the mother of a different family, also took the responsibility, along with her husband Samuel, for encouraging prayerful habits in the family. She maintained that they prayed altogether in the evening, before meals and also in the morning. She mentioned that her husband and herself would pray together at home sometimes. Her fifteen-year-old daughter who attended a Catholic secondary school knew how to pray and she commended the school for teaching her well. Karen's daughter would gather her brothers and sisters so that they could pray together. In this group prayers were offered aloud by the leader of the prayer session, the others prayed silently and then finally all finished praying a final prayer

together. In this household there was opportunity to pray often. Younger children were learning the importance of prayer and how to pray through the example of parents and an older sibling. As a family their prayer habit was routine and regular and it appeared they followed a particular format.

Raymond's views about prayer were as follows. Prayer was considered a means for asking forgiveness of sins and for opening oneself to the love of Jesus. It was important to pray for others including enemies. He also felt that it was important that other people prayed for you. The purpose of prayer for Raymond was to bring peace to self and others through Christ's love.

The catechist was experienced in teaching adults and young people Catholicism in Kakuma Camp in Kenya. He taught about the concept of prayer: - formal, informal, private and communal. He emphasised the Our Father and special prayers for the Lord including responses that were to be said during the Mass. He taught about informal prayers that called to mind those in need and were offered communally and private prayer as a means of communicating with God, including the silent prayer for personal intentions. He said that children were gathered together in the camp during sad and difficult times, citing an episode when the Kenyan tribe, the Turkana, came into conflict with people in the camp and there were killings. Adults and children learned to live with violence. Prayer was said to bring change and they prayed together for peace. Stephen commented that adults and children were taught to pray in Kakuma and that there were certain times, apart from Mass, when people gathered together to pray. The forms and function of prayer were taught and practised.

Findings

The findings for this theme of prayer were: -

1. Dinka parents were instrumental in teaching their children how to pray.

2. Dinka adults and children have had the opportunity to be taught the forms and function of prayer in the Catholic context in Kakuma.

3. Adults and children prayed routinely and regularly with their family. They also prayed privately.

4. Adult Dinka understood prayer as providing communication and relationship with God.

Findings for this theme encouraged the value and necessity of regular and routine prayer for faith development and right relationship with God. The Dinka children came to know prayer as important by the example of parents and significant adults. Dinka adults told of the violent happenings encountered in Kakuma refugee camp, and their stories highlighted that the Dinka people responded in prayer to these experiences. The Dinka children and adolescents learned to pray for peace.

<div align="center">Religious Singing and Dancing</div>

Five of the seven interviewees commented on the purpose and value of singing and dancing for religious learning, religious ceremony and Mass. The elders, Thelma and Raymond said that singing was a way of celebrating and giving thanks to God. Thelma said, "You want God to hear you're happy." Raymond said that after singing at Mass, "… you leave and go out with something in your heart, mind and body." Singing was a way of giving your heart and mind to God. Raymond also noted that singing brought a change in your life and spirit. Similarly, dancing was considered a demonstration of praise, happiness and thanks to God. Thelma described the purpose of religious dance was part of the process of hearing God. In this way religious singing and dancing was envisaged as praying.

Religious song and dance provided a method of religious education for adolescents in Sudan and in some refugee camps where catechists were available. Two interviewees explained that parts of the Scriptural text would purposely be set to music so young people could learn about their content and meaning. Singing and dancing in this way was a traditional way of learning and praying. Paul mentioned that it was well known in Dinka culture that musicians would hear a story and compose a song in the Dinka language.

I think that it goes back to our own traditional way of doing things as well. The only way we can learn about things is in stories and songs… and so musicians would put things they would hear [into] a story, most of people don't read, they would hear the priest tell the story and then they compose it into a song. They [word] into the Dinka language and they make it into a song.

In Africa these songs were performed during Mass on Sundays and also in the afternoons after Mass when the people extended the celebrations of the day and watched performances, meet people and played soccer. Often people composed a song after hearing a story from the priest. Singing was also viewed as a way of praying. During the interview, Karen produced a Dinka hymnbook with lyrics for the different parts of text from Scripture. It was explained that young children went Sunday school, and from about thirteen years of age adolescents attended youth choir. Karen believed that singing in this way brought people close to God, so much so that God's presence could be felt.

… when you are singing you think about [the] God, about the Word of God. You like you feel[s] like the inside, the hand of [the] God.

Peter enjoyed singing at Mass. In his appraisal of singing, feelings of religious fervour were demonstrated.

He says when you sing you pray twice and you will discover that a happiness that really is within prayers.

Dancing, he maintained, was for children and referred to it as a type of African traditional prayer. Praying in this way was an African cultural practice and in the context of praise and worship dancing was a way of life. Dancing was a way of praying and Peter maintained that all Africans did this form of dancing. In naming three realities of common ground for African traditional religion, O'Hanlon (1991) cited the African spiritual delight in celebration as significant. He drew attention to their willingness to dance, drum and sing together and further noted that these group activities were universal. In regard to children and young people dancing, he contended that this type of prayer was applicable for the Offertory

procession at Mass. He thought it was a way to encourage children into spiritual life and a way for them to express it at Church.

Findings

The findings for the theme of religious singing and dancing were: -

1. Religious singing and dancing were viewed as a means of praying to God, learning about God and feeling God's presence.

2. Adolescents belonging to Dinka youth choirs before coming to Australia learned about the Word of God from Scripture through song and movement.

3. Dinka religiosity encompassed singing and dancing for religious activity. It engaged with their mind, heart and body to their belief in God.

4. The Dinka children were aware or experienced watching demonstrations of religious singing and dancing during or after Mass celebrations in their refugee diaspora. Older siblings may possibly have participated in youth choir.

Dinka Language

Language classes were particularly important to the Dinka. Raymond and Stephen were aware that the adults of the community wanted the Dinka language included in the school syllabus so that their children could study it as an award subject in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), and also because they did not want their language to die. The Victorian School of Languages (VSL) has offered the Dinka language to be taught at Sunshine, Box Hill and Noble Park, and Dinka language teachers are paid by the VSL. Other language classes in parishes in the western suburbs were for reading and writing both Dinka and English. There were classes provided for adults and separate lessons for young people. The Dinka adults were encouraged to learn to read and write their native language because literacy in Dinka was considered a valuable pursuit. The elders believed that the ability to read and complete government forms in Dinka, such as Centrelink applications, sustained their cultural identity. The promotion of Dinka literacy among adults offered the opportunity to maintain

the Dinka culture. For secondary school students the prospect for them to learn Dinka as a VCE subject benefitted both the Dinka student and the Dinka community. These initiatives sought the acknowledgement of the Dinka language in Australia and indicated the Dinka's resolve in this matter.

The topic of the Dinka language in the context of Dinka spirituality was complex. Lienhardt (1987), described in-depth the nature of Dinka divinities and their link with semantics provided an invaluable insight into the enormity of the cultural incongruity between the tribal nature of the Dinka language and a modern western context. In effect the Dinka language culturally contextualized the revered cow and oxen. These animals symbolized perfect victimhood for the Dinka and their language contextualised reverence for their being. From this perspective their language was not readily translated to modern western culture, tradition or lifestyle. Dinka names, verbs and adjectives expressed qualities of the cow and oxen. Examples included the shade and tone of colours and the vagaries of motion. The type and transcendental quality apportioned to numerous features of the cow and oxen have made these creatures the subject of many of their songs and poetry, where their virtues were extolled. The Dinka language expressed the structure of meaning their ancestors created in relation to beliefs held about cows and oxen. Semiotically its continued existence to effectively produce meaning has been threatened by the enculturation of the west. In spite of these strictures many Dinka people have been proactive about its continued study and use in the Dinka community.

Paul spoke about the importance of upholding tradition and being able to speak Dinka. In being Dinka one needed to understand the Dinka way of life, and for the language to prevail an appreciation of Dinka tradition needed to be assumed.

> *It's something for us it does not make sense to be Dinka and [don't] speak the language and it's interesting because if you want to understand the Dinka way of life you have to know the language… because there are some things that can be described in Dinka that cannot be described in any other language.*

So language is very, very important. Even now, here in Australia, the children would grow up learning the Dinka language.

The sentiments of Paul about language captured the feeling and aspirations of many Dinka people who wanted to maintain their cultural heritage. Some other Dinka people who had learnt to speak Arabic as a result of the dislocation of war were not willing to promote the Dinka language in Australia, and this was a cause of tension in their community.

Findings

In general the Dinka elders and the adult community were proactive about promoting the Dinka language and upholding their cultural heritage, and young people were encouraged to learn and value their language as their primary means of communication within the Dinka community. Some dissension concerning the appropriation of the Dinka or Arabic languages as the cultural language of choice among the community presented various views. Dinka children in Catholic schools have come from a Dinka or Arabic speaking background and their awareness of the importance of the Dinka language may be guided variously according to their background. Findings for this theme highlighted a possible disconnect from their culture and their first language. A Dinka child may have learned to speak Arabic but they remained Dinka. In community in Australia, for Dinkas such as these, their use of the Arabic language disconnected them from their heritage. Issues relating one culture with two languages vying for predominance persisted in the Dinka community.

The Role of Ancestors

The role of ancestors was mentioned by two of the interviewees. Their conversations offered information about the significance of ancestors. Kasambala (2005) highlighted the important role that ancestors played in African cosmology, interpreting their influence on African people as being an unconscious belief in their strong presence in daily life. He noted emphatically that ancestors were not worshipped. O'Hanlon (1991) contended that African spirituality included unquestioningly the reality of the divine and Deng (1984), a Dinka scholar, described the practice of the Dinka praying to the dead, asking them to intercede on

their behalf to communicate to God their acts of sorrow in asking for forgiveness. Ancestors were important but not considered divine.

Paul said that most Dinka believed in ancestors, that they were present, and that they provided things. He noted also that traditionally practical matters of daily life were referred to the ancestors. He cited the example of a woman who would not be permitted to marry a man whose family member/s were responsible for killing her grandfather because, "Traditionally they believe their ancestors don't accept that." In this way ancestors were respected as the custodians of right practice for Dinka culture and tradition. In line with adult beliefs he also contended that many of the Dinka parents wanted their children to go to Sudan and learn about their lineage and ancestors. In Sudan, Dinka children learned to recite their father's genealogy to the most distant ancestor traceable (Deng, 1984). Paul maintained that belief in one God was upheld, and that the ancestors were also with God. In praying to God, the notion was held that the ancestors were with them in [hearing] their prayers.

> *… the one who is with the ancestors is God for Christians but for us we don't [know] who there must be someone who is with our ancestors*

> *They don't know the name, but there's a name for Christians…Nhialic. For Dinkas it is Nhialic. This is translated into English as God.*

The word Nhialic was used to describe God who was with the ancestors. It was important to note here that the Christian concept of after-life was not widely accepted by the Dinka people and Deng (1984) maintained that this precept has been discarded.

Samuel's story recounted a time when he was carrying heavy guns in a small boat on the Black Nile, aptly named for its black water. The boat had taken in water and capsized and Samuel would not let go of the guns.

> *If you lost a gun… you be in big trouble. The general almost die. Say why you lost the gun? They beat you… Many people die protecting the gun.*

> *Samuel went down with the boat as the other soldiers swam to the riverbank. I say oh all right now. I'm finish. I die. I say no! No! No! I come up – when I put my hand like this I get the boat. I don't know where the boat is coming. Another boat – I caught the boat.*

He held on to the boat for a while and travelled along with it to the riverbank. The people in the boat left him in knee-deep water thinking he would be all right but he fell into the water, his body overcome with physical exhaustion. In that moment he imagined his deceased brother and other deceased Dinka friends and relatives from the war were with him. He imagined his brother spoke to him.

> *The brother say, "No problem." Why? He say, "Cause God with you. No problem. Nothing happen with you." He say, "Nothing to happen to you. God with you. God help you."*

Samuel openly spoke about the presence of his deceased brother and compatriots who came to his aid in this time of need. Samuel's brother relayed messages about God to him and this close proximity to God highlighted the Dinka belief that their ancestors were with God.

Findings

The role of ancestors in Dinka culture was pervasive and it was difficult to gauge the extent to which the Dinka parents may have informed their offspring of their genealogy. Parents, elders and significant adults present in Australian community would have been well informed of their lineage since the tradition was generated from their homeland in Africa. Dinka parents may have taught their children about their ancestry and its importance. The role of ancestors included one of guidance for living in right relationship with self, others and the land and stories shared about their life, offered counsel to respective family. They were revered, and daily practices that upheld Dinka traditions referred respectful acknowledgement of their wishes. Ancestors were included in prayers and understood to be with God. Ancestry figured prominently in Dinka adult's stories since their experience of war may have included the death of family members and it was likely that in these instances Dinka children may have been taught to pray to their ancestors.

Polygamy

Two interviewees spoke at length about the practice of Dinka men having multiple wives. Stephen and Paul told of the religious tensions created by this persistent cultural practice,

which was at odds with the Catholic teachings he taught and professed. Deng (1984) contended that polygamy was both an integrating and divisive factor in the relationship of larger families. In extended families created through polygamy, stepsisters and stepbrothers developed strong family ties while different wives may have developed jealousies.

One of the main goals in Dinka life was procreation, as it was believed that immortality was gained through a male's progeny (Deng, 1984). Having many children in the family was seen as a gift because they promoted continuity of the family lineage and "good memory for the family." At a practical level, if a couple wished to separate they were able to do so pending the elder's decision, but reconciliation was always promoted. Dinka men and women who wanted to devote their life to God in the priesthood or religious life, were discouraged by the family because they understood that this way of life precluded family and children.

Findings

Dinka children living in the western suburbs of Melbourne may have had stepsisters and, or stepbrothers living in Australia or in Africa. It was also possible for them to have stepsiblings in other parts of the world where refugees have been accepted for example in America and Canada.

The findings for this theme focused on the values and attitudes the young person may have developed towards family and marriage. While their loyalty to family was very strong, their notion of extended family was not explored. In addition findings for this theme informing the Dinka young person's life experience about family suggested that they might have a living father, though may be domiciled elsewhere. Separation from their father and stepsiblings might have occurred during the course of refugee dislocation.

Separate Themes of Past and Present Concern

The interviewees recalled thoughts of war and present life concerns. The stories of Samuel, Karen, Thelma and Paul were recounted and the names given here are pseudonyms. They

recalled events from their lives that occurred between the1970's to 2009. The themes were pertinent to their culture and experience and provided background information for situations where young Dinka people would have been involved but would not be fully aware.

A Military Story

Samuel's story focused on the trauma of war at the frontline. Samuel was a Dinka soldier who had been fighting from the age of nineteen against the Muslim government in Sudan. He told of two particular instances that for him were significantly spiritual. In the first he recounted an incident where he had been engaged in heavy fighting for several hours and was shot in the leg. The bullet passed straight through his leg. He scrambled into tall grasses and managed to dig a hole and hide. All the while he could hear the enemy searching for him.

> *The bullet come and shoot me from here… come out here… I fall down but people running, then when I fall down I step up with the gun… I hold and run, not much running. I run and then I fell down, after that I get the grass… the grass tall like this [Indicated tall grass by stretching arm up]. I go inside the grass and when I go I dig a hole. I get inside hole and sitting like that in the hole. The grass over me. The army coming around cause I am here.*

When all became quiet he crawled away from danger and he believed at that time that he was close to death. He rested for a while then walked for about three hours. Confused and bleeding he became very disoriented wandering in the bush aimlessly for about three days. He fell and lay down where he came to rest in a hole that had been dug by a pig. While he lay there he prayed to God. While this was happening to Samuel, a friend who witnessed the fighting had a very strong sense that he was still alive. In spite of other soldiers saying they had seen him fall and die, the friend believing Samuel to be still alive, asked the general for some men to organise a search. The search party looked for three days. In his weakened state, upon hearing voices of several Dinka men approaching, Samuel raised their attention by firing two shots into the air. They found him and took him to hospital where he was given penicillin and regained his strength.

> *Cause I sleep. When I sleep I turn to God. My body feel good. When I told what happened to me I told them my prayer … God with me… I thank God.*

Samuel told them about his prayers and thoughts and the men agreed that God had been with him.

Karen's Story

Karen's story highlighted dislocation and separation from her immediate family and the expectation for her to be the carer of a disabled adult. Her childhood recollections demonstrated her attitude as a young girl who was interested in Church, Bible and prayer. Karen was eight years old when her mother took her to her grandmother's village to look after her blind grandmother. They travelled from Khartoum to south Sudan just before the break out of the second civil war in 1983. Karen was left there, separated from her family. She said that she was always looking for the Bible, "to read a little bit of my language." She went to Church and took her grandmother with her. Around that time, war broke out.

> *I know God help me because the war started when small. Then I pray and know about God – my life not bad – but I remember always that God help me with that life.*

Thelma's Story

Thelma's story highlighted aspects of trauma and suffering associated with separation, loss, journey, physical injury and dislocation from an adult perspective. In 1983, with disarmament agreements dishonoured, Thelma decided to flee from Sudan with many other Dinka people for Ethiopia. It was a time of violence and destruction. As Thelma and many others were being chased out of Sudan, an ambush awaited them at Maar which is a town situated in Sudan on the way to Ethiopia.

> *That is Maar… the caught centre of my husband [the place where Thelma's husband was caught]. On that day when we were ambushed, where my husband was killed …*

Thelma spoke about another time when she and her family were on their to Equatoria when her daughter was killed and she was seriously injured. Three of Thelma's grandchildren were left orphaned on that occasion.

> *People were just running randomly, children without their father, women doesn't know where her husband is and all this. And from all this the army when they saw people that the people going out of the town, they ran after the people and they made ambushes … and this is where it happened that I [was have] gun shot…on my right hip*

Thelma was cared for by the Catholic Church under the guidance of Bishop Paride Taban who arranged medical care in Khartoum. Thelma was sent from the south of Sudan to the north. She recalled that life in the hospital was not so good because of the discrimination she experienced.

> *… people were forced into Islamic. Islam you have Muslim. Then you have to wore the Muslim things … the clothes and all this and if not no… yes I was forced and from there my life not so good.*

Thelma left Khartoum and went to south Sudan, leaving her children behind at this point. With political tension heightening in the south in 1995, she travelled further southwards near to the boarders of Kenya and Uganda where she made the decision to go to Kakuma in Kenya.

> *… when I was Nairobi I tried to let them [family] know that I'm alive and I had come … Some of my brothers managed to come then we went, they took me to the camp where they were and I found my children … very, very happy day*

There she met with her daughter Tania, the children including the orphans and her mother and father. Another daughter Ann had travelled northwards with her children to Egypt and later Thelma found out that Ann and her family were permitted residency in America. Thelma lived in the camp for eight years and said that life as a refugee in the camp was difficult. Poor food, shelter and little education provided little solace for many widowed women.

> *… women who really lose their husbands, who were killed in the war, and the war was still going on, a lot of bombardments and lot of killings and death and sickness and hunger…*

 Her story of the miseries she suffered along with others illustrated the pain and suffering that war brought to the women and children who were left in the wake of its violence. She spoke of many, many women getting together who approached the UNHCR in their search for

emigration. Thelma believed their campaign had been considered in Geneva and that America, Canada and Australia rallied support. In 2001 it became known that Australia was interested in widows with small families and Thelma made a successful application.

> *... when you are accepted that is a very, very, very, very joyful day for you in your life. All [the] people dance, you dance. You make a good food if you have some money, you drink tea ...*

Thelma, a Dinka elder, came to Australia in 2003 with her son, daughter Tania and her stepson, and the three orphans of her deceased daughter. These children had spent their childhood in the refugee camp. Thelma lived with and provided for her three grandchildren in the western suburbs of Melbourne and they attended Catholic secondary schools.

Paul's Story

Paul fled Sudan on his father's back in 1983. The journey took two months and Paul lived in the camp for two and half years with his family in Ethiopia. He recalled that life continued with the same focus on family and community as he had experienced in Sudan. War broke out in Ethiopia, the Dinka there had to move back to Sudan because the neighbouring country of Kenya did not have diplomatic relations with the new democratic government. Paul was six years old at the time and he spent another two to three months travelling from Ethiopia back to Sudan and into Kenya. They went to live in Kakuma refugee camp.

Paul lived in Kakuma for twelve years. He knew it as a place of chaos where many tribes came together and where there were a lot of fights. He recalled 1996 as a particularly violent year in the camp when many people died due to tribal unrest. He also noted that there was fighting between a native group called the Turkana and the people of the camp.

> *The Turkana were very dangerous because they just live across a creek from us and most of them were very poor and most of them would depend on us from what we get from the UN ... but we share it with them. If we don't have enough then they think that we're hiding something and that's when they come at night and attack in groups and take whatever you have ...*

He experienced the raids that occurred at night and personal skirmishes that happened during the day. He recounted an incident where a group of young people were dancing and celebrating to the sound of music from a radio. Radios were uncommon in the camp and it drew the attention of an unfamiliar group with a recognizable language (Turkana). This group watched from a distance for a while. A boy was approached by the group and was asked about the celebration. He became frightened as he realized their real intent for being there was not to join in the party. He tried to raise an alarm.

> *So he came back and try and tell everyone that these people here. By the time he could tell us they had already invaded. They took the radio; they went into the houses, so we all had to hide. We all had to lie down and stay calm so they can take whatever they want and leave*

Paul remembered being ten years old when this happened.

Findings

Every Dinka person has a story to tell. Their stories of hardship, danger, survival, perseverance, poverty, fear, despair, childhood acceptance of adult responsibility, solidarity, cultural cohesion and the growing sense that God, Jesus, Church and prayer sustained their deep spirituality and celebratory sense of religiosity. These traits were both common and remarkable. Their spiritual connectedness was indicated in their stories and these highlighted the action of the human and visible spirit (Tacey, 2003). In considering the relationship between life experiences and the effect these had on their spirituality it could be observed that, for Samuel a strong faith in God sustained his will to survive; for Karen a deep sense of care and responsibility made her strong in her resolve to care for her grandmother at the age of eight, and to also join the local Church community; for Thelma a physical and mental endurance emancipated herself and others (re: approaching UNHCR for emigration status for widowed women and their children in refugee camp); and for Paul, the childhood reflections and his decision to enter into seminary life in Australia; all made known their emotional responsiveness to respond to their harsh life experiences in favourable ways (Donaldson,

1992). Their human expression in these circumstances exemplified how their humanity freed them from the self-absorption of their egos and transformed their lives, and the lives of those around them (Moore, 1989). Samuel's case differed in that his spiritual expression was generated from an invisible presence that transformed him.

The human visible actions were articulated in terms that acknowledged the invisible and the divine (Tacey, 2003). The stories recounted their experiences of spiritual guidance and help through visions, Church attendance and / or prayer and these indicated the presence of God in their lives. For these Dinka people religion was real and close because they sourced its meaning from their human experiences and because their sense of sacredness gave meaning to their existence.

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Two Issues of Interest and Note

Unaccompanied Children and Orphans

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Paul's childhood recollection of dislocation pointed to a certain kind of trauma involving the many young children who were sent to flee Sudan unaccompanied. He was four years old when he and his family fled Sudan. *Sharia* had been introduced and most people left at that time because they did not want to convert to Islam. Many people set off on foot for Ethiopia and he remembered being carried on his father's shoulders as mentioned earlier while other children were left to walk without their parents. He recalled how children would collapse along the way and for those without family, would be left to perish where they fell. This memory had a profound effect on Paul.

> *There are some extra ordinary things from your childhood you never forget*
> *them. And some of those things were seeing children walking without parents.*

He said that sometimes the children who perished in this way would be buried but it was not always possible. The Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) followed behind the mass migration of people for their protection, and if reconnaissance became aware of enemy

presence they would send a message for families to move with a great sense of urgency. The reason for children travelling without guardianship highlighted the following sadness.

> *Most children were pushed to go by their parents because the parents um … I found out later on, they refused to go because for us especially for the older people, its very important to die at home… but they knew that there would be a better life for the children away from Sudan and so they would tell them to go and the parents would stay.*

Young children would be told by their parents to leave their homeland and join other Dinkas on their journey by themselves. Paul added that many of the unaccompanied children were boys, and those who were able to complete the journey to Ethiopia often became very ill.

> *Most of those kids were very sick because they were eating just anything what's around so there was cholera that time that even killed a lot of them when they got there.*

It was difficult to know if any Dinka children present in classrooms in Catholic schools had been orphaned or had travelled unaccompanied in a refugee group. Paul's testimony indicated his memory from childhood that numerous children had travelled this way and many perished and some may possibly have survived. Thelma, a Dinka elder, also spoke of the plight of numerous orphaned children and the family responsibilities concerning guardianship.

Thelma also remembered the harsh experiences children endured. She was aware that children still remembered the difficult times when they were fleeing bombardments, seeking refuge in the forests with no food, eating only the roots of trees and some leaves. She recalled times when children witnessed a person dead as though asleep, when they were sick with malaria with no medicine to take.

> *Yeh there are so many things. Some children are brought here orphans related to you…yeh you can do that and they are with us in Australia and they still remember the time when their mother's killed or the father was killed… they can remember the time the related person came when said this is the child of my sister, I will take.*

> *Yeh, lot of them… All the Sudanese families they have to bring along some who have no parents. Just left like that.*

The family responsibility to care for the orphaned, along with the opportunity to come to Australia offered the chance for them to help many orphaned children.

These eyewitness accounts illustrated the kinds of suffering and trauma children experienced. They went hungry and were sick, and they witnessed horror and some suffered great loss. Numbers for those children who have survived abandonment and or have been assimilated into other families were unknown but testimonies of their occurrence were given. The experiences of children such as these who possibly attended Catholic schools were not fully known.

The Mindset of Adolescents Living in a New Culture

Peter lamented that his sixteen-year old son wanted to leave the family home when he turned eighteen. Peter mentioned that this disrespected the family because in the Dinka tradition the children stayed with their families until they married. The youth was aware that at eighteen he could leave the home with full legal rights, but the issue was not just about leaving home. The dissension subtly revolved around the liberties the youth felt entitled to have in his home. He became aware of the way some young people behaved outside his culture, and he was pushing the boundaries of what was acceptable within his culture. He did not want his father to have jurisdiction over what he perceived to be his freedom.

> *All of those who grow up here, they know when you reach eighteen you have right to choose and also they know African tradition is when still… you can stay with the father and work according to the regulations and rules of the house. Be at home this time, go to school, study, that is how we do this. We don't send them off. Obligation they have to do this.*

Peter wanted educational and family success for all his children and for them to finish their studies, then live and work in peace. There was no guarantee of this because he perceived that the direction children were taking here was not necessarily good.

This conflict of values created tensions in the home and for the young person at school. The resolve of parents and elders determined this cultural divide in the interim, but the

challenge for cultural identity and the expression of their tradition seemed to be at odds with a western cultural landscape.

These issues presented variously as indicators of Dinka spirituality and religiosity. The first example demonstrated a spiritual landscape of fear and unresolved uncertainty. As children experiencing and surviving the trauma of war, the settling into a new culture, a growing understanding of Christianity, and the means to express their spirituality and religiosity in the context of these experiences, delivered a pressure that perhaps may only be survived by their love of prayer.

<div align="center">Dinka Spirituality, Religiosity and Aspects of their Worldview</div>

The Dinka people have experienced significant religious change especially over the past sixty years. The parents and significant adults of Dinka communities have been responsible for teaching their young people about God, Jesus, Church and prayer. The Dinka children and adolescents have come to accept Christianity as religious normalcy in their community and this research showed that the majority of Dinka young people affirmed belief in God and Jesus. They prayed to God and Jesus and viewed Jesus as a positive influence in their daily lives, acknowledging times of happiness and sadness for their spiritual reflection. Dinka adult perceptions of Church illustrated their understanding that it was a place where people gathered to worship and pray to one true God in the name of Jesus Christ. For them Church also involved supporting parish life where service to others as well as being served was acknowledged. Attendance and participation in Mass was an important part of the Dinka's religious and spiritual expression in Africa and many children and adolescents recalled its significance. Their experiences of Church and Mass as refugees in Africa was a positive one for learning about God, Jesus and prayer. Significant also were the Church and Mass for the Dinka's resettlement in parishes in the western suburbs of Melbourne, for providing spiritual worship, religious celebration and practical support. Dinka Masses, Legion of Mary, choir practices and Dinka catechist classes linked their cultural roots to their spiritual and religious

identity and promoted their cultural solidarity. Language, computer and sewing classes, as well as accommodation support, employment opportunities and interest free loans provided practical assistance and support for their personal independence and stability in the parish community. The majority of the Dinka children and adolescents attended Mass and participated in parish based community activities, and they were aware of the cultural solidarity that their attendance at Mass provided to the Dinka community. Dinka adults viewed prayer as a way to communicate and develop relationship with God. Dinka parents and significant adults taught their children to pray routinely and regularly. Dinka parents modelled prayerful habits and encouraged their children to pray in private, with their family and the Church community. The Dinka children and especially the adolescents spoke about prayer as a means to communicate and relate to God and Jesus. They too prayed routinely, regularly, communally and in private, and they drew their reflection from their knowledge and experience of the trauma of war. The Dinka children and adolescents shared a similar spiritual disposition, which was marked by the way they made meaning of their war experiences through a strong connection to their families. They were emotionally responsive to the needs of others as their experiences of the trauma of war contributed to a heightened awareness of self, others and the world around them. Testimonies from the Dinka adults showed that their experience of violence, grief, loss, separation and deprivation was met with a strong sense of God's helpful presence and guidance. They believed God was with them and their actions of courage, calm, perseverance and personal strength revealed their spiritual resolve to be close to God. The Dinka experiences of trauma hallmarked a deep spirituality bound, in part, to traditions, culture and Christianity, and also a strong Christian religiosity, guided by belief in the God, Jesus, Church and prayer.

Aspects contributing to the Dinka worldview that were incumbent on their present religiosity and spirituality were their drive to have the Dinka language homogenously accepted in their communities, their respect for ancestors included in religious observances

and daily life practices, their historical acceptance of polygamy for procreation and their proclivity for singing and dancing in the context of religious celebration, prayer and learning of Scriptural text. These variables moderating religious change in their culture were not gauged and were outside the parameters of this research. In any discussion designating platforms of religious difference, it is the view of this research that the same God through Jesus Christ has called the Dinka to Christian faith through the mystery of God's revelation, and it was their will to respond to it with God's grace.

In the following chapter the implications for teaching religious education in Catholic schools to war affected Dinka children and adolescents are discussed. The challenges and settlement issues confronting Dinka children and adolescents are explored. Their contributions to the school community, and the learning differences they presented in their classrooms are discussed in view of those experienced in their education and resettlement. The ramifications of these issues are examined in terms of the psychosocial characteristics the Dinka people demonstrated in light of their war affected past. Proposed findings of this research are correlated with education goals for learning religious education in Catholic schools. Recommendations are made for teaching the war affected Dinka children and adolescents.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE WAR AFFECTED DINKA AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Introduction

In the foregoing chapters of this thesis, Dinka children's and adolescents' spirituality and

religiosity have been discussed and certain aspects of their worldview and experiences of war

have provided a context for the discussion of their religious education in Australian Catholic

schools. This chapter focuses on the third aim of the research. It was concerned with the

extent to which the spirituality and religiosity of the Dinka children have been influenced by

the religious education they received in their country of origin and at their Australian Catholic

schools.

Two aims guided the development of this chapter. The first was to present the issues and

needs of the Dinka in education, and in their resettlement. Their contributions and learning

differences are discussed and information about language proficiencies and specific learning

competencies are also considered. The second aim was to locate examples of the psychosocial

effects of war on the Dinka children and adolescents and to examine the context of their

personal resiliency in view of their spirituality and religiosity. This acknowledges that the

psychosocial impact of war violence on the Dinka young person influences their personal

religious beliefs and has significance for the learning methods and religious activities used in

the classroom.

The Participants in Case Study Four

Seven adult participants each took part in a semi-structured interview. For the purpose of this

research they were given the pseudonyms of Iris and Nap, secondary and primary school

principals respectively; Dominique and Carmel, secondary and primary teachers respectively;

Peter and Anthony, two Christian brothers; and a parish priest Father Mark. The expertise of

educational professionals, priest and religious was sought because it was hoped that their

experience and knowledge about teaching and working with Dinka young people in Catholic schools and parishes in the western suburbs of Melbourne would inform this research. It was hoped that the principals could provide a global view of the needs and issues concerning the Dinka students in their schools. The primary school literacy teacher was interviewed because her experience and understanding of how the Dinka students learned English was considered important for understanding the academic constraints on these young people. From the perspective of the secondary school religious education coordinator, it was hoped that detailed knowledge about the teaching and learning of religious education could be sourced. The Christian Brothers had widespread experience and knowledge in teaching and serving the Dinka community through their ministry in the western suburbs of Melbourne, and their perspectives concerning Dinka resettlement was especially sought. All the participants, including the parish priest, were asked for stories of Dinka young people whom they knew had suffered the trauma of war. It was hoped that the parish priest's broad knowledge here could provide valuable data about the Dinka's experiences. The participants responded to questions concerning issues of challenge for Dinka students in schools, their contribution to the school community, demonstration of learning differences across the curriculum as well as in religious education, and for possible contributions Dinka students could offer religious education programming in schools. They were also asked about resettlement issues of which they were aware in relation to the Dinka, and if they knew whether these had affected the children's learning of religious education. During the course of the discussions some of the participants shared stories about Dinka refugees who had suffered particular traumas of war, which had affected their spirituality either positively or negatively. It was hoped that responses to such questions would highlight learning characteristics, religious education programming opportunities in respect to Dinka culture and faith, and the nature of successful or failed coping mechanisms of Dinka young people. Dialogue about these subject areas could then be related to the goals for secondary and primary religious education in the future.

Issues and Needs of Dinka Students

The most outstanding challenge for Dinka primary and secondary school students stemmed

from their need to learn English. All the participants mentioned that learning English and

acquiring literacy skills were the Dinka children's and adolescents' key need. Dominique was

experienced in delivering 'Reading Recovery' and literacy programmes to academically at

risk children in a Catholic primary school in the western suburbs of Melbourne and many of

her pupils included Dinka children. She was also involved in other curricula activities where

she engaged relationally with young Dinka people in her classes, and was attuned to their

academic and emotional requirements. She referred to recent literacy results from the

National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) for her school.

NAPLAN is the national reporting requirement designated by the Australian Curriculum

Assessment and Reporting Authority. It mandated set tests required for students in Years 3, 5,

7 and 9 in the domains of reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and

punctuation) and numeracy. Dominique spoke about the results from years three and five,

which focused on listening, speaking, reading and writing. Documented language assessments

for English showed there was oral proficiency among the Sudanese. These children recalled

and recounted a story in sequence and related to its characters, either approving or

disapproving them. Good results were gained for story writing, as they were able to compose

narrative stories. Two other text types, not included at the time of testing, informative and

persuasive writing, were later included in successive years for assessment. Good results

attained for story writing in the particular year referred to, cannot be assumed as a clear

appraisal for their overall writing ability. NAPLAN results for the Dinka children's reading

skills indicated that the school was eligible for funding, as the children required tutoring in

reading.

Six participants commented on the Dinka students' sound oral proficiency in reference

to their oral based, non-literate backgrounds. Students coming from non-literate backgrounds

had particular educational needs (Matthews, 2008). For the Dinka students it was important to build their oral competencies through language experience, utilizing programmes that demonstrated literacy as relevant to their future lives (Oliver, Haig and Grote, 2009).

The major cultural group in the Catholic schools where the data was collected were the Vietnamese, and it was indicated that students from this background generally developed proficiencies in reading and writing English more readily than in oral language. Dominique noted that her Dinka student's oral fluency benefitted the Asian members in class because the Dinka children were talkative, outgoing and engaged others in conversation. The exchange of competencies was not reciprocated, as the Dinka did not develop their literacy skill through the example of the Asian students. This observation highlighted two important issues. Oral fluency demonstrated in interpersonal communication developed quickly, but cognitive and language proficiency needed years to develop (Cummins, 1980). In addition, the literacy programmes (English as a Second Language [ESL]) that had been implemented effectively for Vietnamese students, for several years in the primary and secondary schools were culturally specific and based on teaching European and Asian migrants from literate backgrounds (Matthews, 2008). Iris was aware that language approaches that had been successful in the past were not effective with students from Sudan.

> *Unlike in the past we've always been able to use drawing as a way into the curriculum and pictures for children who are not good at reading and writing. Dinka children can't draw and are very embarrassed by their drawing.*

Culturally specific approaches to learning embedded in curriculum, which were based on literate backgrounds, were problematic for literacy learners from non-literate backgrounds. In this case the Dinka students were disadvantaged.

Carmel raised the issue of Sudanese students concealing their lack of knowledge especially when working in groups and where writing was the main activity. She observed that sometimes the Sudanese students presented with attention-seeking behaviours to distract from their inability to complete their section of a written task.

If we're doing group work they don't want to look silly in front of their peers cause they can't write what they're saying. Sometimes they misbehave to take the focus off the fact they can't.

Students behaved this way to conceal their need for assistance and because they did not want to appear unintelligent in front of their peers. The importance to scaffold opportunities for student success in group-work situations was highlighted here (Oliver, Haig and Grote, 2009).

The Dinka students' initial unfamiliarity with the school environment, timetables, routine, basic organization and time management was mentioned by five of the interviewees. This issue was noted in view of the fact that many of the Dinka children had received limited or no schooling. This meant that schooling was possibly disrupted or non-existent and the overall impression was that these students seemed unprepared for school or that a period of acclimatization or induction was required. There was the related issue of the Dinka students' lack of reliability in bringing the correct books to class, and in the case of secondary school students, being able to respond in a timely manner to the bell. For the Dinka children there was little sense of urgency for maintaining timeliness. These behaviours led to unsettledness in learning and in some instances for long periods of time. It was generally understood that a lack of, or limited schooling meant a high level of need in the student in the initial stages of their learning in the Australian school environment.

The results from the NAPLAN assessments from the Catholic primary school indicated that Dinka children were strong oral learners. The principals, teachers, Christian Brothers and the Parish Priest were aware that the Dinka children's reliance on learning in this way had significant effects on their academic performance. Iris's comment highlighted the challenges for Dinka students, the teachers at her secondary school and the school community.

It has been an enormous challenge for us… in that you have children in year eight and nine classrooms who cannot do maths, and who can't write, who can't read and [where] *access to an academic curriculum is through the written and spoken word…that's both a frustration to the children and it provides a barrier for* [them] *engaging with other students and for other*

students really getting to know them as people because you never get past the fact that they're Sudanese and that they're Dinka…

In effect Dinka secondary students were being frustrated by their academic standards and marginalized by the barriers these created for them in their engagement with others. In addition the academic levels they were expected to achieve set them up for minimal success or failure. Nap, Iris and Dominique were aware that time was required for literacy development and that low literacy hindered their progress in other areas of the curriculum. In the secondary school environment, the widespread use of text-based curriculum for learning made it difficult for some Dinka students to learn effectively and this was reflected in some poor results. Carmel spoke of a year eight student who was in tears because his report graded him below standard in many areas. He was devastated because he had done all the work required and had tried hard. His educational levels did not match his aspirations and hard work. Enabling the achievement of short-term goals and future prospects through alternative timescales (Matthews, 2008) needs to be considered an important strategy for providing an optimistic outlook for learning.

The issues of an education system grading students according to age not ability, and the need for raising the Dinka children's performance levels in school were deemed significant by the participants. The primary school principal Nap, said that the Dinkas students' disposition for oral based learning was not taken into account when they were expected to perform to accepted academic levels in reading, writing and numeracy. Both principals and the ESL teacher highlighted the unreasonable expectations made on these young people and their teachers.

The way they learn at this time is governed by their lack of academic skills and what the secondary curriculum demands of the children.

…so they came to our society without any education. So you have to start people in grade four, five, six. You start from scratch… there were children in grade six going to high school [they] might have [had] a grade two education standard… very difficult for them.

Thus, an education system that graded students according to age rather than skill, in light of backgrounds of limited schooling, non-literacy and oral-based learners applied inappropriate standards of competency and assumed, "a short sighted osmotic, blind-faith approach to refugee education" (Lo Bianco 1998, cited in Miller et. al., 2005, p. 21). Nap commented that Sudanese entering the education system at grades four, five and six, without an understanding or appreciation for text based learning, left primary for secondary with below standard academic levels.

One school principal reflected on the issue of raising performance levels among the Dinka students. In the secondary school environment a speciality math class and ESL class for year seven Sudanese and Dinka students were trialled. These classes proved to be unsuccessful despite the highly qualified and experienced teachers delivering the sessions, the provision of teacher's aides and the overall beneficial student-to-teacher ratio created for the fourteen Sudanese students in the classes. Their behaviour was unruly and unacceptable in these classes and the decision was made not to continue the classes in the following year. In contrast the same students in their regular classes did not behave in this way. It has been found that Sudanese students from these classes generally regarded modified programmes as obstacles or punishment (Miller et al., 2005), and what was introduced as a logical initiative to try raising the performance levels in math and literacy was ineffective.

Carmel's observation that many Dinka students were proactive about their learning was supported by the fact that many students attended the Edmund Rice Centre (ERC) for homework help. The Christian Brothers have been offering homework help in the western suburbs of Melbourne since 2001, and in recent years over four hundred students annually have regularly attended. The students ranged from primary to tertiary levels and received practical support and encouragement with their homework. Recent Australian research recommended homework support such as the ERC as a key to the academic success of refugee young people (Refugee Health Research Centre, 2007). The Centre for Multicultural

Youth (CMY) funded by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development operated over 250 programmes in schools, libraries and community centres across Victoria (CMY, Newsletter, 2011), and their service to the community was very significant. In a recent report African parents said that they would like their children to be involved in more skill-based activities, and organizers said that homework needed to incorporate didactic approaches with language experience activities (Dooley, 2009). These approaches did not readily cohere with integrated learning approaches that incorporated high levels of literacy engagement, such as those that existed in primary and secondary schools. Brother Peter, the director of ERRS commented that research activities and projects were difficult for the Sudanese to do especially because of their non-literate background, and this raised questions about homework that empowered the refugees' learning. The homework clubs in the western suburbs of Melbourne were heavily patronized and offered a significant resource to Catholic schools.

The teachers and principals commented on aspects of Sudanese social behaviour that presented challenges to the students and to the schools. They noted incidents of reactive physical behaviour in their dealings with one another when they became frustrated, and in one instance an adolescent had reacted strongly in response to injustice done to a non-African. Dominique and Carmel mentioned that the Sudanese children had a tendency to handle their own problems in the yard when interacting with one another. They referred matters involving other children (from non-Sudanese backgrounds) for teacher management but approached personal matters involving Sudanese independently and with a sense of self- reliance. Iris's insight supported this saying, "Most of the fights that we've had have been between them rather than between them and other children." She noted also that a serious fight involving a Sudanese boy at the school had been in reaction to a 'wrong doing' dealt to a non-Sudanese young person at the school. Her opinion about the Sudanese's' reactive behaviour was that as a newly arrived ethnic group they would eventually settle, and that like other newly arrived

groups before them such as the Vietnamese and Filipinos, groups take time to sort out their relationship within the school community.

Father Mark observed some quarrelsome behaviour amongst the adults due in part to what he believed was the tension created by two factions within the Dinka. One group supported adherence to traditional ways, and another was sympathetic to retaining culture but also wanted to integrate and see themselves as Australians. Ways for appropriating acceptable social behaviours for Dinka young people in the wider community were regularly discussed, and strategies were developed and implemented by Dinka elders in response to this issue. The elders too were coping with the cultural fallout experienced through factionalism possibly within their own ranks.

In summary, the following issues were significant in the education of Dinka children and adolescents in their Australian schools.

1. The Dinka children and adolescents from limited schooling, oral-based learning and non-literate backgrounds were 'high need' literacy learners.

2. Grading according to age for the Dinka students coming from limited schooling, oral-based learning and non-literate backgrounds applied unrealistic standards to their learning.

3. Homework clubs, mentoring and tutoring sessions, were sought by the Dinka students and provided proactive learning strategies for helping raise performance levels at school.

4. The Dinka students were challenged to meet the academic standards for reading, writing and numeracy as prescribed by NAPLAN.

5. The Dinka students had gained proficiency in their oral fluency but required time for their literacy development.

6. Culturally specific literacy programmes based on literate backgrounds did not support the literacy development of the Dinka students.

7. Sometimes the Dinka students presented social behaviours with literacy-based needs, cultural interpersonal interactions or overt sensitivities to perceived injustice.

8. Initially the Dinka students were unfamiliar with school environments, routines and timetables and required induction for time management and basic organization skills.

Resettlement Issues

The Christian Brothers operate a ministry in the western suburbs known as Edmund Rice Refugee Services. A large part of their work has involved the delivery of homework and mentoring programmes for refugees, but they also provided many other services for this community. Some of these included finding accommodation and school placement for unaccompanied and /or orphaned youth, operating camps for children and their families, running holiday programmes for children and their families and offering scholarships to young people to attend Christian Brothers' schools. Father Mark had been instrumental in offering newly arrived Sudanese material assistance as well as ministering to their spiritual well-being during resettlement from their previous host country to the western suburbs of Melbourne. Both the Christian Brothers and Father Mark were intimate with the pressures and concerns experienced by Dinka families.

Brothers Peter and Anthony were aware that Dinka families experienced difficulties with the English language. For parents written communication required translation, usually into Arabic. While the Dinka language was widely spoken in the community, its written form was not generally known, due in part to the sustained impact of the war, and more importantly because a standardized orthography for the Dinka language had been conceived only in the latter part of the twentieth century (Idris, 2004). Hence reading and writing Dinka was a

relatively recent practice for a literate few. Dinka children had to cope with performance pressures brought about by age-based placement in schools and their reliance on oral-based memory and rote learning. Text-based learning involving reading, writing and researching impeded their learning capabilities as noted in the previous section of this chapter. In response, the Christian Brothers organized venues in the western suburbs for children and adolescents who were new arrivals to receive help with their homework. Adults needing help with completing forms or writing job applications would also be welcomed and assisted. Literacy and numeracy acquisition and the effects of interrupted learning were recognized as major issues for resettling the Sudanese including the Dinka into the education system, and their homework help groups sought to redress this.

Initially timetables and settling into a routine required a period of acclimatization. Adults and children were not used to being guided by the timing of the clock. Brother Peter noted that it was not unusual for newly arrived Sudanese to look up to the sky and refer to the position of the sun when making arrangements for meetings. The sense that the Dinka were not used to being ruled by the mechanics of time was made clear. Brother Peter drew attention to the Dinka's appreciation for arranging a meeting. He said that it was the connection with people that was important and the potential outcome for relationship that mattered to the Dinka.

The Christian Brothers and the parish priest considered the link between parish and school important because they indicated that both the parish and the school supported the parents' faith. Father Mark offered two reasons for Dinka refugees gravitating towards the Church. The first was that it provided safety and security for these new arrivals. Father Mark said, "*The Church continues to assist them as it has done in the past*". Testimonies from adult Dinkas, which were provided in chapter five of this thesis, corroborated this sentiment. It was the Church that looked after many in Sudan, and it was the Church these people trusted in a foreign land. Church was the link and a stable 'mooring' for these people during the civil

wars (1955-1972 and 1983-2005), in diaspora and post migration settlement. The second reason was situated in the first. Father Mark contended that the Dinka were divided on whether to faithfully retain their traditions or to sympathetically retain their culture whilst integrating themselves as Australians. The Dinka have experienced some tension within their own community in discerning their cultural identity. The Church linked these groups because the experiences of both groups highly regarded the care and spiritual guidance the Church provided. The Church in conjunction with Dinka religiosity was a binding force for their culture and community.

While the Church provided a link for the Dinka people to establish themselves in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Brother Peter and Father Mark were aware of some instances where the Dinka were not fully aware of denominational differences in regard to certain Christian traditions. The experience of Samuel and Mary, Dinka parents highlighted in chapter five, supported this. They maintained they were Anglican, attended the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints and sent their children to Catholic primary and secondary schools. Their belief in God and Jesus supported by a community of praying faithful was significant to them and the nuances of specific religious beliefs and practices were less important.

Contributions of the Dinka to Religious Education

The teachers and principals responded to questions about how they perceived the contribution of the Dinka students to the school community and also their contributions to the religious education programming within their schools. Most participants commented on their talkative, outgoing and lively personalities. Dominique said that as oral learners the Dinka children contributed to the learning of others especially through class discussions and by personally engaging conversation with non-talkative members of the class. She noted also that they were generous with their food and toys, and that they were sensitive to others' needs as demonstrated in the following.

I've seen one child when another child was crying because she was cold and she'd forgotten to bring her coat to school, and one of the Sudanese children took off her jacket and gave it to her… "You can have mine. I don't need it on. I'm not cold."

Dominique thought the Dinka children looked after younger children as a matter of course *"They're like little mini parents …if someone's upset, they're going to try and fix it."* In the primary school the cultural exchange of skipping, clapping and chanting games were popular with many of the children in the playground. Carmel observed that their willingness to participate in the life of the school found them actively involved in sports, liturgies and on school councils and social justice groups. They were also interested in leadership positions in secondary school. Nap and Iris also spoke about aspects of the Dinka children's personal qualities and experiences. Iris said that they displayed a strong code of justice and in effect they were 'the social barometers of truth and honesty.'

They bring a strong code of justice and that's both challenging… it can get them into real arguments and confrontation with other children but you can almost be sure when you're trying to get to the bottom of something that's happened that most of the Dinka children would tell the truth.

Nap spoke of his awareness of the violence and poverty the Dinka had witnessed and said that their experience offered new learning experiences for teachers at their school. He commented further saying that this contribution was at the same time a challenge for the school community to accept the Dinka's experience, and to provide the best service for them.

…we have to learn as teachers. We have to learn how to give the best service to these children. Learn how to teach reading, writing, arithmetic and religion.

This awareness of their life experience affecting learning and teaching, acknowledged the need for classroom teachers to be given the opportunity to attend professional development seminars, to inform them about appropriate pedagogies, and increasing the teacher's repertoire for teaching, in this case war affected children from an oral-based culture (Oliver, Haig & Grote, 2009).

Participant observations highlighting the Dinka students' contribution to the religious education programme in Catholic schools focused on several key words about their personal qualities. They were seen as empathetic, joyful, appreciative persons, keenly aware of social justice issues. Dominique said that the Dinka children brought a deeper understanding of empathy to the classroom through their ability of story telling. She said that they were able to draw from personal stories of loss, war and heartache and noted that the feelings they shared in the context of class discussions engaged and informed other children. They were effective communicators for arousing empathy.

> *You know being able to infer the person's feelings in the story or the effect somebody's choice would have had… They're* [the Dinka children] *willing to speak about it, which encourages the others to speak about it.*

The primary school Dinka children had experiences and personal qualities that allowed them to influence other children who heard them speaking about the feelings of others. Likewise, Carmel drew attention to two particular religious education units. One year ten unit focused on the plight of the East Timorese and another year nine unit concerned the slave trade and the efforts of William Wilberforce to abolish it. She commented that the Dinka students found the units of work very confronting and that they related to the subject matter empathetically.

> *…our social justice unit looks at East Timor and the political situation…for some of the Sudanese kids that was quite difficult. It did bring it into the classroom for a lot of the other kids because they were able to talk about… 'yes that happens where I come from'… 'Yes this is what it was like'… and so it made it a bit more real.*

Secondary school Dinka students also had the credibility to speak about social justice issues from their personal perspective. Their experiences of war were made meaningful in the context of discussions about social justice with their peers. Iris also noted that Dinka students quickly sensed injustice and were prepared to speak out and act in these situations.

Dominique, Carmel and Iris spoke of the Dinka students' deep sense of appreciation, and how it had an incredibly humbling effect on the teachers. Carmel spoke of an incident

where one of her students was concerned about her absence. She told the Sudanese girl that

her eighty-two year old grandmother had passed away recently and that she had been

spending time at home with the family. The girl was genuinely moved by Carmel's news.

> *Oh, I'm very sorry for you and she gave me a hug… 'You know in Sudan my grandmother she just got killed.'* [She] *went on to say a few different family members had died at a young age and reflected that I should feel happy because she* [my grandmother] *had such a long life… that we're lucky and need to understand those things.*

Carmel was humbled by the girl's action and words and acknowledged her spirituality and her

deep appreciation for the preciousness of life. Carmel reflected,

> *…we need to be appreciative of that* [life] *you know because you don't know how long you've got, what you've got… and so you should know. It made me think too that I am lucky cause I'm in my thirties and I still had my grandmother.*

Appreciation of something beautiful was recognized in the following story. Iris gave an

account of a young Dinka girl who when asked why she had not taken off her jumper on such

a warm day replied, *"But Miss, it is so beautiful."* The young girls responsible for these

comments were in year seven and were either thirteen or fourteen years of age. These

examples illustrated a value for life and its longevity, and an appreciation of beautiful things.

Nap said that the Dinka were joyful people who were great at dance, music and the

creative arts. He also said that they had a desire to know about God from the Old Testament.

Iris mentioned that Gospel stories were well known as their oral tradition had served them

with memorable references to Scripture. Nap and Iris commented on the Dinka adolescent's

keen attention to religious practice, noting also that they were strongly involved in parish life

and that in the secondary school, Mass was attended voluntarily. These personal attributes and

practices contributed to the religious culture of the schools.

The Dinka children and adolescents were able to contribute to religious education

lessons spiritually and religiously. In terms of their spirituality the contributions they made

came from the way they were able to deeply connect to others. Their empathy for others

generated their sense of generosity, appreciation and social consciousness. It was their empathy that made them credible witnesses to violence and social injustice, and this was evidenced in primary and secondary Dinka school children. The witness they provided offered important stories, which were listened to, accepted and considered crucial for other children and adolescents to hear, so as they would not overlook or trivialise the significance of social injustices or the needs of others. In terms of their religiosity the following contributions were considered noteworthy.

- The Dinka had a strong involvement in parish life.

- The Dinka participated readily in dance, song and music.

- The Dinka children in secondary school regularly attended mid-week Mass voluntarily.

- The Dinka children and adolescents knew and had an understanding of Old and New Testament stories.

The contributions the Dinka children made to religious education in Catholic schools were their ready engagement in liturgies and the rituals of the Catholic tradition, and their openness to Scripture.

<div align="center">Learning Differences in Religious Education</div>

Information relating to the learning differences in religious education for the Dinka students was referenced to archdiocesan curriculum frameworks from Melbourne and learning outcomes focused on cognitive, affective and spiritual modes of learning.

<div align="center">*Archdiocese of Melbourne Curriculum Frameworks*</div>

The Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) has developed a religious education curriculum framework for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. A curriculum framework for primary and secondary Catholic schools outlined the dimensions, goals, content, objectives, learning foci, standards and units of work for religious education. The

framework for teachers was entitled: *Coming to Know Worship and Love* and the accompanying text for students was entitled: *To Know, Worship and Love.*

The religious dimensions encapsulated in these texts sought to develop knowledge and understanding, nurture spirituality and envision the personal response to, and promotion of the Catholic Tradition. The goals for teaching were taken from the Catholic Education Office Melbourne frameworks for primary and secondary religious education (CEOM, 2008 & 2005) respectively were as follows: -

1. To make sense of everyday life experiences in the broader contexts of mystery, complexity, confusion and awe.

2. To gain access to and understanding of the Scriptures, the Traditions of the Catholic community, its stories, its experiences and its teachings.

3. To celebrate with others the mystery and life of the risen Christ.

4. To respond to the activity of God on their life and the whole of creation.

The content of each framework incorporated five strands including Church and community, prayer, liturgy and Sacraments, scripture and Jesus, morality and justice and God, religion and life. The objectives, learning foci and standards applied to units of work applicable to levels from preparatory in primary to year twelve in secondary school. The frameworks provided basic objectives, which supported the foci and standards for specific units of work (CEOM, 2008 & 2005). Religious education teachers prepared lessons from these units and connected specific outcomes to lessons that signified the proposed knowledge, values and attitudes, and skills to be acquired. These outcomes correlated to cognitive, affective and spiritual aspects of learning.

Cognitive, Affective and Spiritual Learning

Cognitive, affective and spiritual outcomes were brief statements about learning that described intended achievements usually for a lesson. Cognitive outcomes referred to knowledge and skills to be acquired and were generally related to specific measures that

called for reading, writing, or perhaps oral recount tasks. Cognitive outcomes involved

processes of remembering, understanding, applying evaluating and creating. Affective

outcomes were usually broad statements that focused the development of attitudes, values,

emotions and faith responses. They were applicable to whole programmes or units of work

and called for hoped results concerning elements of appreciation, responsiveness, sensitivity,

solidarity, sympathy, acceptance or reflection. Spiritual outcomes involved the opportunity

for growth and transformation. They invited participation in liturgy and community service

programmes or the demonstration of appreciation for a religious event. Spiritual outcomes

were especially challenging because they invited change (Hyde and Rymarz, 2009).

The Dinka Students

The various ways the Dinka children and adolescents learned in religious education were

explored. Participants were asked about the learning differences they perceived the Dinka had

in relation to religious education. The participants' responses highlighted aspects of learning

pertaining to the children's cognitive, affective and spiritual outcomes, as well as raising

issues for re-thinking suitable approaches for teaching religious education.

All participants including the parish priest, Christian brothers, principals and teachers

were aware that the Dinka children learned differently and they relied primarily on oral-based

learning techniques. The Christian brothers, Peter and Anthony were aware that the Dinka

came from an oral tradition which honed skills of listening, memory, dialogue and discussion

> *...they're coming from a culture where listening to stories, listening to their elders has been predominant. So it's a different type of learning.*

Learning differences that Dominique perceived about primary aged Dinka students involved

their ability to access information. She maintained that the students were able to engage orally

in religious education lessons and that their generally excellent memory retention aided their

knowledge acquisition, but that there were issues with reading text from the archdiocesan text

based programme *To Know Worship and Love* and performing written tasks, unless they

involved very simple texts. Similarly, Iris said that the adolescent Dinka students were trying to learn with a deficient academic skill set, and that when applied to the demands of the secondary school curriculum, learning differences presented issues.

> *… we've always had an academically challenging programme with the new framework that's probably become even more so…*

Secondary school presented conceptual expectations for students to think and apply language and literacy competencies at a symbolic and interpretive level. For example Iris noted that the secondary religious education framework began to deconstruct literal interpretations of the Bible with significant ramifications for the biblical appreciation and literal learning of the Sudanese Dinka. Before *'unpacking'* the meaning of the language in the Bible it was necessary to study the stories of different cultures and learn about the nature of myths. By doing this students were meant to explore the nature of truth and come to an understanding about how truth could remain in the absence of facts. Iris was concerned for students without sound literacy skill commensurate for the level of bible study and the confusion it potentially created.

> *If kids don't have the reading, writing, conceptual thinking and the point of readiness to do that, that's a very difficult situation…*

There was an urgent sense to uphold the integrity of the subject matter taught and to acknowledge the learning differences of the Dinka students. Their cultural perceptions, previous religious instruction and developing literacy skills contributed to the way they received and accessed information.

Dinka student's abilities to access religious information and learning was enhanced by their memory and oral skills and compromised by their lack of English literacy. Newly arrived Dinka made to complete religious education assessments that utilized cognitive and English literacy skills were questioned. The suitability and delivery of highly academic curriculum to these was also questioned. Affective and spiritual outcomes for religious education on the other hand provided more positive prospects.

Learning differences characterized in the Dinka student's attitudes, values, emotions and faith responses were noted. The Dinka student's ability to inform other class members about social justice issues and the values of kindness and compassion encompassed attributes of Catholic school ethos and challenged popular thinking in support of meaningful change. The teachers, principals and Christian brothers spoke about aspects of this learning difference, which was best illustrated in Carmel's comment.

> *I guess when you talk about social justice and living like the school values we have, they* [the Dinka] *can put into perspective for kids the society that most students have been brought up in and make us realize we do take things for granted, and we are lucky, and realize that the people we talk about when we talk about Project Compassion…[3] these people are real people.*

The teacher's awareness of these qualities in her Dinka students illustrated desirable learning outcomes sought from all her class members. Affective and spiritual outcomes were generally long term, and were impossible to measure in a lesson or unit of work (Hyde and Rymarz, 2009). It can be noted from the above quote that the presence of the Dinka children drew attention to affective and spiritual outcomes of the religious education curriculum. At the point where a Dinka student informed his or her peers then he or she became the learned. Their lived experience and connectedness to family and other people (Hyde, 2008) showed the other young people different ways of valuing and living.

Prior and Current Religious Learning

Prior religious instruction and learning for the Dinka students revolved mainly around their experiences of Mass and Church activities. Young Dinka children's memories of prior religious learning were vague however the students from about eleven to sixteen years of age presented very vivid recollections of Bible stories taught and regular lessons received from parents, elders and catechists. Some received sacramental preparation for Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation and adolescent boys instructed in altar serving, remembered being groomed

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[3] Project Compassion is Caritas Australia's major annual fundraising and education campaign. Caritas Australia collects money every Lenten season leading up to Easter for poor and oppressed peoples worldwide

as likely candidates for the priesthood. The Dinka catechist, Stephen, said that the Dinka

students in his classes in the western suburbs were not aware they were learning about

religion in their mainstream schools, because they associated Christian religious education

with their presence in a Church or at Sunday school. He noted that the children were familiar

with particular lesson formats, which they associated with traditional forms of religious

instruction. Familiar teaching and learning strategies for the Dinka children included oral

teaching and learning with question and answer lesson formats incorporating rote and

memory learning. Children used to religious instruction in Sudan or Kakuma refugee camp

would have also been used to learning information from set catechisms written in English and

Dinka that were published in 1990. These learning methods and texts were prescribed in the

places where catechists were formally trained and taught religious instruction.

Stephen received one year, full-time, formal training to teach as a catechist in Kakuma

where he taught from 1992 to 2007, and said that his duties as a catechist were to prepare

Catholics for Baptism and Confirmation. Infants were baptized and their preparation included

the child's mother taking lessons. Confirmation preparation was delivered to eleven year olds

and adults. He noted that instructors taught about God, Jesus, Church and prayer according to

the catechism. Stephen mentioned that he continued to conduct religion classes in the western

suburbs for Dinka adults and children, and that the same format, content and sacramental

preparation for Baptism and Confirmation was delivered to those who wished to learn more

about Catholicism and become Catholic.

Dinka culture, tradition and worldview presented many learning differences and there

were some important issues for the teaching of religious education in Catholic schools. The

Dinka learned differently because their faith culture represented a recently evangelized

people. Evangelization is the term that describes the initial phase of a person's approach

towards Christian faith (Ryan, 2007). It was understood that the Dinka people have made their

preliminary encounter with the Christian story and accepted Christian beliefs about God,

Jesus Church and prayer. While the Dinka people in diaspora and in the western suburbs of Melbourne were in the process of receiving the Good News of Jesus Christ, their immersion in the Catholic faith and tradition represented various stages of development. They had a strong connection to the Church and prayer that was being guided by the visions of the Dinka elders, parents and their Christian communities. These visions incorporated acceptance of some change and also holding onto certain traditions. The Dinka Christian community shared and nurtured their belief in God and Jesus, which was demonstrated by their strong religiosity. Some aspects of their culture permeated their belief about afterlife. The adults also spoke about the deep respect they held for their ancestor's memory and it was conceivable that these affirmations of reverence would have a bearing on the Dinka child's worldview in relation to decisions, which affected life, family and prosperity. The children also drew significant knowledge about life from their personal experiences of the trauma of war, and these experiences had influenced their personal outlooks on life. Their learning differences became apparent through the interplay of cultural and worldview perspectives.

Dinka Student's Culture and Faith

In terms of the Dinka's recent evangelization towards Christianity and the religious education programming that is based on catechesis in Catholic schools, the suitability of this approach for the Dinka students may assume Catholic precepts of faith not fully known by the Dinka in the Christian communities to which they belong. Catechesis assumes deepened understanding of beliefs and practices of Christianity that is faithfully echoed in the religious community (Ryan, 2007). The Dinka's robust spirituality and fervent religiosity presupposed a faith development ready for a religious education curriculum that assumed catechesis in its teaching approach, however their prior religious learning and current practice was in the process of synthesising aspects of their culture within their faith expression.

As shown in earlier parts of this thesis, Dinka children and adolescents expressed a deep spirituality and committed religiosity. They illustrated non-worldliness and spoke non-

materialistically about the things that were important to them, valuing family and the common good. The heritage of their southern Sudanese culture demonstrated their celebration with music, song and dance. Their presence in Catholic schools not only represented cultural diversity but spiritual and religious diversity too, because their harsh life experiences had developed in them firm relationships with God and Jesus. The dichotomy in spiritual and religious outlooks created by their life experiences and faith expression, in comparison to other children and adolescents not affected by war, were represented in the factors that inhibit or promote spirituality.

Factors said to inhibit young people's spirituality were the preference for material things and revelling in consumer possibilities, the reliance on the superficiality and ego satisfaction, and the status that affirmed children in material excess and ignored their spiritual needs (Hyde, 2008). In comparison, factors promoting spirituality that presented in Dinka young people were their preference for the common good, their reliance on sincerity and honesty, their ability to express awe and humility and their awareness of the needs of others. Their community affirmed solidarity, and parents and elders were actively involved in their children's spiritual and religious development. The Dinka people celebrated family and community togetherness routinely and often, and their personal and communal activities focused on connection and relationship building. The general background of these young people demonstrated indifference to the excesses of affluence that marked the society they were now part of and disparity with the worldly values of others.

In comparison to the attributes of Dinka student's culture and faith, a theoretical application of the principles for spirituality in education presented concerns for educationalists in religious education. These highlighted areas of spiritual contrast between the Dinka students and those from Western cultural backgrounds. Spirituality in education sought to include areas of learning that developed or facilitated certain spiritual traits, for example, a sense of awe, wonder and mystery; the search for purpose in life; to respond to

challenging experiences in life such as beauty, suffering and death; and the ability to recognize the value and worth of individuals and to develop a sense of community (see full list on page 79). These learning tasks were identified as needs for young people to achieve a measure of spiritual connectedness.

The lack of grounded identity in young people from Western cultural backgrounds (Eckersley, 2008) and the need to develop sociological constructs to meet changing cultural meanings (Rossiter, 2010) for these students offered meaning for the context of their lived experience. The Dinka students whose lived experiences have met with the awe of confronting suffering and death, and have demonstrated strong values for community and family within their cultural context were not regarded as 'needy' in this area of education. The disparities between the lived experiences, cultural spiritualities and educational needs for these two groups highlighted the incongruity between the cognitive, affective and spiritual outcomes that would be required for them to successfully and effectively learn about spirituality and religious education in Catholic schools.

The teachers interviewed in this research commented positively about their Dinka students as being the 'moral compass' for class discussions concerning social justice issues. They positively influenced the opinions of their peers on this topic. Their concern and care for others was clearly noticed, and their actions of care challenged their classmates to consider others meaningfully. Comments from both principals interviewed about Dinka people's religiosity noted their appreciation for vocal and joyous participation at Mass, and voluntary attendance at Mass by adolescents. The teachers and principals were becoming aware of certain qualities about their Dinka students and accepted their attitudes, values and actions as characteristic of their being.   The extent of the Dinka student's spirituality and religiosity were not fully known, but collectively the teachers, principals and religious provided stories illustrating outstanding qualities about the Dinka's outlook on life, God, Jesus and Church. These are explored and discussed in the following section on psychosocial characteristics of

the war-affected Dinka. As young people learning about faith in God and Jesus in Catholic schools these students have illustrated their witness of Christ to others.

> *The General Directory for Catechesis suggested that it is important to know and understand the culture of students and to assess the extent to which it penetrates into their lives* (Congregation for the Clergy, 1998).

Thus, the imperative for teachers in Catholic schools would be to learn about their Dinka student's world, life, culture and history to fully appreciate the difference of their learning for the context of their faith development. The synthesis of Dinka culture, spirituality and religiosity with Christian faith offers rich opportunities for Catholic school communities to learn about the wisdom of God's revelation.

Psychosocial Characteristics of War-affected Dinka Children and Adolescents

Introduction

Psychosocial effects referred to the combined psychological and social effects of a given environment (Machel, 2001b). The social effects of war, for example, dislocation and trauma combined with psychological effects such as anxiety and anger presented various emotions, thoughts and behaviours in Dinka children and adolescents. Some of these young people demonstrated qualities, which allowed them to rise above adversity and were able to resolve their anxiety or anger. These children and adolescents typically presented positive spiritualities and strong religiosities. To a lesser extent, other Dinka young people unable to resolve certain fear or aggression demonstrated negative spiritualities or religiosities. The aim of this section of the chapter is to explore the spiritual and religious natures of six Dinka young people given their different psychosocial effects and distinguish particular attributes of resilience such as humour, resourcefulness and a sense of imagination, which have sustained and stimulated meaningful relationship with self, others and creation. Conversely psychosocial effects presenting aggression, sleep disturbances and stuttering are also explored.

The teachers and both Christian Brothers were asked about their witness or knowledge of a Dinka child or adolescent they knew who exhibited either strong positive or strong negative spirituality since coming to live in the western suburbs of Melbourne. They provided one negative and three positive stories of spirituality. Two other stories, one positive and one negative were supplied from a semi-structured interview with an adolescent, and the questionnaire respectively, and these provided useful contributions to the data collected at this stage of the research.

A strong positive spirituality was marked by sincere concerns for relationship to oneself, to God and to others. It was opened to higher values borne of a sense of inner freedom where trust in God pervades one's life, and responsibility for fellow humans and creation was unquestionably accepted. (de Vries-Schot et el., 2008). A negative spirituality was marked by a disoriented relationship to oneself, to God and others. Pathogenic forces that promoted the destruction of the spirit were characterised by personal aggression, depression and aggressive behaviours (Antonovsky, 1987).

Negative Spirituality

The following were two examples illustrating aspects of negative spirituality. Dominique, the primary school teacher described her observations of a young Dinka who was at the Catholic school for approximately five years. In a grade two special literacy lesson, some of the children began talking about their experience of school in Egypt. They told of their witness of a shooting by the Egyptian police on a school premises, and they all commented on the hatred Egyptians had for the black people. This story led to another, offered by the boy in question. He stammered as he described a scene where he witnessed his mother being stoned by Egyptian men as she tried to make her way to work. He said that he lived in a rough place and told of incidents where he'd witnessed several deaths and knifings. As it so happened a fire drill was initiated at the end of that class.

> *So the alarm went off and this particular student that I'm thinking of turned*
> *around to the others and said, "They heard us! I told you we shouldn't have*

talked about Egypt." I tried to explain, I said, "No, no! This is a practice for if there's a fire in the school."

As a result of the fire drill that particular child had become excessively nervous that day and feared retribution for breaking silence about the violent treatment of black people he'd witnessed. He did not stop shaking until he had realised the purpose of the alarm signal. Dominique described this child as athletically gifted but one who had developed pronounced anger management issues, and that by grades five and six the school community and his parents were aware that his aggressive behaviour was a serious problem. The teacher made the connection that his witness of violence and death may have contributed to his anxious and aggressive behaviour and she said that his spiritual wellbeing seemed to be impaired. Symptoms such as severe anxiety and aggression indicated the increased possibility that war experiences had affected the boy's ability to reconcile personal anger against others in a non-violent way (Machel, 2001a). His thoughts about God were not known but his war experiences had been traumatic.

In the context of the questions posed in chapter one on page 29 concerning the behaviours of war-affected children and their spirituality the following analysis applied. The demonstrated behaviours of this child were sourced from a semi-structured interview with a teacher, and the information gained from an open-ended questionnaire. The young boy the teacher described in this story had demonstrated negative aspects of spirituality. He suffered distress symptoms as a result of witnessing his mother being stoned and also witnessing a shooting by police at a school where he had been attending. Severe anxiety had developed and the aggressive behaviours he demonstrated at school indicated that his relationship to self and others were disconnected and disoriented. The inputs of violent knowledge he'd received in refugee diaspora generated toxic inspiration resulting in a synergy of maladaptive cognitive and affective information within the child (Fisher, 2009). The boy's anxious and aggressive behaviours were not necessarily indicative of a maladaptive spirituality that was unique to the

traumas of war, though the distressed symptoms he displayed were characteristic of one who had witnessed injury and persecution of a parent (Goldstein et el. 1997).

The second story of negative spirituality concerned a boy who by his own admission had stopped praying because he said that praying was ineffective. He also said he was angry with God because God had not given him relief when had asked for it in prayer.

> *Just like… if you ask like to have a good sleep… sometimes it comes opposite. It* [praying] *doesn't even make you go to sleep. Makes you stress about it. Like … sometimes you had the same dream yesterday, you keep having it. You stay up.*

This youth mentioned that he had stopped praying because of a tragic occurrence, which he did not wish to explain. He noted that it was because of this *"tragic thing"* he did not believe in religion and that he viewed sacraments as meaningless. He seemed to suffer from sleep disturbances and recurring bad dreams and mentioned that in the past when he was in Egypt he used to sleep a lot, making a link to his parent's concern for some illness he had suffered. Presently, he had detached himself from his family's religious practices of prayer and Mass attendance, and he said that he had confided to his mother that he no longer wanted to go to Mass. The youth had been disturbed by something tragic, discarded religion and suspended belief in God and prayer. In distancing himself from family and the Church community he marginalized his prospects of engaging in sustainable relationships that could promote his wellbeing. This boy mistrusted in God and his spirituality was marked by disoriented relationship to self, God and others.

Both these young people demonstrated behaviours that hampered their ability to sustain relationships with others. Their connectedness to themselves, God and to other people presented physical symptoms characterized by physical aggression and unwanted dreams respectively. The inner strength required to respond positively to traumatic events relied on personal attitudes and cognitive systems that encouraged optimism, humour and beliefs that promoted an individual's resilience (Freitas and Downey, 1998 and Masten & Coatsworth,

1991). The following stories of positive spirituality highlighted optimism for living and the positive influence of religious beliefs. These were guided by a firm trust in God, sincere concerns for self and others, an appreciation of higher values that connoted the common good, humility as a consequence of the experience of awe, compassion and empathy in response to physical and emotional need.

Positive Spirituality

The following account originated from a semi-structured interview with an adolescent girl previously introduced in this thesis named Simone, who spoke articulately about her experiences. While her story was a personal account of certain events, it was telling about her spiritual disposition. Simone was born and lived in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Even though she admitted that there were many fights in the camp, she said that she liked it there because she lived with her cousin and her grandma. The fighting in the camp was violent and she said that it occurred about three times a year. Simone recounted her witness of horrific attacks involving raids and shootings where people were severely injured or were killed. She saw dead people being taken away and people bloodied from having their legs cut off. She questioned why people were treated this way. In the hospital where people would go to hide after such attacks, she sat next to a distraught woman whose baby had died, and she cried with the woman for the loss of her child. In the malaise and confusion of an attack she became separated from her father and feared for his life. She anguished for his safety and rejoiced when he came to her unharmed. As she recalled the horror of these stories there was an element of emotional numbness or blunting (Baker, 1995) in her recount, but otherwise she was totally engaged and animated. Her memories of celebrating Christmas in Kakuma were joyful; happy gatherings of people focused on multiple attendances at Mass and prayer, special food, and visiting people. She spoke warmly about her relationships with family and friends. In all, Simone's recollections demonstrated some important indicators of a positive spirituality. She liked the place Kakuma because that's where all her family were together and

as violent as it was, she learnt to make sense of her existence there. Her delight in attending Mass and her focus on prayer demonstrated trust in God, while her witness of the horrors of war inspired awe and dread. She was humbled by the preciousness of life and shared in others' sorrow when life was debased. Her actions illustrated empathy and compassion through her crying and grieving. She related to people openly. These snippets of information indicated that Simone's religiosity and life were integrated.

Brother Peter spoke about a seventeen-year old girl who shall be named Margaret who had been living in Australia for two years. She came as an unaccompanied minor, had no mother or father with her and she lived with a male and female cousin who were younger than her and a twenty two year old cousin who represented the adult figure in the household. She attended a Catholic secondary school in the western suburbs and was in year eleven. Brother Peter said that he saw her at Mass nearly every Sunday and described her attitude as devotional, prayerful and attentive. She had also made a positive impression on her teachers at school where she successfully made a written and oral application to attend World Youth Day (WYD) in Sydney. When it was her turn to speak, she spoke nervously with a stutter and in spite of that the school chose to sponsor her attendance. Brother Peter said that he caught up with her quite by chance at WYD in Sydney and asked her what it meant for her to be there. She spoke of her faith being strengthened, which Brother Peter found exceptional because most people usually spoke about the experience of meeting people. In conclusion Brother Peter said that it was difficult to know about another person's faith but in Margaret's case he thought that there was strong reason to believe that she had most certainly experienced violence, separation, loss and homelessness. He said this about Margaret.

> *Somehow* [Margaret] *has come through it with a sense that God is important to her, that going to Church is important, that being active in her Catholic school is important…* [Margaret] *has no parent figure with her to give her an example of faith or lived out faith. Somehow she has acquired it along the way…*

The social effects of war on Margaret were in altered relationships that she had experienced due to loss and separation of immediate family. Further social effects extended to the economic dimension of her existence living with three other teenagers and a young adult to manage the household, which represented a precarious financial situation. Psychologically, the effects of dislocation, loss, and separation and possibly death of family members were not impediments to sustaining her sense of self-esteem, her relationship with God, or her ability to link with like-minded people. (de Vries-Schot et al., 2008). However, Margaret stuttered and this condition may be attributed to the experience of stressful situations during childhood. There were many other contributing factors including genetic, environmental and congenital conditions responsible for stuttering and the suffering of trauma cannot be applied exclusively as a reason for the condition (Guitar, 2008). There were many psychosocial factors that could have had detrimental effects on Margaret's spirituality but faith in God, herself and others predominated.

Brother Anthony cited a case of an unaccompanied Dinka youth who was referred to him by a social worker who was keen to arrange the boy's living conditions. The boy's school had to be arranged before his accommodation because he particularly wanted a Catholic education. Brother Anthony was aware that he was not a regular 'Church goer' but he had seen him at Mass now and then. He observed that the youth went to Church especially to connect with the Dinka community at the parish and he mixed well with everyone. Brother Anthony said he was one of the 'Lost Boys of Sudan' and had been separated from his family. Independently he made his way to Egypt and then a family friend sponsored his trip to Australia, but was not able to accommodate him once he had arrived. Brother Anthony mentioned that the boy was keen to mix with other young people from the Edmund Rice Network and shared his story of survival with them if invited to by the Brothers. He attended a Catholic secondary school in the western suburbs and attended class to the end of year

twelve. After several years here in Australia he located his mother and five sisters who were living in Africa and has rejoined them in Egypt.

The social aspects of his loss and separation from his family, and the possible estrangement had not stopped him from rejoining his family. Emotionally he wanted to be with them. For his own benefit whilst he was living in Australia he wanted to be educated in a Catholic school. Brother Anthony attributed this need to keep a close connection to his cultural roots and as well as being involved with the Church and the Catholic school. It was his way of keeping connected. As one of the 'Lost Boys of Sudan' he would have suffered and endured many deprivations and he had developed a great sense of perseverance. In terms of his religiosity he attended Mass and Church activities and became known to his people and others. His spirituality was marked by his will to survive and be reunited with his family.

A brief story about a year seven girl who shall be named Pauline in Carmel's class, (introduced earlier in this chapter) demonstrated a spirituality that acknowledged the preciousness of life. Carmel had been absent because her grandmother had died and when she returned, Pauline inquired as to why she had been away. Saddened by the news, she offered her condolences and gave Carmel a hug. Carmel told her that her grandmother was eighty-two, and the young girl was gratified to hear she had lived to such an old age, adding that her grandmother had been killed along with other family members at a younger age. Pauline encouraged Carmel to be glad for her grandmother's long life, and while it was painful for her to reflect on the girl's wisdom, Carmel said that she realised how positive it had been for her to have the benefit of her grandmother's being at her age. The credibility of Pauline's spiritual understanding was reflected in her empathy for Carmel's sense of loss and grief, and her wisdom about the gift of having family living to old age. She had connected with her teacher at emotional and cognitive levels and its effects were positive. The social effect of war on Pauline was that she had experienced the loss and grief of multiple family members through

senseless killing, and from a spiritual perspective this adolescent was oriented towards appreciating life in an existential sense.

Psychosocial Characteristics of pre and post Migration Stressors

Some of the psychosocial characteristics of Dinka children and adolescents were pre-migration stressors. This study located the witness of violence and death; the experience of displacement and homelessness; the separation and loss of family; the deprivations of food, clean water and adequate shelter and illness with a lack of proper medication. Symptoms arising from these stressors were anxiety, sleep disturbances, aggressive behaviour (in older children and adolescents), and possibly stuttering. Some emotional numbness or blunting was demonstrated when children and adolescents were reliving trauma. These psychosocial characteristics and symptoms of pre-migration stressors cohered with other literature and studies (Machel Review, 2001b and McCloskey et el., 1995). In many cases the Dinka children born and raised in Kakuma refugee camp presented positive adjustment to their poor living conditions because their camp life was generally settled. Simone said she liked Kakuma even though it got violent there. Two of the adolescents who participated in the questionnaire (analysed in chapter four of this thesis) also mentioned that they were settled when they were living in Kakuma. The catechist, Stephen, lived in Kakuma for fifteen years where he received his medical training and then practiced as a nursing aide for the Internal Rescue Committee from America, as well as conducted catechetic classes at a Catholic parish within the camp. Simone's story attested that Kakuma was a very harsh place to live in but it was also noted that no detrimental effects were apparent, given the social living conditions she experienced.

Post-migration stressors for children and adolescents included independent living arrangements for some older adolescents, financial insecurity, premature undertaking of adult responsibilities and no access to caregivers. These post-migration stressors applied to a small

group of unaccompanied orphaned or abandoned adolescents in the Dinka community in the western suburbs.

<div align="center">*Resilience*</div>

The children's ability to process and make meaning of the stressors they encountered required resilience. The 'Lost Boy from Sudan' Brother Anthony spoke about demonstrated a number of attitudes and cognitive systems that promoted the development of his resilience. As a lost boy, resourcefulness and imagination would have offered him a means of sustainable survival. In the group situation he needed to think of ways to become valuable so that he promoted everyone's chances for survival success. As an unaccompanied minor living independently in the western suburbs of Melbourne, he needed to enlist the support of significant adults to help him (Hill, 2005). He knew that he wanted to learn in a Catholic school and be where other Dinka people gathered. In this way he generated a network of people who knew him and helped him. The competencies he needed to develop and to survive in both these environments were indicative of a process where he learned to take risks and overcome odds (Anderson, 2004). Margaret's situation was similar to the 'Lost Boy' however her approach to resilience was different. As an unaccompanied minor in a strange land she needed to be sure of her purpose for living. She found meaning in her life through her relationship with God and that experience motivated her to make difficult decisions like applying for sponsorship to WYD and presenting her case orally to a panel (de Vries-Schot el al., 2008). This was especially challenging given her speech impediment. In addition, to managing the serious stresses of prematurely having to undertake adult responsibilities as an adolescent in an unfamiliar cultural environment, Margaret focused on her religious and spiritual life. Her reserves of self-discipline would have been tested as she negotiated getting herself off to school every day, going to Mass on Sundays and as she looked after a house with three other young people. Another aspect of resilience was evidenced in the capacity for someone to recover after prolonged adversity (Anderson, 2004). The young girl Simone, who lived in a

refugee camp, witnessed horrible violence and left behind family dear to her, offered the kind of optimism that promoted her self-esteem, trust in God and empathy for others. Another young adolescent, Pauline, lost family through the killing of war and offered empathy and compassion. The concern and kindness she showed her teacher highlighted her emotional maturity. These forms of resilience assumed positive outcomes and demonstrated physical, mental, emotional and spiritual strengths. The reserves of positivism and empathy in the outlooks of these young persons characterised an ego-resilience (Blecham, 2000).

Resilience then may be viewed as a process, a capacity or an outcome. The 'Lost Boy,' Margaret, Simone and Pauline's stories illustrated the way the various approaches to resilience may be understood. The qualities applicable to these young people's attitudes and cognitive systems, for mediating resilience for any of the approaches described, were marked by openness to experience, sound reason and humility.

Conclusion

The Dinka children and adolescents presented with certain issues and needs which were pertinent for the applicability of their religious education and curriculum programming in general. The Dinka students were oral based learners from mainly non-literate backgrounds and presented with 'high need' literacy learning. Unrealistic standards of competency applied to their learning set many students up for limited success. These learning differences were also pronounced when reading and writing activities were integral to lessons and assessment. Reading and writing activities for the Dinka primary school students were challenging but there was some scope to vary learning activities. The secondary school religious education framework was prescriptive and less flexible and in some ways obstructed the learning and progress of the Dinka students.

Issues relating the suitability of cognitive outcomes for primary and secondary school students in religious education referred to their competence to access and learn from written resources, to write thoughts and ideas clearly, as well as to read from set texts such as *To*

Know, Worship and Love. For Dinka students set competency levels based on age rather than ability led to unrealistic expectations of achievement in religious education. Non-literal interpretation of Scripture and the ability to understand and apply knowledge of language forms such as myths generated concern among secondary school teachers. Some primary and secondary school students attended Dinka catechist religious instruction and sacramental preparation classes. These classes were based on teaching methods, which utilized and enhanced their abilities of memory and oral learning.

Learning differences associated with affective and spiritual outcomes found high levels of empathy, understanding, wisdom and Christian practice where applicable. The Dinka children and adolescents offered significant contributions to religious education lessons in Catholic schools. Their witness of serious injustice in the world provided a clear lens for other students not affected by war to see and appreciate the real issues associated with social injustice and materialism. Their potential contribution to the Catholic school and religious education in terms of their strong religiosity, ready engagement for dancing, singing and music, and their spiritual awareness for the value and purpose of prayer were largely overlooked. In many cases, these very religious young people created a disparity created by the values they held and those of their peers who were not affected by the experiences of war. Their unique attitude for valuing and living set themselves apart from others more worldly.

Prior religious learning especially remembered by the adolescent Dinka provided springboards for learning religious education. The teachers were not aware of the previous learning that Dinka children in religious education classes had experienced. Affective and spiritual outcomes for religious education were informed by their resource of life rich experiences that referred to the appreciation of life and 'their being' rather than 'their having.'

Psychosocial characteristics of war affected Dinka children presented variously in individual students. Six stories concerning Dinka student's spirituality included two of a negative complexion and four of a positive spirituality. Psychological effects affecting

emotion, behaviour, thought, memory and learning ability registered anxiety, aggression, sleep disturbances, emotional numbness and possibly stuttering. The social effects precipitating these symptoms emanated from the student's experiences and witness of death, violence, separation, loss, grief and material and emotional deprivations. The psychosocial impact of war violence for teaching religious education in Catholic schools illustrated pre and post migration stressors affecting the Dinka student's physical, mental and spiritual health.

In the following chapter findings relating to all of the aims of the research are presented, and the findings noted in this chapter are examined and correlated with Catholic education goals for learning religious education in Catholic schools. The assumptions implicit in these goals are noted and the ramifications they entail for Dinka learners are presented. The implications arising from the incongruities between Dinka children's experiences of war and Catholic religious assumptions in schools are discussed and recommendations offered.

CHAPTER EIGHT

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the spirituality and religiosity of the Dinka children

and adolescents in Catholic schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria. The

research set out to discover the effects of war on these young people's spirituality and

religiosity in an effort to reconcile Catholic religious education's assumptions about teaching

religion to those whose everyday experiences had encompassed the trauma, dislocation and

suffering of war. The first aim of this research was to discover the kinds of trauma these

children and adolescents had experienced, whether these experiences had affected their

spirituality, and if so, in what ways. The second aim involved the investigation of the Dinka

young people's perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer. Complementary to this, the

third aim enquired into the learning background that coincided with their perceptions. The

fourth and final aim examined the nature of the issues and needs surrounding the Dinka

children's and adolescents' psychosocial dispositions, resettlement and Catholic religious

education in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Recommendations arising from the data

accumulated in pursuit of these aims are then proposed. This chapter also provides a

discussion of the significance of the research, its limitations and the topics for further research

to which it may lead. Finally personal key learnings about this research are offered, discussed

and related to the areas of the Dinka refugees, their culture and tradition, their spirituality and

religiosity, their Catholicity and Catholic religious education.

Summary of Literature

The review of literature sought to inform the following contentions. Children are capable of

expressing themselves spiritually (Hay and Nye, 2006; Hyde, 2005a and Mountain, 2005) and

there are a variety of perspectives on this. In particular the *experiential mode* (Keating, 2000)

was identified and frameworks and schemas were sourced from Champagne (2001), Hyde

(2008) and Kessler (2000). The spiritual models that centred on articulating these realities in children's experiences were especially pertinent in understanding Dinka children's spirituality, as theirs had been influenced by the trauma of suffering and war (Sommer, IIEP, 2005 and Moro, 2004). The Dinka children and adolescent refugees from the south of Sudan who attended Catholic schools in Australia had realities relating to their African culture and tradition (Lienhardt, 1987 and Deng, 1984) and personal war experiences (Yath, 1991; Moro, 2004; Johnson, 2002; Parker, 2002 and Crisp, 1999). It was clear that these children would have a different worldview, and that their conscious awareness of whom and where they were in the cosmos would influence their spirituality and religiosity, in contrast to those children who had not been affected by similar circumstances. Literature about children's thoughts of God (Duffy, 2002), Jesus (Aylward nee Walshe, 2005), Church (Dixon, 2005) and prayer (Mountain, 2005) provided a spiritual and religious landscape to compare the Dinka young person's perceptions in the same area. The effects of war on children and adolescents in general (Machel, 2001b; Armstrong, 2002 and Moses et el. 2003) offered a context for exploring the kinds of trauma they experienced. In light of this, there was a moral imperative to nurture spiritual strength in children who have suffered prolonged trauma (Hill, 2005). The foci of resilience (Anderson, 2004), posttraumatic effects (Tedeschi et al, 2004) and psychosocial impact (Machel, 1996) were highlighted in reference to opportunities that provided spiritual nurture and growth from what otherwise was cited as chaotic situations (Watters, 2008). In addition to these, complementary studies citing children born and raised in refugee camps (Miller, 1996) and those who have fled war zones (McCloskey, Southwick, Fernanndez-Esquer and Locke, 1995 and Kostelny and Wessells, 2004) reported variously on the effects on young people's psyches ranging from positive adjustment experienced to psychosocial distress brought about by pre and post migration stressors. Coping mechanisms (Freitas and Downey, 1998) that aided resilience (Anderson, 2004) and its process (Masten & Coatsworth 1991) offered resourceful young people flexible responses to manage their stress.

Ego-resilience (Blecham, 2000) characterized by high levels of empathy, reasoning and openness provided indicators for envisaging resilience in terms of a developmental process, a coping mechanism and the capacity for recovery. Important coping behaviours also included facing the reality of loss through the expression of grief and the acceptance of change (Frater-Mathieson, 2004). The management of loss and the flexibility to meet its demands inculcated the resilient spirit (Silvermann, 2000). The implications for teaching religious education in Catholic schools in light of these issues, and others that concerned the Dinka children and adolescents' spiritual and religious development were many. Criteria for assessing *'mature faith'* (de Vries-Schot et al., 2008) included the free acceptance to do "good," the value of living non-materialistically and the search for life's meaning through relationship with God in prayer. A theoretical examination of spirituality in education (Wright, 2000) focused learning needs in young people from Western cultural backgrounds (Eckersley, 2008 and Rossiter, 2010) and highlighted possible contrast with Dinka children and adolescent's spiritualities. The dependence of curricula including religious education on teaching and learning through language literacy skills in secondary, and to a lesser extent in primary schools (CEOM, 2008 & 2005), highlighted issues of education marginalization where students such as those from the south of Sudan, entered education systems with a non-literate background (Sangster, 2002) and were expected to perform successfully in literacy-based learning programmes (Oliver et al., 2009). Good practice interventions proposed by Matthews (2008) suggested that a whole school approach to organizational processes and structures, policy, procedure, pedagogy and curricula be adopted to circumvent a complacent 'fourth world' mentality that did not challenge the detrimental issues which confronted refugee newcomers to learn with a sense of achievement (Dooley, 2009). From a psychosocial perspective the young people's potential to be, and remain resilient given their pre and post-migration stressors, needed to be affirmed, afforded our understanding, and given special consideration and determined effort to redress imbalances (Heptinstall et el., 2004).

The Spirituality of War Affected Dinka Children and Adolescents

The first research aim explored the traumatic life experiences of the Dinka and how these affected their spirituality. The participants in the research all had experienced dislocation and were familiar with the fears and insecurities that living this way encompassed. The study found that young children linked their experiences of war with the sadnesses of life such as sickness, separation and loss of family. They were exposed to dangerous life-threatening situations during the course of their dislocation and they were aware of injustice and indignity and the harshness it brought to bear. Adolescents specifically included experiences of the death of family members due to sickness or violence, and first hand accounts of being caught in the crossfire of a raid or fighting. Parents and elders were aware that children suffered from hunger, exposure to the harsh natural elements, avoidable sickness and the separation or loss of family and others. Their traumatic life experiences were documented, and the relationship of these experiences to their spirituality was of particular interest.

In chapter four the notion of a 'unitive sense of being' was introduced. This term described the Dinka children and adolescents' strong connection to family. The fact that all Dinka participants, independently and unanimously, nominated family as the value that mattered most to them, was significant. Donaldson (1992) contended that what a person intellectualized as important, their sense of value was characterized in their actions. If family was imaged as important and sensed as the value of being, then the characterization of the purpose of family entered the imagination. The wellbeing of the family relied on the willing service of its members who envisioned a common goal that transcended personal self-interest. Disassociation from the fear or loss of personal identity (Donaldson, 1992) was required to become one with the family. Thus if the child, adolescent and parents alike were emotionally responsive to the needs of the family, then as individuals they demonstrated altruistic behaviours, which highlighted a spiritual sensitivity that was earnest for making meaning of

life. Their spirituality represented by this connection of self for others, focused their energy for life in a positive way.

Moore's (1990) psychological approach to a Christological understanding envisioned Jesus Christ as the model of perfect humanity and perfect divinity, who demonstrated authentic human expression. This expression exemplified how humanity liberated itself from the self-absorption of the ego. The liberation of desire freed the individual from materialistic, self-interested want and the urge to have power. In renouncing want and power Christ modelled the ability to transcend personal self-interest, do God's will, promote life values and pursue the common good. In chapter two of this thesis examples of these were provided. Notably these acts required self-denial and the letting go of one's personal identity. For the Dinka, expressions of Christ's model were illustrated in their stories and drawings. For them, life was pursued actively by being physically with and part of their family. The importance of being one with family for the Dinka was the awareness that what was given and shared in family was a respected and dignified life.

In the context of Dinka children and adolescents' spirituality, those directly affected by war articulated and demonstrated a spiritual sensitivity of cohesive family orientation. They drew meaning about themselves in relationship with their family. They understood that family sustained the individual and that their purpose as a member of this group identity was in promoting its wellbeing. In the task of looking after each other they learned to care, be responsible, be patient and become emotionally responsive to each other's needs. Spirituality borne of a relationship that sensed a unique value in family, and where the individual had learned not to 'want' taught them altruistic awareness. Lived experiences bound by hardship, tuned children's senses to become emotionally responsive to the needs of family members and others. Thus the spiritual connection was 'unitive,' because the value that had been imaged by the individual, signified a group identity not a single identity, and because the

lived experience had made them acutely aware of "need" as opposed to the pursuit of personal "want" that precluded the common good.

Religiosity and Resilience

The second aim of this research was to discover how the Dinka child and adolescent perceived God, Jesus, Church and prayer. The findings from this aim were explained and discussed in chapter four of this thesis, and in brief they presented a case for the presence of a strong religiosity. Dinka children and adolescents' perceptions of God equally acknowledged God's immanence and transcendence. Both groups personally related to Jesus in prayer and viewed him as a positive influence in their lives, and significantly the majority of them attended Mass and were involved in Church activities. Dinka children and adolescents prayed often and routinely and articulated their personal relationship in prayer to God and or Jesus. These characteristics of the young Dinka's religiosity were indicative of a commitment to strong developing faith.

Studies focusing on resilient outcomes in young people (Freitas & Downey, 1998; Masten & Coatsworth, 1999; & Blecham, 2000) offered mechanisms such as humour, optimism, resourcefulness, flexibility, empathy and responsiveness as indications of health resilience. This research suggested that the young Dinka's fervent religiosity was an indication of the presence of hope illustrated by their regular and routine prayer ritual and that this hope was also an expression of resilience. Brueggemann (1986) cited the 'hopeful imagination' of the psalmists Jeremiah, Ezekial and 2 Isaiah lamentations as the humble heart seeking right relationship with God. This act of humility in the presence of hope signified the seeking of regenerative newness. For Brueggmann (1986), the meaning of prayer was hope and its function was to transform. For the Dinka children and adolescents their collective and private expressions of prayer at Church and home were of praise, worship, asking forgiveness and offering special intention. These prayers focused their awareness of and relationship with God. The adolescents talked about feeling the real presence of God and Jesus during personal

times of trial, and they expressed their hopes for receiving strength and resolution. They also prayed with their cultural community and this was an act of hope and faith that offered solidarity. In prayer, the Dinka young people were personally strengthened and offered strength to others. Prayer as a vehicle of hope and a function of transformation offered trust in God. Hope, trust and transformation, then, were empowering qualities concomitant with resilience.

<div align="center">Evangelization of the Dinka</div>

The third aim of this research was to investigate how the Dinka children and adolescents learned about God, Jesus, Church and prayer in their country of origin, and since arriving in Australia. Their sources of learning were variously experienced and the different routes that Dinka refugees took to exit Africa, as well as the formal and informal learning backgrounds to which they were exposed, had a bearing on the ways in which their children learned about God, Jesus, Church and prayer.

In sourcing the Dinka children's and adolescents' religious learning background, the religious changes that occurred in Sudan's recent history were an important background. Elders, grandparents and parents influenced the religious beliefs of the current generation of Dinka young people, so a brief historical account of their experiences was relevant.

From the 1950's to current times (2010), the Dinka people have been subjected to a rapid and complex chain of events that have seen various religious changes in southern Sudan and in their refugee experience. In the late 1940's and 1950's Christian missionaries operated unfettered, in the south of Sudan. The Missionary's Code of 1905 designated each Christian denomination an area of operation so that both Catholic and Protestant traditions were represented and taught in the South. A general policy of minimum interference was adopted by the missionaries where Christian converts embraced the new religion but remained traditionally embedded in their tribal economy and culture (Deng, 1972). The British left and independence was claimed in 1954 but by 1958 the independent government had been

overthrown and military rule was set up. The Arab Muslim majority held the balance of

power in the north of Sudan and during the 1960's they aimed to convert the people of the

South to Islam. Deng (1972) commented that in 1957 missionary schools were nationalized

for fear they were turning the southern peoples of Sudan against the north. In 1962 the

Missionary Societies Act brought Christian missionary activity to a halt and by 1964 all

foreign missionaries and priests were expelled from the South. Arabic Islamic-oriented

schools were opened in the southern parts of Sudan (Deng, 1972). Relative peace was

experienced between 1972 and 1983 but the Dinka people were in turmoil over their religious

preferences as evidenced in this traditional poem written at the time (Deng 1972, p. 157).

> The Bishop is the one who orders the land;
> Father, Master, the land is threatened by pagans;
> The land is threatened by Mohammedans.
> Oh what will the Christians do?
> I turn this way and it is the evil spirit
> And Mohammedans are facing East.
> They are facing where the sun comes from.
> What misfortune, what misfortune?
> We are tangled with bad spirits,
> Some have evil eyes,
> Some inflict evil spells,
> Some are evil men who disturb the innocent,
> The land is confused;
> The land has its head in a knot.

Interviews with Dinka elders, parents and adults noted the 1980's and 1990's as a time of

religious confusion. Some Dinkas were Muslim but it was thought that many became or

returned to Christianity. In the main the southern peoples of Sudan, including the Dinka,

viewed the Christian missionaries as guardians. During the second civil war (1983-2005)

Dinka interviewees recalled that they received spiritual care from Christian bishops whilst

they sought refuge in the forests. Through all this turmoil Christianity was taught formally

and informally to the Dinka people who were willing to listen and learn about Jesus Christ,

though some remained Muslim, and some others were indifferent.

Towards 2000 the religious experiences that accompanied Dinka migration through

parts of north Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Egypt varied greatly. In Kakuma Refugee

Camp, catechists were formally trained and commissioned by the bishop to teach and prepare Catholic converts for Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. In Egypt designated religious teachers would conduct Christian religious instruction in Dinka homes, and during the course of dislocation and journey parents would teach their children to pray and would go to Church when they could. Some adolescent youth recalled being schooled in Islam and then attending Mass with the family at other times. Others remembered serving as altar boys and being groomed for the priesthood. For the Dinka children and adolescents who attended Catholic schools in the western suburbs their past religious experiences and sources of religious learning came from participation at Mass, in the sacraments, and through prayer and lessons with parents or catechists. In the western suburbs in early 2000 religious instruction and sacramental preparation with Dinka catechists were conducted with Dinka children and adults upon request.

The Dinka people demonstrated strong religiosity and deep spirituality. Their traditional religious system of beliefs incorporated the veneration of cattle and oxen as the perfect victims, giving meaning for their existence in relationship with their one 'Supreme Force' they named Nhialic. In terms of the Dinka's Christian evangelization they applied fervent religious practices and had a deep spiritual base from which they drew their understandings about God, Jesus, Church and prayer. Aspects of these background experiences have influenced the Dinka children and adolescents' understanding and encounter of the Christian faith, and furthermore, the process of sharing and nurturing this faith should be accounted for inclusive of these various influences.

<div align="center">Inclusive Catholic Religious Education</div>

The fourth aim of this research was to detail implications arising from the incongruities between the Dinka children's experiences of war and the Catholic religious education assumptions in their schools. Two implications presented as significant outcomes for this study. The first arose from the Dinka children's disrupted or non-existent schooling, oral-

based learning and non-literate backgrounds. The war disrupted the Dinka children's education. Schooling during wartime was limited and those who attended were either placed in overcrowded classrooms or took lessons under a tree in a field, learning to read and write in Arabic or learning lessons by rote. Few used books and oral-based learning predominated. Their non-literate background was not a consequence of war but it compounded other learning issues that originated from wartime. Oral-based learning and disrupted or non-existent schooling predisposed the Dinka child and adolescent as 'high need' learners, and religious education frameworks drawing heavily on reading and writing skills for assessment limited the possibilities for their academic success.

Catholic religious education assumptions about pre-requisite cognitive skills refer to literacy accomplishment commensurate with academic levels of achievement. The CEOM (2008 & 2005) frameworks provided objectives underlying standards for specific units of work, which were planned as lessons by religious education teachers. The disconnect between the war-affected group of students and the learning assumptions for non-war affected students was the expectation that all students successfully learned and could be assessed via literacy-based activities, and that age-determined levels of development and achievement were appropriate for students with disrupted or non-existent schooling. The outcome of this assumption marginalized the Dinka children's or adolescents' potential to grow in faith through knowledge and presented learning assumptions limiting their success.

The second implication highlighting incongruence between war-affected Dinka and non-war affected students for the learning of religious education in Catholic schools was the strong spiritual and religious dispositions that the Dinka students demonstrated. Teachers and principals were aware of their Dinka student's sapiential awarenesses but these were not widely credited as a contribution in educational terms. Their committed religious practices were noticed but were also overlooked in terms of the affective outcomes that could have applied in certain areas of the curriculum. The spiritual giftedness of many Dinka students

focused their counter-cultural, non-materialistic approach to living with their strong sense of family, justice, honesty, empathy and belief in the benefits for the common good. The Dinka students had a different way of viewing life and their experiences of war connected them to self and others in regard to these qualities of living. Their perceptions of God, Jesus and prayer were demonstrated in their actions such as regular Mass attendance and routine prayer.

Religious education assumptions accommodated children and adolescents who were not war-affected, and did not express the feeling for family 'unitively' or the pursuit of the common good (Hyde, 2008) to the same extent as the war-affected Dinka students. The assumptions about the context of every day life experiences and the personal response of the activity of God in life and creation (CEOM, 2008 & 2005) encapsulated in the CEOM goals for primary and secondary curriculums were incongruent with the broader contexts of mystery, complexity, confusion and awe that were found relevant and significant to the Dinka student's experiences.

Recommendations Arising From the Research

The following recommendations are offered in the light of the research outcomes presented. In the realm of spiritual awareness of war-affected children and adolescents, education professionals in Catholic schools, including principals, teachers and counsellors need to become familiar with the Dinka students' lived experiences as a path for understanding the way their senses have made meaning of life. The students' emotional responsiveness to core values concerning human dignity, justice issues, and the common good, management of natural and human resources, offer opportunity for dialogue where the Dinka students could make significant contributions in religious education and in inclusive curriculums. Overall, awareness of the Dinka students' trauma and the ways they have responded to it can contribute to informed, strategic lesson and unit planning for religious education.

The Dinka students' earnest relationships with God, Jesus and Mary were illustrated in their current regular Mass attendance and prayerful attitudes and routines. Recommendations

focused on fostering incultured religious experience, cultural exchange and inclusive teaching strategies. Cultural religious exchanges invited awareness, appreciation, information and knowledge, where school communities engaged in such activities. To assist in fostering greater involvement between the Sudanese Dinka community and the school community, non-Dinka students could be invited to attend Dinka Masses when given an invitation by an elder. Afterwards, oral or written reports presented at school via different media highlighting positive experience would promote awareness and profile of the Dinka's contribution to the school and parish community. At the school level, cultural exchange and profile would be enhanced through non-tokenistic religious presentations of music, song and liturgical dance at liturgies and school Masses where appropriate. At the classroom level strategies and opportunities for prayer and Scripture development could be explored through regular, routine prayer sessions, prayer brainstorming that invited class compositions on a given theme to be written up by the teacher or the teacher reading a particular text from Scripture with detailed oral recall from students. The focus of these examples would be to provide equal learning opportunity and to raise the Dinka student profile where prayer and Scripture were shared.

Dinka evangelization during the latter part of the twentieth century has experienced complex and rapid change in southern Sudan and in the Dinka refugee diaspora. Recommendations referring to the Dinka students' prior religious learning acknowledges these influences and found that Mass participation and regular prayer were common background experiences for the current generation of Dinka children and adolescents in dislocation and refugee diaspora. Variables here ranged from no religious instruction to formal instruction including sacramental preparation. The recommendation from this finding suggests a simple religious background profiling of Sudanese refugee students to ascertain their Christian tradition, their parent's or guardian's religion, the religious instruction the child received, including their involvement in sacramental programmes, if any and the

sacraments they may have received. This information would assist appropriating catechesis or evangelization approaches to their faith development.

Taking into account learning differences bound in the Dinka student's developing literacy skills, their cultural perceptions and prior religious learning the following recommendations are offered. Both primary and secondary school Dinka students need to be able to access lesson information through different styles of learning. Hyde and Rymarz (2009) have suggested that the curriculum in primary religious education can be differentiated to accommodate students' various learning styles. The preferred styles for Dinka students would include activities that utilized oral-based learning, music, and song and dance. In the primary sector the following teaching strategy serves as an example for differentiating the religious education curriculum and presents suitable learning styles for the Dinka students. Howard Gardner's (1993), Multiple Intelligences (MI) utilized sets of abilities pertaining to separate intelligences. They included verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily kinaesthetic and more recently naturalist and existentialist intelligences. The sets of abilities that could effectively engage the Dinka students' natural talents would include musical-rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily kinaesthetic and naturalist intelligences. These outlets would allow the Dinka students to explore and access religious information effectively in mediums that reflected their preferred learning styles. Incorporation of all MI's in religious education units of work would be inclusive of all students' preferred styles and would offer engagement and challenge in learning without overburdening underrepresented learning styles in the curriculum. Secondary school religious education curriculum offered less flexibility in teaching strategies and approaches however every opportunity to engage Dinka adolescents in religious education with their preferred learning styles should be prioritized. Their abilities to recall and retrieve knowledge from memory should be harnessed so as to incorporate their proclivity for music, song and dance and religious compositions through story, Scripture or movement sequences.

Their oral-based learning skills could also be used to develop skills in public speaking such as oral presentations and debates. Their ability to create three-dimensional figures from clay can be used to demonstrate religious understandings from Scripture, ritual, the sacraments and Traditions of the Catholic Church. The main objective for both primary and secondary school Dinka students in trying to accommodate their learning differences would be to develop cognitive abilities through preferred learning styles as well as literacy, and promote desirable affective and spiritual aspects of their learning to their peers in the forum of the classroom. Teaching approaches responding to the Dinka student's sapiential awareness involves carefully 'listening to' and 'listen for' (Champagne, 2001) the spiritual insights they reveal in their discussions, and the spiritual dimensions they reveal about themselves in their daily living. Observations such as these require teachers to familiarize themselves with students' backgrounds so that they may appreciate the integrity of what the student values, before endeavouring to deliver the content set out in the curriculum guidelines. Such familiarity includes prior religious learning, culture, traditions and worldview. These help to locate suitable learning approaches for content and teaching strategies that best served their learning needs.

Significance of the Research

This research explored the spirituality and religiosity of war-affected Dinka children and adolescents in the context of Catholic schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne. It was significant because the area of spirituality, religiosity and war-affected children was largely unchartered and it was hoped that the information offered here provided seminal thought for understanding the effects of trauma, dislocation and suffering on the young person's spirituality and religiosity. The research sought to address cultural dissonance by acknowledging the spiritual uniqueness and religious practice of the Dinka and give voice to them in their marginalized state. It also recognized the unique spiritual contribution of Dinka people and their children, as they came to learn about the Catholic Church and its beliefs and

practices. Finally this research has significance for its current application to addressing issues in Catholic secondary schools where its present enrolments who are Dinka belong to the war-affected demographic.

Limitations

This researcher accepts the limitations of the following aspects that were relevant to the study and not included. The Dinka children and adolescents participants chosen for this study were sourced from family environments. Thus the spirituality and religiosity that this related was specifically limited to their lived experience within a family context and their refugee journeys. Questioning to these participants did not include the themes of war child soldiers, sexual abuse, orphaned, abandoned or unaccompanied minors and it is understood that these themes would represent information significant for investigation into the nature of child spirituality. Also, there were several other locations in the Melbourne metropolitan area and rural Victoria where the study could have been pursued. The study was limited to the western suburbs because while it represented only one area, from a logistical perspective, the numbers were sufficient to select several case studies from several sites. The Dinka's command of English speaking and comprehension skills were considered as possible shortcomings for the integrity and credibility of the research. Carefully worded questions were devised for the interviews and questionnaires for participants. The contact with participants was mainly one-to-one except for the focus group, which was specifically modified to include activities that were more suitable for young children. This session was video as well audio recorded which improved the reliability of the transcription. Interpreting services were provided as required, and during interviews the researcher was attentive to repeat answers of participants where meanings suggested ambiguity. The researcher's connection to the community and the position of trust held within it accepted the strength and weakness this offered to the study. As strength, the study benefitted from the researcher's trusted position and the open door that was offered to enter this tight-knit community. As a weakness the researcher understood that

the professional relationship she shared with many of the participants, could be construed as detrimental to the reliability of the data and subsequent outcomes, in the event of participants assuming the need to give perceived correct answers to the researcher. The use of various questioning and interview techniques including participant recounts, focused, open-ended, closed and probing questions aimed to redress shortcomings here.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Further Research</div>

Further studies relevant for the spirituality and religiosity of war-affected children and adolescents were contained in the themes presented as limitations to this study. According to information received in this research there were many orphaned children who accompanied families to Australia. Their situation begs investigation in view of the notion of the 'unitive sense of being' that has been ascribed to the spirituality of the war-affected children in this research. Ethical issues regarding the research of sensitive human relations such as these would require strict scrutiny. Studies conducted and involving war child soldiers, orphaned and unaccompanied minors were represented in Barnitz (1999), Bennett et al., (n.d.), Blackman (1997), Daniel (1996), Driessnack (2006), Frater-Mathieson (2004), Goodman (2004), MacKenzie et al., (2007) and Ogina &Niewenhuis (2010). These studies did not explore the spirituality or the religiosity of the young people the study represented.

The effects on the Dinka youth in Australia whose fathers were absent, their whereabouts unknown, either continuing to participate in Sudan's freedom in the south, or with stepfamily in Sudan, highlighted disparity in their spiritual and cultural outlook compared with other Dinka young people. Research investigating their value and meaning of life experiences may benefit the south Sudanese and Dinka communities in Australia who may struggle to contain an unsettled group of young men in their midst.

Finally a comparative study including first generation Dinka children born in Australia not directly affected by war compared with those directly affected by war, would provide insight into various spiritual dispositions and the caliber that war has for effecting spirituality.

Family interactions and the depth of religiosity could be explored in view of this study and others where the affects of war ameliorate guilt by survival.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

The Dinka people have demonstrated a heightened spirituality and religiosity and the perception that they are culturally 'out of step' with Australian society does not reflect the truth about their integrity and dignity as a people of hope. A prayer from their past may enlighten this point (Deng 1984, p. 107).

<div align="center">

O Creator,

O Creator who created me in my mother's womb,

Do not confront me with a bad thing.

Show me the place of the cattle

So that I reap my crops

And keep my herds.

</div>

Their cattle have been scattered and the crops destroyed by war but their belief in a 'Supreme Force' has always been with them and remains with them still. It was not fear that has brought them to this point but trust and humility. The experiences of war and the Christian evangelization that has precipitated, have cultivated a humble heart and faith in God that supports the meaning in life as a blessing from God, and the parents of these children and adolescents have given thanks to God, and have taught their children to do the same. These children and adolescents have been schooled in the art of sincere gratitude borne from a lack of need, and they offer a people consumed by materialism a different way to view the world.

The significance of the findings presented in this research realized that prayerful children and youth such as the Dinka, open to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ were ready for religious education in Catholic schools. The young Dinka people directly affected by war showed strong ties to the family unit, articulated a deep social conscience, were indifferent to materialism and were empathetic towards those in genuine need. Translated, these were

powerful values that meaningfully operated within their fertile spirituality and religiosity. In the context of the mission of Catholic schools, which teaches to live the Gospel message, there are compelling reasons for Catholic educators to learn about and acknowledge the contribution of the young Dinka people in their schools. Culturally inclusive approaches incorporating sound pedagogy that values differentiated curriculums acknowledge these faithful who seek understanding about God through Jesus Christ.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Copies of Approval Forms

Catholic Education Office
Archdiocese of Melbourne

In reply please quote:

GE08/0009
1448

3 December 2008

Ms D Goodwin
263 Napier Street
STRATHMORE VIC 3041

Dear Ms Goodwin

I am writing with regard to your research application received on 27 November 2008 concerning your forthcoming project titled *Exploring the spirituality and religiosity of Dinka children in Catholic schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria.*. You have asked approval to approach Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, as you wish to interview principals, teachers and students.

I am pleased to advise that your research proposal is approved in principle subject to the following standard conditions.

1. The decision as to whether or not research can proceed in a school rests with the school's principal. So you will need to obtain approval directly from the principal of each school that you wish to involve.

2. You should provide each principal with an outline of your research proposal and indicate what will be asked of the school. A copy of this letter of approval, and a copy of notification of approval from the university's Ethics Committee, should also be provided.

3. A *Working with Children* (WWC) check – or registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) – is necessary for all researchers visiting schools. Appropriate documentation must be shown to the principal before starting the research in each school. Details about applying for a WWC check may be obtained from the link in the Department of Justice website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren>.

4. No student is to participate in the research study unless s/he is willing to do so and informed consent is given in writing by a parent/guardian.

5. You should provide the names of schools which agree to participate in the research project to the Knowledge Management Unit of this Office.

6. Any substantial modifications to the research proposal, or additional research involving use of the data collected, will require a further research approval submission to this Office.

7. Data relating to individuals or schools are to remain confidential. The video of participants must not be shown to anyone other than the researchers or subjects involved in the project and should only be used for purposes directly relating to the research.

8. Since participating schools have an interest in research findings, you should consider ways in which the results of the study could be made available for the benefit of the school communities.

9. At the conclusion of the study, a copy or summary of the research findings should be forwarded to this Office. It would be appreciated if you could submit your report in an *electronic format* using the email address provided below.

I wish you well with your research study. If you have any queries concerning this matter, please contact Mr Martin Smith of this Office.

The email address is <km@ceo.melb.catholic.edu.au>.

Yours sincerely

Terri Hopkins
MANAGER
POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

✚ ACU National

Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: A/Prof Kath Engebretson Melbourne Campus	
Co-Investigators: Melbourne Campus	
Student Researcher: Denise Goodwin Melbourne Campus	

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:
Exploring the spirituality and religiosity of Dinka children in Catholic schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne, VIC.

for the period: 1ˢᵗ October 2008 - 31ˢᵗ October 2009

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: V200708 100

The following <u>standard</u> conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (2007) apply:

(i)   that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
  * security of records
  * compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
  * compliance with special conditions, and

(ii)   that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
  * proposed changes to the protocol
  * unforeseen circumstances or events
  * adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

Signed: ....   Date: ....
(Research Services Officer, Melbourne Campus)

APPENDIX B: Letters to the Participants and Consent Forms

Appendix B

<div align="center">
INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENTS:
Questionnaire, Focus Group and Interviews
</div>

TITLE OF PROJECT: Exploring the spirituality and religiosity of Dinka children in Catholic schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria.

NAME OF THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Kath Engebretson.

NAME OF THE ASSOCIATE SUPERVISOR: Dr Brendan Hyde

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ms Denise Goodwin

DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

Dear Parents,

Your child/children are invited to take part in a research project, which will provide information about the spirituality and religiosity of Dinka children in Catholic schools. The research focuses on the refugee experiences of the Dinka child and the effects these experiences have on their spirituality and religiosity. In particular their perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer will be explored. It is anticipated that the findings from this study may inform religious education curriculum in Catholic schools.

There are minimal risks to the children. They will be asked to give approximately one hour of their time to participate in an interview or group discussion. With your permission the interview and discussions will be video taped or audio taped and transcribed, and will be used only by the researcher, after which they will be erased. The children will never be identified in any material that is produced as a result of the research.

Your child/children's participation will help the researcher to make recommendations for the planning and implementing of religious education programmes for young Catholic refugees in Catholic schools.

Your children are not obliged to take part, and if you choose not to, you do not need to give permission. If you do give permission and then change your mind, you also do not need to give a reason. You can withdraw your children at any time.

Your children's participation and that of the school and parish will be confidential. You, your children, the school and parish will not be named in any report or publication that comes from the data. If you have any questions about the conduct of the research you should contact the Principal Supervisor:

Associate Professor Kath Engebretson
(03) 9953 3292
St. Patrick's campus
Australian Catholic University
115 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy

Victoria 3065.
k.engebretson@patrick.acu.edu.au

The Human Research Ethics Committee of Australian Catholic University has approved this study. If you have any complaints or concerns about the way you have been treated during the research, or if you have any questions that the researcher has not been able to answer, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of:

Chair HREC
St. Patrick's Campus
Australian Catholic University
115 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy, Victoria 3063
Phone: 9953 3158
Fax: 9953 3315

Any complaint or concern will be confidential, will be fully investigated, and the person who complained will be informed of the outcome. If you agree to participate you should sign both copies of the Consent form, keep one for your own records and return the other to the supervisor in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope. If you agree to participate the researcher will contact you to arrange a mutually suitable time for the interview.

With thanks

Associate Professor Kath Engebretson: Principal Supervisor

Dr Brendan Hyde: Co-Supervisor

Ms Denise Goodwin: Student Researcher

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF PROJECT: Exploring the spirituality and religiosity of Dinka children in Catholic schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria.

NAME OF THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Kath Engebretson.

NAME OF THE ASSOCIATE SUPERVISOR: Dr Brendan Hyde

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ms Denise Goodwin

DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

Dear _____,

You are invited to take part in a research project, which will provide information about the spirituality and religiosity of Dinka children in Catholic schools. The research focuses on the refugee experiences of the Dinka child and the effects these experiences have had on their spirituality and religiosity. In particular their perceptions of God, Jesus, Church and prayer will be explored. It is anticipated that the findings from this study may inform religious education curriculum in Catholic schools.

There are minimal risks to you and you will be asked only to give approximately one hour of your time to participate in the interview. With your permission the interview will be audio-taped and transcribed, and will be used only by the researcher, after which it will be erased. You will never be identified in any material that is produced as a result of the research.

Your participation will help the researcher to make recommendations for the planning and implementing of religious education programmes for young Catholic refugees in Catholic schools.

You are not obliged to take part, and if you choose not to, you do not need to give a reason. If you begin to take part and then change your mind, you also do not need to give a reason. You can withdraw at any time.

Your participation and that of the school and parish will be confidential. You, the school and parish will not be named in any report or publication that comes from the data. If you have any questions about the conduct of the research you should contact the Principal Supervisor:

Associate Professor Kath Engebretson
(03) 9953 3292
St. Patrick's campus
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Fitzroy, Victoria 3063
Phone: 9953 3158
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Any complaint or concern will be confidential, will be fully investigated, and the person who complained will be informed of the outcome. If you agree to participate you should sign both copies of the Consent form, keep one for your own records and return the other to the supervisor in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope. If you agree to participate the researcher will contact you to arrange a mutually suitable time for the interview.

With thanks

Associate Professor Kath Engebretson: Principal Supervisor

Dr Brendan Hyde: Co-Supervisor

Ms Denise Goodwin: Student Researcher

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM (Parent/Guardian's copy)

TITLE OF PROJECT: Exploring the spirituality and religiosity of Dinka children in Catholic schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria.

NAME OF THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Kath Engebretson.

NAME OF THE ASSOCIATE SUPERVISOR: Dr Brendan Hyde

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ms Denise Goodwin

DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

I _____ have read and understood the information provided in the letter to parents. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that my child, named below, may participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I agree for my child to be audio taped and/or videotaped and I understand that the tape and its transcript or video will only be used by the researcher. I agree that research data collected from the study may be published, or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN_____
                                                    BLOCK LETTERS

SIGNATURE_____

DATE_____

NAME OF CHILD

_____
                                                    BLOCK LETTERS

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR

_____

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT INVESTIGATOR

_____ DATE _____

CONSENT OF PARTICIPANTS (ADULTS) Researcher's copy

TITLE OF PROJECT: Exploring the spirituality and religiosity of Dinka children in Catholic schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria.

NAME OF THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Kath Engebretson.

NAME OF THE ASSOCIATE SUPERVISOR: Dr Brendan Hyde

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ms Denise Goodwin

DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

I _____ understand what this research project is designed to explore. What I will be asked to do has been explained to me. I agree to take part in an interview, realising that I can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason for my decision. I agree that the interview may be audio-taped and I understand that the tape and its transcript will only be used by the researcher without me being identified.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT

_____
                                                    BLOCK LETTERS

SIGNATURE _____

DATE_____

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR

_____

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT INVESTIGATOR

_____

CONSENT OF PARTICIPANTS (ADULTS) Participants' copy

TITLE OF PROJECT: Exploring the spirituality and religiosity of Dinka children in Catholic schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria.

NAME OF THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Kath Engebretson.

NAME OF THE ASSOCIATE SUPERVISOR: Dr Brendan Hyde

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ms Denise Goodwin

DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

I _____ understand what this research project is designed to explore. What I will be asked to do has been explained to me. I agree to take part in an interview, realising that I can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason for my decision. I agree that the interview may be audio-taped and I understand that the tape and its transcript will only be used by the researcher without me being identified.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT

_____
                                        BLOCK LETTERS

SIGNATURE _____

DATE_____

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR

_____

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT INVESTIGATOR

_____

APPENDIX C: Questionnaire, Stimulus Picture, Draw-write-narrate method and Guide Questions for semi-structured interviews

Appendix C1. Questionnaire for Open Questionnaire
Questionnaire

Name: _____

Age: _____

Country of Departure: _____

ASPECTS OF RELIGIOSITY	YES	NO	COMMENTS
1. Do you believe in God?			
2. What do you believe about God?			
3. Do you believe in Jesus?			
4. What do you believe about Jesus?			
5. Is Jesus important to you? Why?			
6. Do you pray?			
7. What do you do to pray?			
8. When do you pray?			
9. Do you think that praying helps? 10. Why?			
11. Do you pray at home together as a family?			
12. When do you pray together as a family?			
13. Do you have holy pictures of Jesus, Mary etc…. on your wall at home?			
14. Do you have Rosary beads?			
15. Do you pray the Rosary?			
16. Before you came to Australia did you have religion lessons where you learnt about God, Jesus, Church or prayer?			
17. What can you remember about what you learnt about God, Jesus, Church & prayer before coming to Australia?			
18. How would you learn the lesson?			
19. Can you tell me what you know about the story/ies?			

|			
20. Did you pray when you were in Africa?			
21. What did you used to pray about?			
22. Did you go to Mass/Church when you were Africa?			
23. What was that like?			
24. Do you go to Church now that you are here?			
25. Do you go to Dinka Mass?			
26. Do you go to other Mass?			
27. Why do you go to Mass?			

Appendix C Figure C2 Stimulus Pictures for Picture Chat
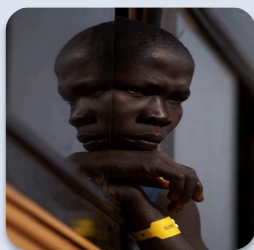
Where do you think this person is?

What do you think this person may be thinking?
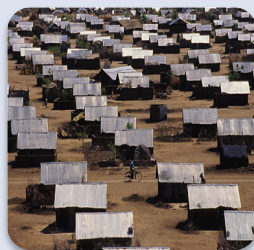
Do you know this place?

I wonder why people are living like this?

These are children's hands sharing food from one bowl. How does this make you feel? What are they eating? Do you know what it is like to share food like this?

What is happening in this picture? There are many people gathered. What are they doing? look at the boy's face. What do you think he is thinking?

Crying child

Why do you think this chid is crying?What is important to this person?

Refugees on the move

What is happening in this picture?

Why do you think they are moving?

Do you wonder how far they have travelled?

Medical Check

What is happening in this picture?

Does the little girl look sick?

Why do you think this is happening?

Appendix C Figure C3
THE CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS
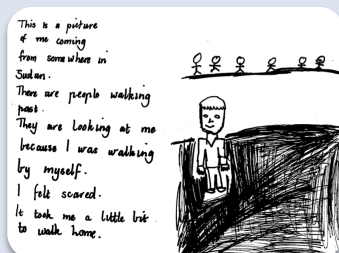
Alone

This is a picture of me coming from somewhere in Sudan. There were people walking past. they are looking at me because I was by myself. I felt scared. It took a little bit to walk home.
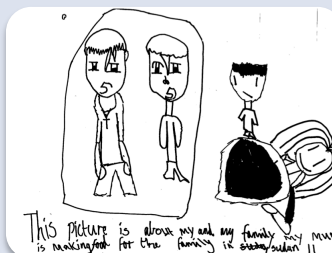
Family Life

This picture is about my[me] and my family and my mum is making food for the family in Sudan.

Hard Work

This is about 3 strangers are trying to earn money and food for their families. They finally earned hay. They had to work for it.
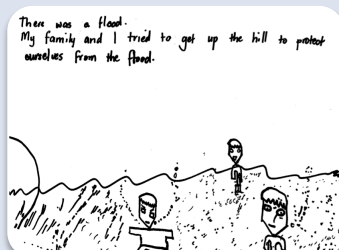
The Flood

There was a flood. My family and I tried to get up the hill to protect ourselves from the flood.

My Home

I drew a picture of my house and animals that were near my house. This is where I sleep, like a tent.

There is my bed and my parent's bed,
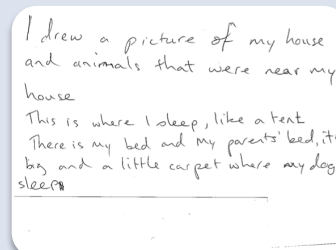
Text for 'My Home'

it's big and a little carpet where my dogs sleeps.

Appendix C4.

GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR CASE STUDY TWO: ADOLESCENT PARTICIPANTS

Focus for Dinka Adolescents:

- Encompassing aspects of their experiences of their

  journey/s and spiritual perspectives pertaining to Kessler (2000).

1. Deep Connection

Relationship to self, others, community, lineage, nature, higher power

Who do you feel close to?

In what ways do feel close to Africa?

In what ways do you feel close to Australia?

2. Meaning and Purpose

Loss of meaning

'Big Questions'→ Death, Birth, God, Heaven→ Hope, Faith?

Individual Purpose

Service learning→ taking responsibility

What really matters to you most in this life?

What do you wish for? If you could make something happen, what would you wish for?

3. **Joy**

Gratitude and celebration→ Can you remember celebrating for something? What was it?

Joy and Humility→ How did you give thanks?

Awe, Wonder and Reverence for Life

Play→ What did you do for fun? Then/Now

Can you tell me a time when you felt joyful? How did you give thanks?

Wonder & Awe→ Is there a question or are there questions in your life you would like

answers for?

If you could have your question/s about life answered what would you ask?

4. Creativity

Dancing→ form & freedom, Art and Drawing, Sport and physical abilities→ prowess

What is something you like to do that gives you a sense of satisfaction?

5. Transcendence

Through suffering pain, loss, ill health, separation, dislocation etc.

What is the most difficult thing/experience you have lived through?

What did you do?

Can you tell me what you were thinking about at the time?

6. Initiation

Specific to Dinka→ Ritual scarring, knocking out of teeth, Parenthood, Elders

Do you know why some Dinka have the scars on their face? Encourage explanation

Do you know the elders in your community?

Do you know what they do? Do you know about the decisions they make?

Is what they do worthwhile?

Do you respect their decisions?

How do you see yourself as a grown- up person? How do you see yourself in the future?

Appendix C5.

GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR CASE STUDY THREE:

DINKA PARENTS, ELDERS, CATECHIST AND SEMINARIAN

<u>Focus for Dinka parents and Elders</u>:

- Aspects of personal journey, observations of children's refugee experiences, future directions and Church and Mass participations, personal values…

<u>Focus for Dinka catechist and seminarian</u>:

- Background information regarding religious instruction in Sudan and refugee Diaspora

- Aspects of journey, religious learning in Sudan and refugee Diaspora

<u>QUESTIONS FOR DINKA PARENTS, ELDERS, SEMINARIAN & CATECHIST</u>

1. Can you tell me what it was like for you before you came to Australia?

2. What do you remember about the place where you came from?

3. What really matters most to you in life?

4. Do you go to Mass/Church? Why do you go?

5. What do you think are some of the reasons for the Dinka people going to Mass/Church? What do you think about Mass/Church?

6. In what ways do you think the Mass is important to the Dinka?

7. What do the Dinka prayer for?

8. What do the Dinka think about singing at the Mass?

9. What activities do the Dinka involve themselves in the parish?

How important is parish life to the Dinka congregation?

10. What kinds of activities in the Church or parish help the Dinka learn about religion?

    What kinds of learning take place?

    Consider aspects concerning resettlement.

QUESTIONS FOR CATECHIST & SEMINARIAN

1. Do the Dinka children in Sudan learn about religion?

2. Do the Dinka adults in Sudan learn about religion?

3. Is religion taught in the places where refugees go? How do you know this?

4. What religion do they learn?

5. What are they taught?

6. Who teaches them?

7. What guidance do catechists receive to teach?

8. What do the instructors teach about God? Jesus? Church? & Prayer?

Appendix C6

GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR CASE STUDY FOUR:

TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND PARISH PRIEST

<u>Focus for teachers and principals:</u>

- Implications for Catholic Religious Education, resettlement concerns, positive and negative aspects of Dinka spirituality, and religious education perspectives relating to experience in Catholic schools

<u>Focus for Christian Brothers:</u>

- Resettlement concerns, positive and negative aspects of Dinka spirituality, religious education perspectives relating after-school programmes

<u>Focus for Parish Priest:</u>

- Resettlement issues, religious activities of the Dinka and participation in the parish

<u>QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS & CHRISTIAN BROTHERS</u>

1. What are the main issues that the Dinka students are presented with in the school and classroom?

2. What contributions do they make to the school community?

3. Does their religious education learning demonstrate difference form other learners?

4. If so, what are these differences?

5. What contributions do you think they offer the religious education programming of the school?

<u>QUESTIONS FOR CHRISTIAN BROTHERS & PARISH PRIEST</u>

1. What kinds of resettlement issues have the Dinka children experienced in Catholic schools?

2. How do you think these experiences affect the children's learning of religious education?

QUESTIONS FOR ALL CASE STUDY FOUR PARTICIPANTS

1. Can you tell me about Dinka refugee/s you know personally who have demonstrated

    strong positive or negative spirituality since coming to Australia? What were their

    circumstances?

APPENDIX D: Tabulated responses from Dinka Children and

Adolescent Participants

Appendix D

Table 4:1 *Children's perceptions of God*

Responses from children aged between 9 and 12 years old for questions 1 and 2	Number of children
Belief in God	
Affirmed	12
Denied	1
Perceptions of God	
Creator God	3
Personal God	7
Omnipotent God	3
Not sure of thoughts about God	4
God not important	1
God is true	1
Confused God with Jesus	2
God as forgiver	3
God the Father of the Saviour Jesus	4
God who makes people come alive	1
God offers heaven to the good	1
God maker of the Catholic Church	1

Table 4:2 *Children's perceptions of Jesus*

Responses from children aged between 9 and 12 years old for questions 3 to 5	Number of Children
Belief in Jesus	
Affirmed	11
Unsure	2
Perceptions of Jesus	
Personal Jesus	14
Jesus as a real person	2
Jesus as Saviour	7
Jesus' relationship to God: King, Son, Holy Spirit's messenger and miracle worker	6
Jesus is the right one.	1
Jesus went to heaven.	1
Notions of Jesus' Importance	
Importance affirmed	10
Not sure of personal importance	2
Importance denied	1
Jesus as model of kind behaviour	6
Jesus as teacher	4
Jesus as healer	3
Jesus as helper and carer	5
God as Jesus' father important.	2

Table 4:3 *Children's perceptions of Prayer*

Responses from children aged between 9 and 12 years for questions 6 to 12	Number of Children
Prayer	
Prays	11
Prays sometimes	2
Prays for/to	
Give thanks to God	4
Jesus	6
Mary	1
Family	3
Sick	3
Personal special intentions	7
Poor and homeless	4
Time of Prayer	
Before meals	3
Before sleep	12
At school	6
At Church	4
Morning	7
Prayer Ritual	
Makes the Sign of the Cross	8
Lights candle	1
Joins hands	4
Closes eyes	2
Lowers head	1
Kneels next to bed	5
Sits down	2
Views holy pictures or crucifix	2
Prays silently	5
Prays audibly	3
Formal prayers use	4
Hail Mary	4
Our Father	1
Apostles Creed	
Perception of prayers of intercession	12
Praying helps	1
Praying does not help	11
Extraordinary things can happen through prayer	9
From prayer grows compassion	6
Prayer engenders calm, strength and security	1
Praying respects God	1
God and Jesus listen to prayers	1
Family Prayer Participation	
Prays together	8
Used to pray together	4
No longer prays together	1
Prays at meal times	8
Communal prayer for special intentions	7
Sing Our Father, join hands together	1
Kneel in prayer in evening with brother and sisters and say Our Father	1
Pray in Arabic	

Table 4:4. *Perceptions of Prayer: The Rosary and Religious Symbols*

Responses from children aged between 9 and 12 years for questions 13 to 15	Number of children
The Rosary	
Has Rosary beads	4
No Rosary beads	9
Knows/ prays Rosary	2
Rosary unknown	5
Does not pray Rosary	2
Mother prays Rosary	5
Learns Rosary from mother	3
Learns Rosary from formatted sheet	1
Religious Symbols in Home	
Symbols in homes	13
Holy pictures, Crucifix and Statues	18
In bedroom	5
Other rooms	6
Prayer table	1
Picture of crucifixion on computer screen	1
Crucifix necklace	2

Table 4:5. *Sources of Learning for God, Jesus, Church and prayer prior to Australia*

Responses from children aged between 9 and 12 years for questions 16 to 19	Number of children
Learning about God, Jesus, Church & Prayer	
Can remember religious learning	7
Can't remember religious learning	2
No religious learning prior to Australia	4
Taught in Egypt	5
Taught in Sudan	1
Taught in Kakuma: Kenya	1
Prayer practice prior to Australia	6
Too young to pray	7
Parents and significant adult teachers	3
Methods and resources: Scripture, games, listening activity, Big books and asking questions	12
Venues: Home, Church, Sunday school	5
Not much learnt	1

Table 4:6 *Perceptions of Church*

Children's responses for perception of Church	
Children aged 9 to 12 years for questions 20 to 27	Number of children
Mass and Church participation in Africa	
Attended Mass	11
In Egypt	9
In Sudan	4
In Kakuma: Kenya	1
Don't remember	2
Experiences of Mass/ Church in Africa	
Danced at Mass	1
Attended Mass with family	1
Baptised in Egypt	3
Baptised and made Holy Communion in Sudan	2
Prayers said: Our Father, for family, to God, Jesus and Mary	3
Listened music and learned hymns	1
Listen to testimonials	1
Did not pray	1
Mass and Church participation in Australia	
Attended Mass	12
Does not attend Mass	1
Attends Dinka Masses	9
Attended other Masses	8
Mother attended Arabic Mass for Dinkas & Dinka Mass for Dinka; rest of family attended Dinka Mass in Dinka only	1
Attended Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints	1
Reasons for Mass attendance	
To be like Jesus & learn about God, Jesus, Mary	
To attend lessons at Mass	8
To pray	2
To receive Holy Communion	6
To initially receive sacraments	7
To altar serve	8
To listen	1
To sing	3
To light candle	3
To pray for forgiveness	1
To follow the crowd	1
To enjoy being there	1
	1

Table 4:7 *Dinka Adolescent Perceptions of God and Jesus*

Responses from adolescents 13 to 16 years for questions 1 to 6			
Perceptions of God	Number of Children	Perceptions of Jesus	Number of Children
Existence of God believed	7	Jesus believed	7
God disbelieved	1	Jesus disbelieved	1
Creator God	3	Teacher	2
Confused God and Jesus	4	Forgiver	1
Loving, merciful,	3	Saviour/Son of God	7
forgiving	2	Real not believable	1
Supernatural being		Virgin Mary & Joseph	3
affecting life	1	his parents	
Ineffectual God	1	Miracle worker	1
Relational God		God crucified	1
		Fixing Dinka people's	3
		lives	6
		Jesus' importance	1
		affirmed	1
		Importance unsure	8
		Importance denied	
		Jesus offers positive	3
		presence	1
		Jesus as Saviour	1
		Jesus as focus on prayer	1
		Jesus as God's	
		messenger	
		Jesus as forgiver	

Table 4:8 *Dinka Adolescent Perception of Prayer*

Responses for adolescents aged between 13 and 16 years for questions numbers 7 to 12			
Perception of Prayer	Number of Children	Perception of Prayer	Number of Children
Prays	7	Believes praying helps	6
Ceased praying	1	Believes praying does not help	1
Prays for special intentions	7	Believes God hears special intentions	5
To stop bad things happening and to make things right		Believes praying brings one closer to God	4
Prays in gratitude	2		
Prays to Jesus	2	Believes that prayers are not always answered	1
Prays for family	1		
Prays for sick and dead	2	Family prays together	4
Prays for forgiveness	1	Family used to pray together	4
Prays before sleep	6	Siblings pray together	2
Prays at school	4	Separate members of family pray together	4
Prays at church	5		
Prays upon awakening	2	Devotional prayer to Mary	2
Makes sign of the cross to pray	5	Family prays to bless food	1
Lights candle to pray	1	Family prays for special intentions	1
Joins hands to pray	3		
Kneels next to bed to pray	2	Family prays to give thanks to God	1
Prays silently	3		
Prays audibly	2	Family prays at Mass	2
Prays Hail Mary	1	Family prays before outing	1
Prays Our Father	1	Time not counted when family prays together	1

Table 4:9 *The Rosary and Religious Symbols*

Responses from Adolescents aged 13 to 16 for question numbers 13 to 15			
The Rosary	Number of Children	Religious Symbols	Number of Children
Possesses Rosary beads	5	Symbols present in homes	8
Does not possess Rosary Beads	3	Holy pictures, statues, Jesus, Mary, Crucifix	12
Mother/Grandmother has Rosary beads	3	Symbols in bedrooms	1
Knows how to pray the Rosary	5	Symbols in living rooms	4
Does not how to pray the Rosary	2	Bibles as symbols	3
Used to pray the Rosary	3		
Mother prays Rosary	2		
Learning to pray Rosary	3		
Knows some mysteries and prayers of the Rosary	1		
Rosary beads used as ornament			

Table 4:10 *Dinka Adolescents Prior Religious Learning*

Prior Religious Learning	Number of Children
Recalls religious learning	7
Taught in Egypt	5
Taught in Kenya	2
No religious learning prior to Australia	1
Lessons delivered by women and elders	2
Parents as teachers	2
Adolescents involved in sacramental preparation	2
Received academic and religious learning in Muslim school	1
Christian religious learning in Arabic	2
Adolescents practised prayers	1
Various Resources/methods: Scripture, Bible stories, songs, dance, movies	6
Classes at Church	4
Classes at Sunday school	1
Classes at home with others	4
Learnt about God, Jesus, and prayer	5
Learnt by attendance at Mass	5

Table 4.11 *Dinka Adolescent Perceptions of Church*

Responses from adolescents 13 to 16 years for questions 20 to 27			
Perceptions of Church Africa	Number of Children	Perceptions of Church Australia	Number of Children
Attended Mass	8	Attended Mass	6
In Egypt	6	Attended church service	1
In Sudan	4	Stopped attending Mass	1
Prayed in Africa	8	Attended Dinka Catholic Mass	6
Danced after Mass	1	Attended other Mass	2
Prayer experience	7	Attended the Church of Jesus	1
Asked God's forgiveness	1	Christ and Latter Day Saints	
Asked God peace	2	Attended Mass:	
Asked God's help	4	To pray/speak to God	4
Dirt mound seating/elders on chairs	2	To receive Eucharist	3
		To pray for special intentions	1
Altar serving	1	To support one another	2
Children's lessons during	1	To listen to testimonies	1
Mass conducted by elders		To pray for forgiveness	1
Listen to testimonies	1	To sing	3
Lots of music	1	To praise and worship	1
Lots of people present	1	To gain uplifting experience	1
Mass prayed in Dinka	1	For obligation of conscience	1
Water passed around church to make Sign of the Cross	1		
Kakuma Mass peaceful/Sudan not	1		
Christian primary school attended at Church	1		

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